

First Minister celebrates the inspiring winners of the 2017 St David Awards

The national awards celebrate the great deeds and extraordinary achievements of Welsh people from all walks of life – from saving lives to inspiring a nation.

Congratulating the winners, First Minister of Wales Carwyn Jones said:

“What a truly inspirational group of winners – I feel incredibly proud that we in Wales can call such an exceptional group of people our own. You make Wales what it is.

“Congratulations to everyone who has won an award and to all the finalists who made the award’s shortlist. You are a credit to your families, friends and the nation. I hope you are rightly proud of your achievements.

“I would also like to remind everyone that if you have been inspired by the winners and finalists, nominations are now open for St David Awards 2018.

“The terrible events that unfolded in Westminster this week remain close to my mind. Tonight, we have heard so many uplifting stories showing us everything that is good about human nature. Stories about bravery, about sacrifice, and about hope.

“These awards are a poignant reminder of the kindness of humanity, and an important opportunity to say thank you to those people who go above and beyond – often endangering their own lives – to keep us safe.”

The winners of the 2017 St David Awards are:

Bravery – Firefighters Gary Slack and Billy Connor

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

Young person – 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.

Sport – Wales Football Team

The Wales 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.

Culture – 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.

Enterprise – David Banner, Video Games Company 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.

Innovation, Science and Technology – Professor Meena Upadhyaya OBE

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.

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.

International – Dr David Nott OBE

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 "davidnottfoundation", raising hundreds of thousands of pounds for charity and providing surgical training to frontline medics.

First Minister's Special Award – Sir Karl Jenkins and Dr Mererid Hopwood

The 21 October 2016 marked the 50th Anniversary of the Aberfan disaster, which tragically claimed the lives of 116 children and 28 adults.

Sir Karl Jenkins and Dr Mererid Hopwood were commissioned by S4C to compose a new choral piece in memorial of this disaster for this concert called Cantata Memoria and its world premiere was held at the Wales Millennium Centre.

The concert commemorated a very difficult time in Welsh history but it was

handled in such a way that it took the families with it. It reflected the pain of loss while at the same time looked to the future. It was a very difficult balance to achieve but the piece succeeded and allowed our nation the opportunity to remember the day in a sensitive and dignified way.

Speaking about the First Minister's Special Award winners, Carwyn Jones said:

"What Sir Karl and Dr Mererid accomplished was incredible. Through their music, they brought together not only the community, but so many people from Wales and the world to share in this commemoration."