

HELI MEDS

WINTER 2025



Elusen Ambiwlans Awyr
CYMRU WALES
Air Ambulance
Charity

Gracie's Gift of Life

Christmas is a magical time, but it means so much more to the Kinnear family. Two years ago, little Gracie needed lifesaving treatment from the Wales Air Ambulance. Without it, she wouldn't be here to celebrate this Christmas. Will you help to give the gift of life to more families this Christmas by donating today?

This is Gracie's story, told by her mum, Emma...

You don't know me but without your generous support, Gracie, my daughter, wouldn't be here this Christmas.

Two years ago, Gracie was enjoying playing, but a lovely day soon turned into a nightmare. A vehicle was heading towards us. Time stood still as I desperately ran towards my little girl.

I jumped in front of the vehicle, and both Gracie and I were dragged along the road, but Gracie was caught under a wheel.

It's an image I will never forget

My beautiful girl, my four-year-old, was stuck making no noise. The neighbours heard my screams as I lay in the middle of the road cradling Gracie; almost sure she wasn't going to survive.

We knew Gracie needed help quickly, so we rushed to our local hospital; we had no idea the Wales Air Ambulance medics were meeting us there.

Dr Jon, Critical Care Practitioner Conor and Dr Jamie assessed Gracie, and it was at this point that we knew how critically unwell our little girl was.

She was fighting for her life

It was all such a blur, there were people all around me, but I was numb. The team put her into an induced coma, and gave her a blood transfusion, before transporting our angel to the University Hospital of Wales in Cardiff.

Whilst on route, Gracie deteriorated, but thankfully Dr Jon was able to administer another blood transfusion - without it, she wouldn't be with us today.



Gracie being reunited with Conor and Jon

They're our heroes

Gracie spent five days in a coma, and I felt like I couldn't breathe. But then, our beautiful little girl opened her eyes, and she continues to amaze us every day.

Before the accident, we didn't know much about Wales Air Ambulance and hadn't realised that they were a charity, but they've left a mark on our hearts. Thank you will never be enough for saving our little girl.

Gracie's Gift of Life

The Wales Air Ambulance has given us the greatest gift of all, they've given our Gracie a future. The memories we make this Christmas and moving forward would never have been possible without them.

Most children will ask for toys this Christmas, but the only gift Gracie and our family want this year is for the Wales Air Ambulance to continue to save lives across Wales.

Your support today will help to make Gracie's Christmas wish come true, so if you can, please donate to this lifesaving charity. You never know when you or your loved ones might need them. Thank you.

Merry Christmas
The Kinnear Family

Donate today 



Gracie in hospital



Gracie with her hero, Jon

Critical Care Consultant, Dr Jon Birks, gave Gracie's family the greatest gift they'll ever receive

It was clear when we first saw Gracie that she had sustained major injuries. As specialists in major trauma, we took over her care. We gave her a general anaesthetic and placed her onto a ventilator to protect her brain. We also made a small incision between her ribs to release the air from a collapsed lung and administered blood products.

Gracie was an incredibly poorly little girl. Having my own family, seeing their world fall apart was heartbreaking. To have met Gracie again recently, full of life, is incredibly humbling.

We attend over 3,500 missions every year and can only deliver this service with your support.

Help us give the gift of life to more patients this Christmas by donating today. Thank you.

Season's Greetings and Happy New Year.
Jon Birks,
Critical Care Consultant

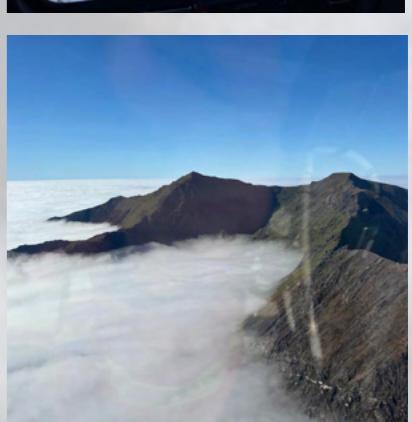


Picture this

View from the crew edition!



You often send us wonderful images of your fundraising events or our flying dragons. We love to see them!



Coming soon • Coming soon



Walk 25, 50 or 75 miles this January
(or choose your own goal)

Raise £200 and earn your
HeliPaws hoodie!

Get a 'pawesome' pack
for £10

- Beanie
- Bandana
- Walkies of shame card



www.walesairambulance.com/helipaws2026



Click here to
sign up for free!

Coming soon • Coming soon

Invite us to talk to your group

The Community Talks Network offers inspiring talks about the lifesaving work of Wales Air Ambulance.

We're reaching out to groups across your county to deliver informative talks that raise awareness of the vital work we do.

Raising awareness
across communities

Perfect for community
groups, clubs and schools

To book a talk, visit walesairambulance.com/request-a-talk

Join us as a Community Speaking Volunteer

Love connecting with people
and making a difference?

We're looking for confident, friendly volunteers to represent Wales Air Ambulance at local events, giving talks and sharing our mission.

Scan the QR code or contact
communitytalksnetwork@walesairambulance.com
to find out more

Be part of a passionate, supportive team



Volunteer Spotlight: Barbara Williams

Barbara's marking 15 years with Wales Air Ambulance!

Barbara Williams is one of Wales Air Ambulance's longest-serving volunteers. The former NHS radiographer used to work at both Neath General and Neath Port Talbot Hospitals before retiring.

The 66-year-old from Neath joined the Charity back in 2010 after spotting an advert in her local newspaper, The Evening Post.

She said: "When I saw the ad in the paper, it really called out to me, because in the months before my mum had passed away, she had been a big supporter of the Charity.

"I only found out after she died, when my dad told me that she had requested donations to be made to the Wales Air Ambulance in lieu of flowers."

At the time, Barbara was not only coming to terms with the loss of her mother but also recovering from breast cancer.

She admits it was a 'tough period' in her life and felt like she needed 'something' to build herself up before returning to work.

Her son Richard was also not working at the time and decided to volunteer too.

"It was the best thing we both could have done. I cannot tell you how it gave me a purpose and a new focus. It really helped me in the months before I returned to my job in the hospital.



"Plus, Richard gained full-time employment with the Charity, which has made me and my husband incredibly proud."

15 years on from joining the Charity, Barbara says it has been a 'fulfilling and rewarding experience' and she's 'made some fantastic friends.'

She 'loves the flexibility' of the role, and the ability to 'commit as much or little time as you want.'

Barbara admits 'no day is ever the same'. She continued: "Last week I was at an open day at a fire station. It was fantastic to meet their team and to learn more about the incredible work that they do.

"They were doing demonstrations so we could see what they have to do when called to an emergency.

"You learn so much about all sorts of things when you meet people from different organisations, who often work alongside our pilots and clinicians when involved with a major incident."

She added: "Today I've been helping with administrative tasks at the main office in Dafen.

"Tomorrow will be very special as I will be doing something I particularly love - meeting our past patients.

"I'll be supporting a base visit and reuniting a family with the clinicians who helped their son."

When Barbara is not volunteering, she has plenty of interests to keep her occupied. A lifelong keep-fit fan, she's a gym member and enjoys walking.

She has been on eight cruises, taking in the Caribbean, Alaska, Scandinavia and the Mediterranean. A keen reader, she enjoys a 'good murder mystery' and loves to shop.

Barbara feels 'very grateful' to be part of the Wales Air Ambulance family and would advise anyone thinking about volunteering to 'get in touch'.

She said: "If you see us at an event, pop over to our stand and have a chat, we are a very friendly bunch.

"Every time you see the helicopter going out, you know the crew are going to help someone having the worst day of their life.

"It's an honour to support such an incredible team."

Schoolboy who suffered catastrophic injuries in a freak accident recognised for his fundraising

A schoolboy who has raised almost £50,000 for the Wales Air Ambulance after it saved his life following a freak accident, has been recognised at the Child of Wales Awards.

Ioan Watts received the Young Fundraiser accolade at a glittering ceremony hosted by Welsh television presenter Gethin Jones at Swansea Arena on Friday, 12 September 2025.

The 12-year-old said: "It's exciting to be part of this ceremony, and a lovely surprise to get this award."

"After my accident, I wanted to do something to help the Charity and started off with a 2K run, then we climbed Pen y Fan.

"I was also the face of the Christmas campaign last year, which helped raise thousands of pounds for the lifesaving service."

The whole Watts family attended the award ceremony, with Ioan's mum Lydia deeply moved that he had been nominated by the Charity.

She said: "We are super proud of Ioan, it's so lovely for all of us to be able to be with him to celebrate how far he has come.

"His accident obviously had a massive impact on the whole family, so it is lovely to do something so positive together."

In October 2022, the Watts family were celebrating their youngest son Rhodri's birthday when it became a birthday to remember for all the wrong reasons.

Ioan was playing on his scooter in the garden shed, but the fun soon stopped when he slid across the concrete and fell 8ft over a ledge headfirst, leaving him fighting for his life.

Due to the nature of Ioan's injuries, the Wales Air Ambulance dispatched two critical care teams – one by air and one by road. Upon arrival, it was immediately clear to the team that Ioan was extremely poorly; he was unconscious, having a seizure and he'd started vomiting, which meant his airway was blocked.

Jez James, one of the medics on board Wales Air Ambulance that day, said: "As part of our role, we are faced with awful situations every day, but I have a son a similar age and this mission has stuck with me. Ioan was an incredibly poorly young boy, one of the sickest I've come across."

The critical care team cleared his airway and gave him some medication to stop the seizure. They also delivered a pre-hospital anaesthetic and placed him on a ventilator, helping to protect his brain.

These treatments would usually only be available within a hospital setting, but thanks to the unique Third Sector and Public Sector partnership between the Wales Air Ambulance and Emergency Medical Retrieval and Transfer Service, Ioan received these procedures in his back garden before being transferred to the University Hospital of Wales, Neurosurgical and Paediatric Trauma Centre.

Lydia and Richard were told to expect the worst, and neither the Wales Air Ambulance crew or his family knew if Ioan would ever wake up or recover.

Jez continued: "My colleagues and I did all that we could for Ioan, delivering advanced critical care to him in his garden. We knew that we were going to give him the best possible chance of survival but with how poorly he was, we weren't sure what the outcome would be."

Ioan spent three weeks in intensive care in a coma and underwent a craniotomy, where part of his skull was removed. Whilst in a critical condition, Ioan's dad spoke to a vicar; something he remembers like it was yesterday.

Against the odds, Ioan slowly began to show signs of improvement and was slowly taken off the ventilator.

Ioan's grateful mum Lydia said: "After 3 weeks in a coma, and emergency brain surgery, Ioan began his slow recovery, learning to walk, talk and do almost everything he could do before his accident. He worked so hard and after 3 months in hospital, he came home to continue his recovery."

Inspirational Ioan said: "I don't remember my accident, but my family were told to prepare for the worst. I spent three months in hospital and underwent more surgery to put the part of my skull back into place."



Ioan Watt with his mother, Lydia, at the Child of Wales Awards 2025

loan spent over three months in hospital, where he relearned how to walk, talk, and care for himself.

Just ten months after his accident, he completed the Caerphilly 2K, raising £4,460 for Wales Air Ambulance and Noah's Ark. A month later, he climbed Pen y Fan with Jez. As the face of the Wales Air Ambulance Christmas Appeal, loan has helped raise over £45,000.

The Wales Air Ambulance Charity relies on public donations to raise the £13 million required every year to keep the helicopters in the air and rapid response vehicles on the road.

Now in his second year of high school, loan continues to inspire everyone with his courage and spirit.

Jez said: "It's been fantastic to see loan walking up on stage to receive his well-deserved award for the incredible fundraising he has done for Wales Air Ambulance.

"The first time we met was obviously when we attended him at the family home, then I had the pleasure of walking with him to the top of Pen y Fan and supporting his charity fundraising.

"Reuniting at the awards, has been amazing. We have a connection after all he has been through, and he is such a great character.

"It's really great to see him having the best time at such a wonderful event and getting on with his life."

The Child of Wales Awards is a very special annual event that celebrates the inspirational achievements of the young people of Wales, while raising money for charities in Wales dedicated to helping children.

Its founder Blanche Sainsbury said: "We shine a bright light on an amazingly brave group of children and young people who face hardships and challenges every day, yet never give up, never stop trying – inspiring those around them in the process.

"loan's story is extraordinary, his resilience when faced with the challenge of learning to walk and talk again, moved our judges. Just months after his accident he was fundraising for the Charity that saved his life.

"His commitment to raise as much as he can for Wales Air Ambulance, after overcoming so much, is deeply moving, and he is a worthy recipient of the Young Fundraiser award.

"We are grateful to our sponsors and all those who helped make the night so special. We look forward to returning in 2026."



Courageous schoolgirl who dialled 999 when step-mum went into sudden labour praised for her actions

Please note: This story contains content that some readers may find upsetting.

A schoolgirl has been recognised for her incredible courage at the Child of Wales Awards after coming to the aid of her step-mum who was six months pregnant when she went into sudden labour.

In August 2023, Bella Laver was staying at her auntie's apartment when she woke up to 'sudden screams coming from the bathroom'.

The 12-year-old said: "It was such a shock! Josie was having the baby, my auntie was on holiday, and my dad was at work. So, I dialled 999 for help."

It was an extreme situation for anyone to have to face, especially someone so young, but Bella calmly followed the instructions given to her by the call handler.

She provided critical support to Josie whilst she endured intense labour pains and guided her through baby Jac's delivery.

Bella said: "The call handler told me that Josie needed to do CPR on the baby. So, I repeated everything that was said to me, to help her do that. I was doing all the counting for the rhythm of the heart."

Josie says Bella was 'extraordinary throughout', trying to hold back her tears, she described how her stepdaughter 'showed great courage, and strength beyond her years'.

She said: "Bella saw things she should never have had to see. It was horrible. I would never want to put something so hard on her at such a young age."

"Sadly, this has happened, but if it wasn't for the way she responded and took action, calling 999, we would not have had the time we had with Jac."

The Wales Air Ambulance rapid response vehicle was dispatched from Cardiff. Jac was transferred via road ambulance to the Grange University Hospital NICU in a Baby Pod to keep him warm. The clinical team continuously monitored and treated him en route.

Bella says that day still feels like a blur, but the one thing she remembers is the 'relief' she felt when she saw the air ambulance team arrive.

She said: "A lady in a red suit walked towards me and gave me a big hug. I was so grateful that they were there and able to help Josie and Jac."

Bella's dad Dale arrived soon after. He said: "There were around fifteen people, the most we've ever seen inside the flat."

"The air ambulance team were incredible, they continued CPR, put Jac in a pod to keep him alive.

"The helicopter was on standby too, they said they were 'ready to go' if needed."

The team managed to stabilise Jac at the apartment, in Newport, and then he and Josie were taken to hospital by road.

Jac and Josie were admitted to the Grange University Hospital. Dale said: "It is one of the hardest things we have been through. Once Jac made it to the hospital, we had around twelve hours with him."

Jac's heart was not strong enough and sadly his life support machine had to be switched off.

Dale said: "We got to spend some precious time with him, bathing him, Josie syringed breast milk, so she got to give something from herself to him. He was in her arms as he took his last breath."

He added: "I want to say a big thank you to the Wales Air Ambulance for everything they did to help Jac and Josie."

"Those precious hours. I know it is only a short amount of time, but we got to hold him and feel him breathing, whether it was a machine or not, he would have been long gone without their help."

The family admits the first six months after Jac's passing were very difficult. But thanks to the incredible support of the 2Wish charity, Bella was able to return to school.

In April 2025, Josie and Dale welcomed the arrival of a baby girl, Lottie. The family says, 'Lottie has brought great joy', and 'Bella is a very proud big sister'.

Her resilience and strength continue to inspire everyone, including the team at Wales Air Ambulance.

Critical Care Practitioner Jez James was among the attendees at the Child of Wales Awards.



Josie, Bella and Dale at the Child of Wales Awards 2025

He said: "The Child of Wales Awards takes you on a rollercoaster of emotions. It was so touching to hear the stories of all those who were recognised on the night."

"It was very moving to watch Bella's video and to see her on stage with her family. She is such a brave young lady, who made an important call when her step-mum needed her help."

"Her recognition is well-deserved; we wish her the absolute best for the future and hope her dreams of heading to Hollywood come true. She deserves every success!"

Family and friends bake over 2,400 cupcakes in memory of 'force of nature' Honey

A heartwarming community event in memory of a much-loved Pembrokeshire schoolgirl has raised over £7,000 for the Wales Air Ambulance.

Honey Foxx French, 12, tragically passed away last year and her incredible family marked her 13th birthday by baking thousands of cakes in her memory.

Honey, who was called Bee by her family, had a very caring nature and desire to help people, which inspired the family to set up this fundraiser.

The hugely successful event, which was called 'Honey's Big Birthday Bake Off', saw family and friends join forces to come together to bake, decorate and box 2,400 cupcakes all in Honey's memory.

To honour Honey's memory, the family chose to support the all-Wales Charity that helped them on the day she passed away.

Honey's mum, Jessica, said: "Honey was a force of nature and was always destined to make a difference in this world. Honey-bee was the most loved of all little girls.

"She filled every inch of space around her with her presence. Her laugh was husky, cheeky, and contagious. Even if her jokes crossed a line, you couldn't help but laugh—she was hilarious."

The bake off, which took place in Johnston, was led by Honey's mother, Jessica Foxx and father Alan French. Family and friends worked around the clock to meet the constant demand for the cakes.

Originally, their goal was to sell 100 colourful boxes of six cupcakes, but due to the high demand, they received a remarkable 400 orders, which raised an amazing £7,115.

Jessica would like to thank Honey's brothers, Travis and Felix, who put all their efforts into making Honey's Big Birthday Bake Off happen, and the 'wonderful couple April and Alan Warlow', who gave up their home and roped their street into giving up their ovens.

as 'emotional but electric', with many working into the early hours to make sure every last cupcake was finished and delivered on time.

Each cake was beautifully decorated with yellow cupcake cases, trays of pink sugar decorations, and box after box was carefully packed and labelled with Honey's name and a bee-themed tribute.

Reflecting on the huge success of Honey's Big Birthday Bake Off, a grateful Jessica said: "We've cried happy tears doing this for Honey. The support has been overwhelming. I never imagined it would grow this big.

"Honey's caring nature and desire to help, both fuelled our drive to help the wonderful team at the Wales Air Ambulance."

Prior to the fundraiser, additional fundraising events also took place, which included a raffle and 'Honey's Bees Wax Off', which saw family friend Kevin Higgins undergo a sponsored chest wax in the pub to boost donations.

The Wales Air Ambulance is consultant-led, taking hospital-standard treatments to the patient and, if required, transferring them directly to the most appropriate hospital for their illness or injury.

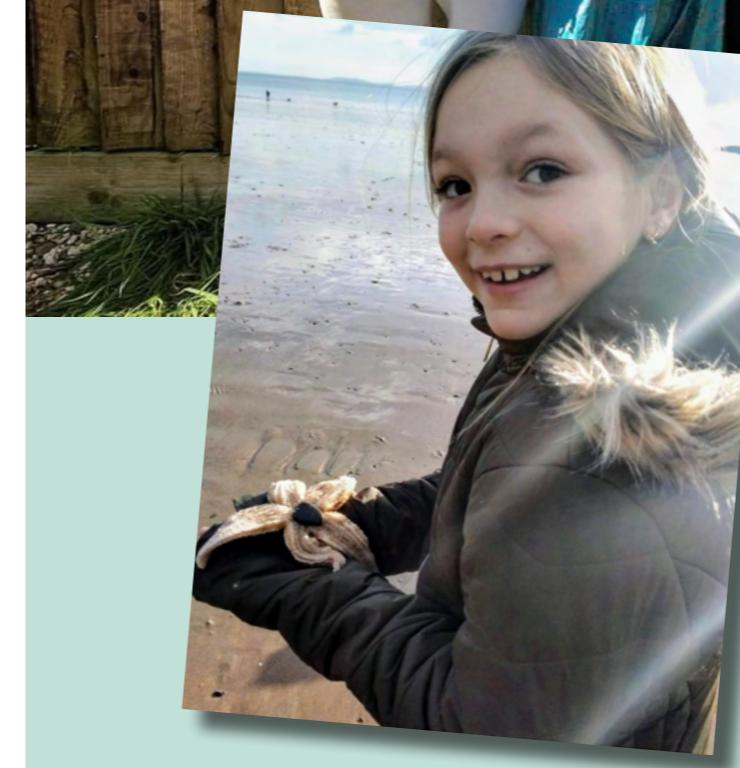
It is delivered via a unique third-sector and public-sector partnership. The Wales Air Ambulance Charity relies on public donations to raise the £13 million required every year to keep the helicopters in the air and rapid response vehicles on the road.

The Emergency Medical Retrieval and Transfer Service (EMRTS) supplies highly skilled NHS consultants and critical care practitioners who work on board the Charity's vehicles.

This advanced critical care includes the ability to administer anaesthesia, deliver blood transfusions and conduct minor operations, all at the scene of an incident.

As a pan-Wales service, its dedicated crews, regardless of where they are based, will travel the length and breadth of the country to deliver emergency lifesaving care.

The family recently had an emotional visit to the Wales Air Ambulance headquarters in Dafen, where they met medics and staff.



Honey's parents presented a cheque of £7,115 to Patient Liaison Nurse, Jo Yeoman, and the Charity's Senior Individual Giving Manager, Emma Moore.

The Wales Air Ambulance crew and staff were touched to receive cakes in memory of Honey from Jessica and Alan.

The Wales Air Ambulance needs to raise £13 million every year to keep its helicopters in the air and its rapid response vehicles on the road.

Emma Moore, who has built a close relationship with the family, said: "We are incredibly grateful to Honey's family for fundraising for our Charity. It was a beautiful way to remember Honey and mark what would have been her 13th birthday.

"The courage shown by Honey's family is so touching. Honey sounded like a wonderful girl who made a difference in this world, something that her family are continuing to do in her memory."

"The community came together to remember Honey and raised an amazing amount for our all-Wales Charity.

"We are touched that the family wanted to help our service after losing Honey."

"The family are very grateful to the Wales Air Ambulance and want to help save lives across Wales. The bake off in memory of Honey will help us to be there for the people of Wales when they need us most, which is incredible. Thank you to everyone who supported this event and marked Honey's birthday in such a special way."

If you'd like to donate to the Wales Air Ambulance in Honey's memory, you can do so by visiting www.walesairambulance.com/donate-v2

Fundraising Stories

As always, we couldn't provide our lifesaving service for the people of Wales without you, our supporters. We are grateful to everyone who has fundraised for the Charity.

Here are a few of your stories...

Dads donate £4,000 after epic fundraiser

Leighton Daniel and Paul Davies from Aberaeron completed a gruelling 103-mile ultra-marathon, which raised £4,000 for the Wales Air Ambulance and the same amount for Noah's Ark Children's Hospital.

Their castle-to-castle ultra-marathon fundraiser saw them running from Bamburgh Castle in Northumberland, to Edinburgh Castle.

The ultra marathon meant 40 hours of no sleep, 36 hours on the course, 29 hours of moving time and 202,000 steps!

Surprisingly, Leighton had never done anything similar to this prior to his challenge and the two were only



able to train together twice ahead of time.

Police Officer Leighton said: "I've never even run a marathon before. But I'm glad it was for a good cause and it definitely gave us a push to get through it. Especially through the night shift, which was a particularly difficult one. It was really good and I feel good for doing



Bluestone Brewery 'sing-off' hits the right notes

An annual fundraising event has hit all the right notes after successfully raising over £21,000, throughout the years, for the Wales Air Ambulance.

Every year, Bluestone Brewery Company hold the popular 'sing-off' event, which sees six choirs compete against each other.

This year, the one-night event raised £3,227 for the all-Wales Charity, and to purchase a community defibrillator. Bluestone Brewery Company has been supporting the lifesaving charity after the Wales Air Ambulance's medics attended the owners' family on more than one occasion.

Bluestone Brewing Company, which is based in Cilgwyn, North Pembrokeshire, has gained a reputation for this fun and lively community event.

This year's event was once again hosted by Steffan Evans, and the winning choir was 'The Singing Men of Cilgwyn'.



Meridian Foods raises vital funds

Colleagues at Meridian Foods have raised over £4,450 following a two-year partnership with the Wales Air Ambulance.

The Wrexham-based team, part of SHS Group, selected Wales Air Ambulance as their site-nominated charity in 2023. Since then, employees have taken part in a wide range of fundraising events, from mountain climbs and bake sales to sweepstakes and volunteering initiatives.

Fundraising highlights from Meridian include a virtual cycling challenge against other SHS sites, as well as a recipe book, Halloween raffles and a popular monthly annual leave draw.

Colleagues also marked the Charity's 24th birthday this year with a coffee and cake event that saw bakers from across the site contribute.

Owens Group employees get on their bikes to raise nearly £4,000

A team from Owens Group swapped their haulage vehicles to cycle 90 miles and raised nearly £4,000!

The team started their epic bike ride at Owens Warehouse in Magor and passed through several of their South Wales facilities, before completing their fundraiser at their base in Llanelli.

Despite a couple of punctures along the way, which were easily fixed, the group regrouped and stuck together to complete the cycle ride. Their youngest rider, Freya Lloyd, 13, joined them at Margam.

A delighted Steve Jones, Owens Group Depot Manager – Bridgend and Newport, who organised and took part in the cycle, said: "The day was an incredible success, and we are already talking about what we will do next year. You have all made it worthwhile and a huge success."



Merched Y Wawr raises funds equivalent to the cost of eight *lifesaving missions!*

A women's group which helps organise social events through the medium of Welsh has raised just over £26,000 for Wales Air Ambulance.

Merched Y Wawr's National President Geunor Roberts named the lifesaving service its Charity partner during her two years in office. Her term came to an end in August 2025.

The organisation, which was established in 1967, has thousands of members across Wales.

Geunor was 'inspired' to raise funds for the Charity after clinicians attended an incident opposite her home five years ago.

Geunor has been overwhelmed by the 'generosity', with 'thousands of items' donated and sold on stalls at the Eisteddfodau, agricultural shows and car boot sales.

She said: "Many clubs and branches of Merched y Wawr have contributed by holding their own events to raise money.

"Members in Ceredigion raised a substantial sum with an evening of styling curly hair and a very successful carol service was held in Carmarthen."



Powys winner celebrates £3,000 Autumn Raffle prize

Patti Sanderson, from Dolanog, was thrilled to discover she had won the £3,000 top prize in our autumn raffle, especially as she had completely forgotten she had entered. The news came as a lovely surprise just before the festive season.

More than 12,000 tickets were sold during the seven week online raffle, raising over £14,000 to support our lifesaving service. Patti says she has not decided how to spend her winnings yet, but may treat herself to some new plants for the garden, fabric for her sewing projects and a few extra Christmas goodies.

Having worked in social care for 47 years, Patti has seen firsthand the difference the Wales Air Ambulance makes, particularly in rural Powys. She continues to support the Charity because of the vital role it plays in delivering emergency care across Wales.

The second prize of £500 went to Sian Tucker from Swansea, and the third prize of £300 went to fellow Swansea resident Moria Atkin.

Thank you to everyone who took part. Your support helps us continue to deliver emergency critical care across Wales.



North Wales Primark raises £178k for Wales Air Ambulance

An incredible **£178,000** has been raised for the Wales Air Ambulance through the proceeds of North Wales Primark bag levy.

An incredible £178,000 has been raised for the Wales Air Ambulance through the proceeds of North Wales Primark bag levy.

Since 2019, the stores in Llandudno, Wrexham and Broughton Park have supported the Charity with the sale of its bags. As part of Primark's Step Up initiative, Primark employees have the chance to nominate a charity to receive money raised from the carrier bag levy, and in North Wales the Wales Air Ambulance was chosen.

Wales Air Ambulance's Regional Fundraising Manager for North East Wales, Debra Sima, was delighted to recently visit the Wrexham store after the Charity received the latest donation of £30,103.

Debra said: "North Wales Primark has raised £178,000 for the Wales Air Ambulance since 2019.

"This incredible donation from Primark stores across North Wales will ensure that we are there to support those in need during life or limb-threatening emergencies across the country.

"We are delighted that Primark has continued to support our Charity and we are incredibly grateful.

"The Wales Air Ambulance Charity relies on public donations, like this, to raise the £13 million required every year to keep the helicopters in the air and our rapid response vehicles on the road.

"A huge thank you also goes to the public, who were happy to purchase a bag knowing the funds would be going to the Wales Air Ambulance. You've all played a part in saving lives across Wales."

The Primark logo, featuring the word "PRIMARK" in a white, sans-serif font inside a large blue circle.

Team Primark pictured with Regional Fundraising Manager, Debra Sima



"This incredible donation from Primark stores across North Wales will ensure that we are there to support those in need during life or limb-threatening emergencies across the country." - Debra Sima, Wales Air Ambulance

A Doctor's View of the Wales Air Ambulance Service Improvement

Dr Stuart Gill is a Consultant Anaesthetist and a Welshpool-based air ambulance medic.

One of the hardest things as a doctor is knowing there are people in a life-threatening situation we're not available to help.

The impact on the person involved and their loved ones can be devastating.

Evidence shows that the hospital-standard care delivered by Wales Air Ambulance at the scene of an emergency significantly improves a patient's chances of survival and recovery.

Sadly, not everybody benefits from this.

We're consistently missing large numbers of seriously ill or injured people.

Of particular concern is the period after 8pm in Mid and North Wales. After this time, we only have one medical team covering the whole of Wales, based in Cardiff.

Across 2023 and 2024, 551 emergencies in Mid and North Wales, between 8pm and 2am, didn't get an air ambulance response.

There were 632 emergencies suitable for an air ambulance in Mid and North Wales during this time. We attended 81. In the same period in South Wales, we attended 983.

These missed emergencies are disturbing enough. But there's more.

In 2023 and 2024, there were 362 days, nearly a YEAR, between Caernarfon and Welshpool when we saw no patients.



So, what's going wrong?

That question was answered as part of an extensive expert review of our service, supported by those of us who work on board the air ambulance.

What did it tell us?

In short, our Welshpool and Caernarfon crews are in the wrong places and we're not operating at the right times.

Since 2015, we've used rapid response vehicles as well as helicopters. One reason for the underuse in Welshpool and Caernarfon is that their remote locations make it difficult for us to use the cars, particularly in areas where our preference would be to attend by road – urban areas of North East Wales, for example.

We need somewhere that gives us the best chance of attending emergencies by air and by road. About 2,000 individual locations were analysed to find the best geographical area – one that would help us attend more patients across the whole of Mid and North Wales.

The optimum location is a more central position in North Wales, near the A55.

The analysis also reveals that the demand for our service in Mid and North Wales is greater in the afternoon and evening than in the morning.

So, the new base location will have two crews in operation. One will work 8am to 8pm. The other 2pm until 2am.

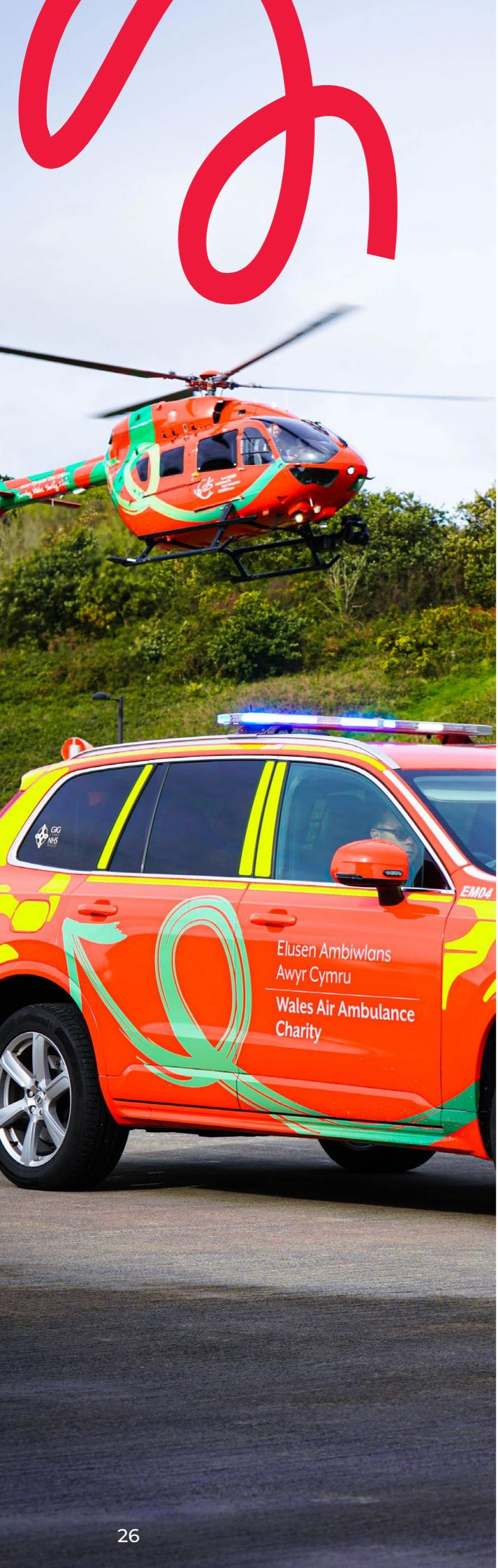
Rumours are circulating that a helicopter will be taken away. That's not true. We'll continue to have four helicopters.

Working in Mid Wales, I understand the genuine fears of our communities. Losing services is a constant source of anguish.

I can wholeheartedly reassure you – you're not losing a service. This is an improvement, giving our communities even more protection.

The questions being asked are understandable. The answers lie in the way an air ambulance operates.





The most frequent question is about response times.

Firstly, we're not a primary responder. That's the role of Community First Responders and the Welsh Ambulance Service. We're a secondary responder, the next link in the chain when hospital-standard treatment is required on top of the vital care already given. Less than 1% of all 999 calls need our specialist service.

There's also a misconception that each base provides a localised service. We see this through comments suggesting 'it'll take you longer to get to us if you move'. This assumes we're coming from a particular base. Wales Air Ambulance is not a regional service. We're a scarce resource. Regardless of where we're based, we go wherever we're needed in Wales. Sometimes, we'll travel from one incident straight to another. Our response times will always vary depending on where we're coming from.

That takes us to the next point. We're not simply 'a road ambulance in the sky'. We're a 'mobile emergency department'. We can put a patient to sleep, protecting their vital organs. We can deliver blood transfusions and even conduct minor operations.

By delivering hospital-standard care on scene, we can save hours, even days, in the patient journey. So, when people talk about 'minutes longer' to an incident, please remember the significant time savings we already bring, which far outweigh anything else.

Other questions include the following.

Why don't you operate after 8pm from Caernarfon or Welshpool? As mentioned, the challenging locations mean that we can't deliver the most effective service by road.

Why don't you leave Caernarfon and Welshpool where they are and put a rapid response vehicle near Wrexham? This would increase the underuse of Caernarfon and Welshpool and see more of your generous donations being wasted on the ground, doing nothing. The way to solve inefficiency isn't to add more resources, it's to improve the efficiency of the resources that we already have.

You're not going to reach rural areas by road? There's already a limited chance of a road response from Caernarfon and Welshpool. For example, in 2024, we attended 25 emergencies in the LL53 postcode (covering part of the Llyn Peninsula). Only one was by road. That's the same for most rural parts of Mid and North Wales. Cars will always be preferable in urban areas and helicopters in rural areas. Right now, our helicopters are dragged into urban areas, where a road response may be better. The service improvement means our cars will be used more in urban areas, freeing up the helicopters for rural areas.

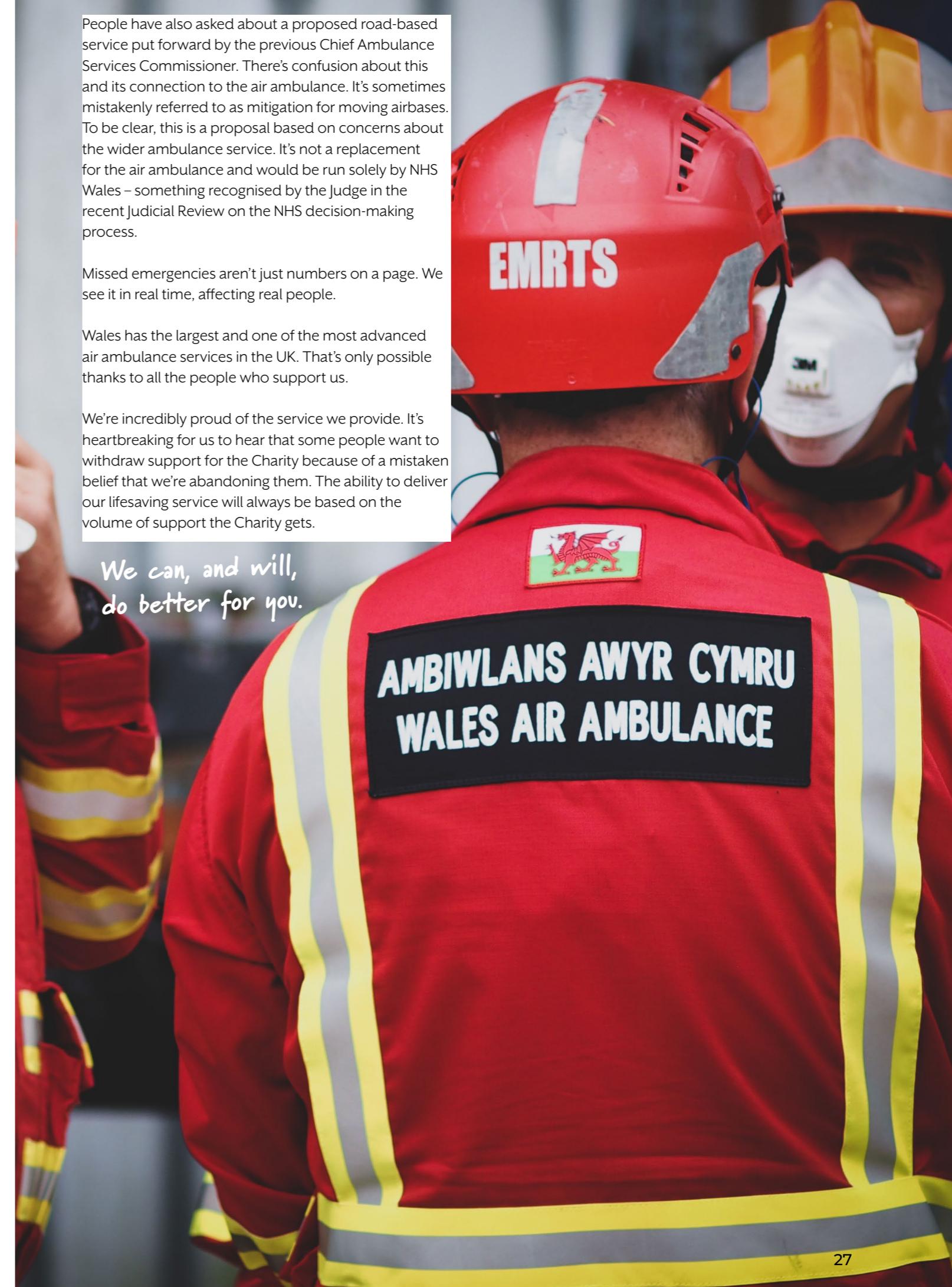
People have also asked about a proposed road-based service put forward by the previous Chief Ambulance Services Commissioner. There's confusion about this and its connection to the air ambulance. It's sometimes mistakenly referred to as mitigation for moving airbases. To be clear, this is a proposal based on concerns about the wider ambulance service. It's not a replacement for the air ambulance and would be run solely by NHS Wales – something recognised by the Judge in the recent Judicial Review on the NHS decision-making process.

Missed emergencies aren't just numbers on a page. We see it in real time, affecting real people.

Wales has the largest and one of the most advanced air ambulance services in the UK. That's only possible thanks to all the people who support us.

We're incredibly proud of the service we provide. It's heartbreaking for us to hear that some people want to withdraw support for the Charity because of a mistaken belief that we're abandoning them. The ability to deliver our lifesaving service will always be based on the volume of support the Charity gets.

*We can, and will,
do better for you.*





Help Wales Air Ambulance win £10,000 in the Selco Community Heroes Awards



Wales Air Ambulance has been selected as one of ten finalists in the Selco Community Heroes campaign, putting us in the running for the top prize of £10,000. We are calling on our amazing supporters to help us by casting a vote.

Nina Rice, our Head of Fundraising for High Value Partnerships, says winning would make an enormous difference to our lifesaving service. The Charity relies entirely on public support to keep our helicopters in the air and our rapid response vehicles on the road, delivering critical care to patients across Wales day and night.

Earlier in the competition, we received £1,000 in regional voting, which has helped us improve the welfare spaces at our Cardiff airbase. A further prize of £10,000 would allow us to continue enhancing the environment for our crews and, most importantly, help us save even more lives.

Voting is open until 14 December, with the winners announced in January 2026.

To vote, visit www.selcobw.com/info/selco-community-heroes