

First Minister announces St David Awards finalists

The St David Awards are the national awards of Wales. They acknowledge the extraordinary achievements of people in or from Wales and recognise the great deeds and contributions made by people from all walks of life.

Announcing the finalists, First Minister Carwyn Jones said:

“The St David Awards, now in their 4th year, are all about celebrating people who have gone the extra mile to make a difference to someone else’s life, overcome adversity or achieved something truly inspirational.

“Once again, the St David Awards finalists are an exceptional group of people. Every single one is a credit to Wales – it is going to be tough to choose the winners! I look forward to celebrating their outstanding achievements at the awards ceremony on 23 March.”

The finalists in the award categories: Bravery; Citizenship; Culture; Enterprise; Innovation, Science and Technology; International; Sport; and Young Person are as follows.

Bravery

Firefighters Gary Slack and Billy Connor. In August 2016, on-call firefighters Gary Slack and Billy Connor braved strong currents at Castle Beach, Tenby, to save 2 children from drowning.

PC Christopher Bluck and PC Rhys Edwards, South Wales Police. In March 2016, police constables Christopher Bluck and Rhys Edwards risked their own safety to save the life of a woman who had set herself on fire and was armed with a handgun.

Pontardawe Fire Crew. In July 2016, the fire crew were called to a house which was on fire with 2 young boys trapped inside. The crew battled dangerous conditions and 800 degree heat to save one of the children, a 3 year old boy, from the fire. The second child was also recovered from the property but tragically died.

Citizenship

Special Constable Cairn Newton-Evans, Dyfed-Powys Police. Having been a victim of a violent homophobic hate crime, Cairn joined the police to try to stop such attacks happening to others. Cairn is a regular volunteer and a passionate advocate for LGBT rights.

21 Plus, Down’s syndrome support charity. Run by 3 mothers who each have

children with Down's syndrome, the charity has gone from strength to strength over the past 10 years.

Anthony Evans, education campaigner for disabled students. Spurred on while looking to further improve his severely disabled son's education, Anthony has campaigned for post-19 education for severely disabled adults. Thanks to Anthony's efforts, a day college for disabled young adults in Wales was established in September 2016.

Culture

Elfed Roberts, Chief Executive of the National Eisteddfod. Having been at the festival's helm for nearly 25 years, Elfed has ensured the Eisteddfod continues to grow and develop, while remaining contemporary and welcoming to all.

Professor Jen Wilson, jazz musician and archivist. For more than 50 years, Jen has played a central role in promoting jazz music in Wales and in documenting its history and social impact – and in particular the role of women in jazz.

The Cory Band. Established in Treorchy in 1884, the brass band has a reputation for excellence. They made history in 2016 by becoming the first band to be quadruple champions; simultaneously holding the National, Open, European and Brass in Concert titles.

Enterprise

Llaeth y Llan – The Village Dairy, yogurt producers. A family run business, developed through diversification of a farm in Conwy, Llaeth y Llan produces yogurts sold across Wales and the UK. They believe their business is only as good as their 43 staff and put an emphasis on training and investing in the community.

David Banner, video games director. As well as being a multi-award winning games director and managing director of Wales Interactive, Dai has been instrumental in the growth of Wales' games industry. He founded the annual Wales Games Show in 2012 and created the GamesLab project, a digital development initiative for the University of South Wales, which has nurtured hundreds of students and provides a global platform for Welsh digital companies.

Halen Môn – Anglesey Sea Salt. Owners Alison and David Lea-Wilson have succeeded in starting a sustainable, successful business which employs local people with environmental and educational principles whilst also attracting tourists to Anglesey.

Innovation, Science and Technology

Jessica Leigh Jones, astrophysicist and engineer. The astrophysics graduate and former UK Young Engineer of the Year received the Intel Inspiration Award for Entrepreneurship for developing a series of novel fibre optic

transducers. An advocate for technical sciences, she is also director of the Engineering Education Scheme Wales and patron of Science and Engineering at Alton Convent School.

Professor Meena Upadhyaya OBE, geneticist. Britain's first female British-Indian professor in medical genetics within the UK, Meena's career focused on identifying genetic disorders. Meena has made a difference to people's lives either through her medical research or community and charity work and received an OBE in 2016 for services to medical genetics and the Welsh Asian community.

Genesis Biosciences. In a market dominated by harsh and sometimes dangerous chemical cleaners, Genesis develops products that put customers' safety and the environment first. This approach has been recognised through a number of industry awards, including the EDIE Sustainability Leaders Awards 2015 and the Technology and Innovation Business of the Year category at the 2015 Cardiff Business Awards.

International

Dr David Nott OBE, warzone surgeon. Each year, for the past 23 years, David has taken unpaid leave from his job as consultant surgeon at Chelsea and Westminster Hospital to work for aid agencies and provide surgical treatment to the victims of conflict and catastrophe. David and his wife, Elly, have also established the David Nott Foundation, raising hundreds of thousands of pounds for charity and providing surgical training to front line medics.

Nizar Dahan, international volunteer. Nizar works for the Human Relief Foundation and is nominated for his extensive international humanitarian work in response to the refugee crisis and for establishing the Swansea Humanitarian Aid Response Project, which supports displaced and vulnerable people.

Professor Carl G. Jones MBE, conservation biologist. Professor Jones has dedicated his life to restoring endangered animal populations and habitats, and is regarded as one of the most accomplished conservationists on earth. He is responsible for saving from extinction the Mauritius kestrel, 3 species of reptiles, a fruit bat and several plants.

Sport

Wales International Football Squad, UEFA Euro 2016. The Wales National football team, led by Chris Coleman, reached the semi-final of the Euros 2016. The squad were first class ambassadors for Wales, both on and off the pitch, and their strapline of "Together Stronger" has inspired the nation and captured worldwide interest.

The Welsh Members of TeamGB Olympics and Paralympic, Rio 2016. The 24 Welsh athletes selected by TeamGB was the largest ever overseas contingent of Welsh athletes at an Olympic Games, while the 26 Welsh Paralympics athletes accounted for 10% of the Great Britain team. 2016 was a very successful year for the Welsh athletes, while they also represented the country with dignity

and courage.

Anne Ellis OBE, Sport Ambassador. In July 2016, Anne Ellis stepped down as President of Hockey Wales, after 20 years at the helm. During the past 2 decades, Welsh Hockey has seen significant changes and Anne has been involved in it all.

Young Person

Brittany Davies, volunteer for looked after children. Brittany became looked after at the age of 16 and, despite many significant and harrowing challenges, she is now studying for her A Levels and volunteers regularly to help others in similar situations.

Savannah Lloyd, mental health volunteer. Having battled mental health problems since she was 11 years old, Savannah uses her experiences to reach out and help others in similar situations.

Elan Môn Gilford, sport volunteer. Despite 18 year old Elan's hearing loss, she volunteers 8 to 10 hours a week to coach sport sessions, children's karate and netball. Elan also runs a community sign language course.