

SCAA NEWS

SPRING 2025

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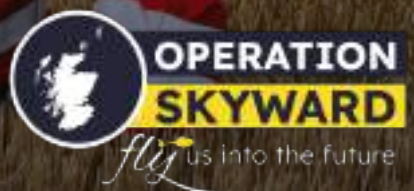
**HELP US LAUNCH OUR MOST
ADVANCED AIR AMBULANCE**

**OPERATION SKYWARD
NEEDS YOU!**

**“WHAT IF SCAA HADN’T
BEEN THERE THAT DAY?”**



SCOTLAND'S CHARITY AIR AMBULANCE



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PERTH BASE

Scotland's Charity Air Ambulance, The Control Tower, Perth Airport, Scone, Perthshire PH2 6PL

ABERDEEN BASE

Scotland's Charity Air Ambulance, Hangar 2B, Farburn Terrace, Dyce, Aberdeen AB21 7DT

GENERAL ENQUIRIES

0300 123 1111 | scaa.org.uk
enquiries@scaa.org.uk

YOUR STORY

communications@scaa.org.uk

If SCAA was there for you when you needed help, we'd love to hear your story. Please contact Erin and we will treat your communication in confidence.

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By post (to the Perth address above) please make cheques payable to "Scotland's Charity Air Ambulance" or "SCAA".

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YOUR SUPPORT REALLY MATTERS.

TO HELP SCAA, SCAN THIS QR CODE OR DONATE AT THE DETAILS ABOVE. THANK YOU.

WELCOME TO SCAA NEWS

Hello everyone and welcome to the latest edition of SCAA News.

You join us at a particularly exciting time for our charity as we announce a service enhancement which will not only see a new state-of-the-art helicopter arrive at Aberdeen, but also upgraded systems and capabilities for crews at both Aberdeen and Perth.

Our mission is simple: to provide rapid, high-quality medical care in the air, to transport patients to hospitals in the most efficient way possible, and to ensure that no one in Scotland should die because help can't get there in time.

Our new replacement aircraft will prove a lifesaver – particularly when great distances, onboard critical care and the need for space are involved.

Each flight undertaken by this new and enhanced air ambulance will be more than just a transportation mission; it will be a chance to change someone's life. To deliver care when and where it is needed most.

You will learn all about the virtues of the H145 D3 as you read on.

Read also of the launch of Operation Skyward – the fundraising campaign to support our enhanced service – your enhanced service.

This is not just about meeting the immediate needs of today or this year – it's about building a sustainable, long-term solution that serves your community and your family and friends for years to come.

The stories of Steph and Harris on pages 3 and 8 tell dramatically of the vital life-saving and critical care that our dedicated crews bring to an emergency scene. Read them and know that you made those missions – and thousands of others – possible.

SCAA is the People's Helicopter – funded by the people of Scotland, for the people of Scotland – and with your continued support we can make a real difference for those most in need. Our thanks, as ever, go to you all.

Help Fly Us Into The Future and enjoy your read.

David Craig

David Craig
Chief Executive



“SCAA GOT ME TO THE HOSPITAL IN JUST 15 MINUTES”

What began as a family day out at the Glenlivet Mountain Bike Trail Centre for Steph soon escalated into a race against time to save her life.



Steph and her family

Steph, a schoolteacher from Kemnay in Aberdeenshire, was enjoying the Easter holidays with her family when her condition began to rapidly deteriorate.

“I was trying to keep up with my eldest daughter on the trails when I suddenly felt really ill,” the 51-year-old says.

“My eyesight became blurry, and I knew I was going to pass out.”

She managed to manoeuvre herself off the trail before falling unconscious.

The mother of two regained consciousness shortly before hearing voices crowd around her.

“That’s roughly when the pain in my chest started. It then radiated down to my elbows, and I couldn’t feel my hands or open my eyes,” recalls Steph.

A land ambulance arrived at the scene. An ECG test concluded that there was an issue with Steph’s heart.

Steph required urgent medical attention, but the journey to hospital by road would clock in at over 1.5 hours.

Despite being in ‘unbearable’ pain, Steph remembers hearing the thud of helicopter rotor blades approach.

Unaware of the severity of her situation, she was told by Scotland’s Charity Air Ambulance (SCAA) paramedics that she was having a heart attack.

Steph was packaged carefully into the helicopter and transferred to Aberdeen Royal Infirmary in just 15 minutes. A journey that may have saved her life.

“I had a stent fitted to fix a block in my right coronary artery,” she comments. The whole operation was complete in 45 minutes, and I was allowed to go home after three days.”

Steph is now a SCAA volunteer, regular giver, lottery player, and recently shared her emotional story at the charity’s Operation Skyward launch event held at our Aberdeen base. Here she was able to reunite with the crew and aircraft that played a vital role in getting her the medical care needed to save her in time.



Steph with Keir, our HEMS Paramedic

“It’s important for me that others get the same opportunity I did – for SCAA to reach more people in time. It’s a debt I can never repay.”

HELP FLY US INTO THE FUTURE OPERATION SKYWARD

Scotland's Charity Air Ambulance (SCAA) is set to launch the UK's most advanced helicopter air ambulance of its type.

The new Airbus H145 D3 is currently in production and will receive its customised aeromedical fit-out, along with some modification, before being ready for operational service with us later this year.



The new Airbus H145 D3

The state-of-the-art twin-engine, five-rotor, aircraft will replace an existing EC 135 at the charity's Aberdeen base.

SCAA is using the generous donations of the people of Scotland to improve our frontline operation for the people of Scotland.

The charity's Chief Executive David Craig said the new aircraft announcement forms part of the most significant operational investment by the charity in its 12-year history.

"The H145 D3 is an aircraft that will help fly SCAA into the next decade."

"No one in Scotland should die because help can't get there in time and this new helicopter will offer greater range, endurance and capacity which significantly enhances our life-saving service and our ability to meet the ever-growing demand on pre-hospital emergency response teams.

"When our new H145 D3 takes to the skies, it will be the most capable air ambulance of its kind in the

UK, operating in the most challenging environment," added Mr Craig. "It will be a lifesaver."

SCAA operates two helicopter emergency response air ambulances, based at Perth (since 2013) and Aberdeen (since 2020).

"The decision to strategically focus on introducing a new aircraft at our Aberdeen base was driven by reviewing our operational data across all of Scotland over the last five years," said Mr Craig.

"This enhanced and more capable aircraft will ensure that, when critical care is required anywhere in Scotland, we can provide a team of specialist doctors and two SCAA paramedics to the scene of an emergency."

The new H145 D3 has three main benefits:

- 1 It allows an additional 60 minutes of flight time helping SCAA to reach more remote areas and fly more missions without refuelling.
- 2 Equipped with weather radar and night vision, the H145 D3 will ensure that SCAA can navigate harsh weather more efficiently and operate more safely in darkness. This will increase their ability to reach patients during Scotland's challenging winters.
- 3 When faced with critical and complex injuries, the larger helicopter will enable SCAA to carry an extra clinician and specialist equipment, which is particularly important for major incidents. This means a better chance of survival for the patient.



This operational upgrade, however, comes at a cost.

You've already done so much to help save and improve lives throughout Scotland - but we need YOUR help again.

An extra £2 million a year on top of our current £8 million costs is required to fund and fly our new life-saving aircraft, prompting a major nationwide "Operation Skyward" fundraising campaign.

To fulfil our purpose to the nation, the charity believes that the opportunity to save more lives is worth the extra cost.

"Other than the initial launch of our service, these service enhancements represent the single most significant operational investment for the charity."

"Funded entirely by public donation - without any Government contribution - SCAA has responded to more than 6,500 call outs since launching in 2013, with last year proving our busiest ever.

"In order to meet the constantly evolving and increasingly high standards of both air ambulance crew and equipment, donations will continue to

be invested in delivering our charitable purpose and our frontline operation is a priority as that ultimately saves lives.

"SCAA last upgraded its aircraft in 2015 after two years in service and launched our Aberdeen operation in 2020," added Mr Craig. "The time is right to advance yet again to ensure SCAA remains at the forefront of patient care and service delivery.

"Our patients will benefit hugely from the upgrade and our crews will appreciate the enhancements that a larger airframe with greater capacity and endurance brings to their life-saving work."

"But we can't do it alone and our appeal goes out to individuals, groups, organisations, businesses, trusts and foundations who share our ambition that no one in Scotland should die because help can't get there in time," said Mr Craig.

"The Scottish public have proved lifesavers through their amazing support of SCAA to date and the many thousands of lives which will be saved and improved through our latest upgrades will be as a result of YOUR continued generosity."



PREPARING FOR THE NEW ARRIVAL

Training will take place this summer to ready the pilots for the arrival of the new H145 D3 at Aberdeen.



And while the crew will be sad to say goodbye to their invaluable H135 G-EMAA, all are excited to welcome its new replacement.

Pilot Pete Winn explained why the upgraded aircraft was of particular benefit to SCAA's Aberdeen-based operations.

"The H135 is a very capable aircraft and has proved a real workhorse for SCAA," he said.

"It's cost effective and the Go To aircraft for many operations – especially in the UK and the US – and still the best aircraft for many roles. It's good to have one remain in the fleet at Perth as it still has a major role to play with SCAA."

"The dynamic at Aberdeen, however, puts added pressure on us," Pete explained. "We fly often with a doctor and advanced retrieval practitioner over vast distances which puts additional pressure on the capabilities of the H135 in terms of refuelling, capacity and comfort."

"The new H145 D3 has not only been specifically fitted out for SCAA's medical needs but is also a more useful platform from the pilots' point of view."

Pete explained that the new aircraft would offer more space inside for additional medical crew, more power, a longer flying time (reducing the need for time costly refuelling while on a mission) and a more comfortable ride.

"We currently fly the heaviest H135 in the UK with floats, radar, extensive kit – and carrying more people over longer distances. We are literally operating at maximum capacity," he said.

"The H145 D3 will be a force for good – a tremendous enhancement for SCAA's operations."

"The crew is enormously excited about the new aircraft and extremely proud to be the first operating what will be the most advanced aircraft of its type, at the cutting edge of HEMS operations, in the UK."

Helimed 79's crew routinely undertakes lengthy flights to bring hope and healing to those most in need all across Scotland with the longest being to Fair Isle, Shetland and Newcastle.



"It has additional hardware and software to ensure safety and the five rotors instead of four produce a much smoother flight. Coupled with the cabin layout allowing doctors and paramedics easier access to the patient, it will make for a vastly improved patient environment and experience."

"The new aircraft is a more capable performer for this type of undertaking."

Both Helimed 79 base pilots are experienced in flying H145s but will undertake refamiliarisation training and licence renewal over the summer in readiness for SCAA's new life-saving aircraft launching.

Night Vision Imaging System (NVIS)



The new H145 D3 will be fitted with advanced night vision capabilities – a system already introduced at our Perth-based Helimed 76 this winter as part of our enhancements programme and our ambition that no one in Scotland should die because help can't reach them in time.

While SCAA could always night fly, we were unable to land when it was dark at unsurveyed sites. This meant we could not attend an accident or medical emergency when we couldn't see the ground and surrounding potential dangers.

Thanks to your ongoing support, our Perth crew is now fully NVIS trained and equipped with the ability to respond to emergencies wherever they occur in Scotland.



So how does it work?

The pilot and paramedics each wear a set of Night Vision Goggles (NVGs). They are attached to the helmet and can be rotated up or down depending on when they are needed. A battery pack is attached with Velcro to the back of the helmet, which powers the goggles via a lead over the top of the helmet.

The NVGs amplify the available light, whether that be from urban areas, stars, or the moon, and provide a green picture of the view down the tubes. This allows the pilot and paramedics to see obstructions on the ground at landing sites or in transit that they normally wouldn't see with the naked eye.

In addition to the NVGs, the helicopter is equipped with additional powerful lights and a large searchlight. The beam of the searchlight allows the crew to safely highlight any obstructions and helps them to ensure the safety of the landing site.

The combination of the NVGs and additional lighting is what allows us to safely land at sites to attend medical and trauma incidents across Scotland by night.



“WHAT IF SCAA HADN’T BEEN THERE THAT DAY?”



Harris being rescued

“I felt my leg break as it smashed off the rock. As I plunged headfirst into the deep water, I worried I would never walk again.”

Harris leapt from the rocky outcrop on the River Feshie near Aviemore after a day’s white-water tubing with his family. He should have cleared the rocks easily as he plunged into the deep water, but a cliff edge stumble saw him crash into the jagged rockface on the way down.

“I knew instantly that I was in trouble as I hit the water,” he said. “I fought my way to the surface and shouted – ‘help, my leg, it’s snapped, it’s snapped’.”

Family members, instructors and other bystanders on the bank had seen the accident unfold and witnessed the sickening crunch as Harris impacted against the rocks, immediately rushing to help the injured swimmer and calling 999.

“People jumped into the water to help support me and pull me to the side of the pool, but the sides were too steep to get me out. I was woozy and clammy and just wanted to drift off to sleep but people at my side were urging me to stay awake.

“I knew that my leg was smashed but could feel no pain. I was terrified I might never walk again.”

A multi-service response was quickly on scene, involving Scottish Fire and Rescue Service water rescue experts, Scottish Ambulance Service,

Mountain Rescue and HM Coastguard. And the need for speed saw Scotland’s Charity Air Ambulance (SCAA) scrambled with a specialist doctor-led trauma team.

“There seemed to be dozens of emergency service workers, all trying to find a way to get me out of the water without causing me serious harm,” recalled Harris. “I was in a wetsuit, but it felt like I had an extra leg joint halfway down my shin.”

Rescue teams waded in with medics giving Harris pain relief, but cutting into his wetsuit revealed a bleeding open fracture. Concern for Harris then included infection. Blood flow to his foot was now compromised. They had to get him out of the water and into hospital care – fast.

“I had been floated on to a rescue raft and my leg put into a splint,” explained Harris, “but there seemed no way out of the water.”

With steep rocky banks on either side and rapids downstream, rescuers had identified a possible exit downstream, and Harris was floated to the spot where others joined in the effort of hoisting him up a two-foot slope on to a stretcher.



Harris being rescued

Meanwhile, SCAA had landed at the adjacent glider club airfield, allowing doctors and paramedics to reach Harris as he was brought out of the water.

“I was told the air ambulance was coming and I felt a huge sense of relief when SCAA arrived,” he said. “They bring such reassurance and comfort and a sense that everything will be OK.”

Plenty of willing hands helped stretcher Harris through steep undergrowth to a waiting road ambulance on the forest track for the quick transfer to the helicopter waiting just minutes away.

“I was pretty out of it by then on painkillers but not so much that I didn’t realise the difference SCAA was making,” said Harris. “I had heard the chatter about infection and blood flow and, as I discovered later from the hospital doctors, SCAA’s speed and efficiency probably helped save my leg.”

At every stage, rescuers had safeguarded the nerves in Harris’s leg – stabilising the limb and ensuring he reached hospital as quickly as possible.

“If the nerve had severed or the journey had taken hours by road, I could have had irreversible damage – perhaps even had to have my foot or lower leg amputated,” he said. “I truly believe that without the care everyone showed at every stage – but primarily the doctor and paramedic team with SCAA and the speed of their airlift – I would have faced a very different outcome.”

SCAA turned what would have been a two-and-a-half-hour road journey into a 35-minute helicopter flight to ensure Harris received vital intravenous antibiotics and limb-saving surgery at Aberdeen’s Major Trauma Centre in the fastest possible time.

Following two operations, the insertion of a rod into his tibia, stitches and skin grafts, Harris is expected to make a full recovery with full mobility in his injured leg.

“It’s been a lengthy process, but the prognosis is great,” he said. “But I often think when I’m visited by the night terrors – what if?

“What if SCAA and their expert crew hadn’t been there that day? I sometimes torture myself with that thought and I vow to do something in the future to raise funds and support the charity that was so crucial to my rescue. I want to help ensure SCAA is there for the next person and gives them the same care and opportunity to make a full recovery.

“SCAA is an invaluable service. I really don’t know what I would have done without them. It would have been a truly isolating and even scarier experience without them by my side during what was undoubtedly the most difficult time of my life.”



Harris is transferred into the air ambulance

SIGN UP FOR A 2025 CHALLENGE



SCAN HERE FOR MORE INFO AND TO REGISTER

Fundraising events are always popular and with a host of challenges to suit all fitness levels, there's plenty of reasons to embrace one of the events below.

Not only will you be supporting and raising funds for SCAA, but you can also stay motivated to keep fit and create lasting memories.

SCAA Events Officer, Caryn Whitelaw, said: "Fundraising isn't just about collecting money;

it's about creating opportunities for individuals and communities to come together and support a cause they believe in.

"These events serve as a platform for building relationships, raising awareness, and encouraging a sense of community."

TO SIGN UP TO AN EVENT IN AID OF SCAA, PLEASE EMAIL OUR EVENTS OFFICER, CARYN, AT: C.WHITELAW@SCAA.ORG.UK



KILTWALKS

Sunday 1 June – Aberdeen
Sunday 17 August – Dundee
Sunday 14 September – Edinburgh

Support SCAA as you don tartan and head around the city for a colourful walk. Pick a city and choose one of three distances: 3, 14 or 23 miles.



RIDE THE NORTH

Saturday 30 August

Could you cycle 150km (93 miles) or 110km (68 miles) for SCAA? A celebration of cycling in Scotland that attracts cyclists of all abilities, it starts and ends at Glamis Castle and is a non-timed, non-competitive event with a fantastic atmosphere.



TOUGH MUDDER

Saturday 7 June

Join the craziness that is Tough Mudder at Hopetoun Estate, South Queensferry. Prepare for plenty of mud, sweat and tears either solo or with a team as you test your limits and conquer epic obstacles.



CREATE YOUR OWN FUNDRAISER

If none of these challenges take your fancy, then why not create your own fundraiser for SCAA? Whether it's hosting a community quiz, competition, concert, or even a swim, abseil or golf challenge – the options are endless.

BREW FOR THE CREW



Host a Brew For The Crew event in your workplace or with friends this year in support of Operation Skyward – our project to launch the UK's most advanced air ambulance of its kind in the UK.

Our air ambulances and their crew can often make the difference between life and death for someone in desperate need of help. Our charity will need to raise an extra £2 million every year to provide the people of Scotland with this advanced emergency resource. Just by sharing a cup of tea (or coffee!) with friends and family, you can help us raise vital awareness and support.



TO GET YOUR BREW FOR THE CREW FUNDRAISING PACK, SEARCH FOR "SCAA BREW FOR THE CREW", OR JUST SCAN HERE.



SKYWARD CHALLENGE FOR SCHOOLS

We're asking Scottish primary schools to help us launch our new air ambulance with the Skyward Challenge. Five lucky schools from around Scotland will win a visit from our new H145 helicopter in September before it goes into service, saving lives across the country.

To win this amazing experience, we're challenging primary school pupils to do 145 laps of their playground or local park while raising vital funds to help us launch our most advanced air ambulance helicopter. Pupils can take on the whole challenge individually or classes can work together to achieve the target. Runner-up prizes include a Q&A session with a member of SCAA's crew!

We can only improve our life-saving service with the support of the people of Scotland, and we hope our Skyward Challenge will help children all over the country better understand the importance of our work.



THANK YOU!

Thank you for continuing to support Scotland's Charity Air Ambulance. Whether you donate, volunteer or play our lottery – we couldn't keep flying and saving lives without you.

SHARE YOUR SCAA STORY

Has SCAA ever been there for you or a loved one?

Scotland's Charity Air Ambulance has responded to thousands of call outs all over the country. Sharing patient stories helps us to raise awareness and support for our vital work. If you've had a personal experience of being airlifted by SCAA, or if we were there when a loved one needed help, we'd love to hear from you.



PLEASE GET IN TOUCH AT
COMMUNICATIONS@SCAA.ORG.UK
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YOU CAN DONATE TO SCAA:

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- By phone on **0300 123 1111**
- By post to:
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