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3rd July 2026
Internal Reference: 260535
Email:

Dear ,

Thank you for your request for information, which we received on **28/05/2026**. We have considered your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. **Please ensure you quote the Internal Reference number above in any future correspondence.**

Please accept the Trust's apologies for the delay and inconvenience you have experienced regarding your FOIA request.

Your Request and our Formal Response

I am conducting research into ambulance fleet composition and the loading systems used by NHS ambulance trusts across the UK. Specifically, I am seeking information relating to fleet size and vehicle types, loading system technology currently deployed across emergency and patient transport vehicles, procurement plans and vehicle replacement schedules, and relevant governance and staff safety policies relating to loading systems.

The detailed questions accompanying this request are set out in the attached document. They have been structured to avoid any commercially sensitive information, and I do not seek details of specific supplier contracts, pricing, or procurement negotiations.

B1 — Fleet Size & Composition

1 Fleet Size

As at 1 April 2026 (or the most recent date for which data is held), what is the total number of operational vehicles in your Trust's fleet? Please break down by the following categories:



a) Double-crewed emergency ambulances (A&E)

A total of 415.

b) Rapid Response Vehicles (RRV / solo responders)

A total of 105.

c) Patient Transport Service (PTS) vehicles

A total of 0. The Trust does not currently provide the Patient Transport Service (PTS) contract.

d) Hazardous Area Response Team (HART) vehicles e)

A total of 20.

e) Other specialist vehicles (e.g. Tactical Response Units, mass casualty, bariatric)

A total of 24.

f) Total fleet (all vehicle types)

A total of 564.

2 Replacement Cycle

What is your Trust's current target replacement cycle (in years) for:

a) Double-crewed emergency ambulances

The current target replacement cycle is 5 years.

b) PTS vehicles

This is not applicable to the Trust, as the Trust does not currently provide the Patient Transport Service (PTS) contract.

c) RRVs If no formal cycle is set, please indicate the typical operational life used for planning purposes.

The current target replacement cycle is 5 years.

3 Fleet by Loading System





Of your current operational emergency ambulance fleet (double-crewed A&E vehicles), how many are fitted with each of the following rear patient-loading systems?

a) Powered ramp (e.g. motorised fold-down/wedge ramp)

A total of 234.

b) Self-loading powered stretcher system (e.g. Stryker PowerLoad or equivalent)

A total of 0.

c) Hydraulic tail lift

A total of 181.

d) Manual ramp or no powered loading system

A total of 0.

e) Other (please describe) Please express as a count and, if convenient, as a percentage of the emergency fleet.

A total of 0.

4 PTS & Specialist Fleet Loading Systems

Using the same loading system categories as Question 4, please provide the equivalent breakdown for:

a) Your PTS vehicle fleet

This is not applicable to the Trust, as the Trust does not currently provide the Patient Transport Service (PTS) contract.

b) Your HART or other specialist vehicle fleet (if applicable)

- Tail lift – 7
- Wedge ramp – 3
- Manual bi folding ramp - 5

B2 — Procurement Volumes

5 New Vehicles Received —2024, 2025 and 2026





How many new ambulance vehicles did your Trust receive (take delivery of) in year ended 31 March 2024, 2025 and 2026?

a) Double-crewed emergency ambulances

- Ended 31 March 2024 - 57
- Ended 31 March 2025 - 57
- Ended 31 March 2026 - 92

b) PTS vehicles

A total of 0. The Trust does not currently provide the Patient Transport Service (PTS) contract.

c) RRVs

A total of 0.

d) All other vehicle types

- Ended 31 March 2024 - 8
- Ended 31 March 2025 - 0
- Ended 31 March 2026 - 20

For each category, how many were fitted with:

(i) a powered ramp

A total of 206.

(ii) a self-loading powered stretcher system

A total of 0.

(iii) a tail lift

A total of 0.

(iv) other/none?

A total of 0.

6 Forecast —2027

Using the same format as Question 5, please provide your Trust's current forecast for new vehicle receipts in calendar year 2027. Please indicate whether this is based on





- (a) a confirmed procurement order
- (b) an approved capital plan
- (c) an outline/indicative plan.

60 Double-Crewed Ambulance (DCAs) confirmed procurement order.

7 Five-Year Capital Plan

Does your Trust have an approved capital plan or fleet strategy that covers ambulance vehicle procurement for the period 2027–2031? If yes:

The Trust has an approved plan for Double-Crewed Ambulance (DCAs) covering the next 4 financial years.

a) What is the total planned vehicle volume over this period (all types combined)? Please provide split by vehicle type and year if available.

Financial Year	ICE	BEV
26/27	60	10
27/28	47	20
28/29	35	36
29/30	18	52

b) Does the plan specify a preferred or mandated loading system type for new vehicles?

No.

c) If (b) is yes, what is the specified loading system, and does it differ between the emergency and PTS fleets?

The Trust does not currently provide the Patient Transport Service (PTS) contract and does not currently have PTS vehicles; the Trust's fleet comprises Double-Crewed Ambulances (DCAs).

B3 — Loading System Policy & Strategy

8 Current Policy



Saving Lives,
 Serving Our Communities

Chair: Michael Whitehouse Interim CEO: Jen Allan



Does your Trust have a formal policy, strategy document, or recorded board-level decision regarding the type of patient-loading system to be fitted to new emergency ambulances? If yes:

- a) What is the policy?
- b) When was it adopted or last reviewed?
- c) Please provide a copy or summary of the relevant section of the policy document and an explanation of why this is the preferred policy.

The Trust does not have a formal policy, strategy document, or recorded board-level decision regarding the type of patient-loading system to be fitted to new emergency ambulances.

9 Future Loading System Strategy

Looking ahead to the next 1–5 years (2027–2031), does your Trust have a recorded plan, strategy, or board-level preference for the loading system type to be fitted to:

- a) New emergency ambulances?

No.

b) New PTS vehicles? Options to indicate: Powered ramp / Self-loading powered stretcher / Tail lift / Mixed / No preference recorded / Decision pending. [Supplier names and contract details are not requested.] Please provide an explanation of why this is the preferred strategy.

The Trust does not currently provide the Patient Transport Service (PTS) contract and does not operate PTS vehicles.

10 EV Fleet Strategy

Does your Trust have a recorded plan or target for the electrification (full EV or hybrid) of its ambulance fleet?

- a) If yes, what proportion of new vehicle deliveries in years ended 3/2026 and 3/2027 are planned to be full EV or hybrid?

3/2026 = 5 EV Double-Crewed Ambulance (DCAs).

3/2027 = 10 EV Double-Crewed Ambulance (DCAs).



b) Has loading system compatibility with EV platforms (e.g. weight constraints, power supply) been identified as a factor in vehicle specification decisions?

Due to weight restrictions, a tail lift is not a viable option. In addition, because the batteries are located within the vehicle floor, it is not possible to install a ramp integrated into the floor structure. As a result, we have opted for a powered stretcher solution on the first five vehicles procured.'

B4 — Patient Transport Service & Specialist Vehicles

11 WAV / Wheelchair-Accessible Vehicles

Does your Trust operate any wheelchair-accessible vehicles (WAVs) — vehicles in which patients remain in their wheelchair during transport? If yes, how many, and what access system is fitted (ramp, tail lift, level-access, other)?

None.

B5 — Loading System Maintenance & Compliance

12 Loading System Defects / Out-of-Service

In each of the last three complete financial years (2022/23, 2023/24, 2024/25), how many vehicles were recorded as taken out of service, or had operational availability reduced, specifically due to a fault or maintenance requirement related to the patient-loading system (ramp, tail lift, or stretcher loader)? Please provide aggregate annual totals — not vehicle registration numbers or supplier identities.

Years	2022	2023	2024	2025	Grand Total
Job Description					
Ramp and Winch Check	165	323	394	128	1010
Tail Lift Service & Weight Test	464	482	477	99	1522
Tail lift Defect	784	1165	852	289	3090
Grand Total	1413	1970	1723	516	5622

13 Loading System Incidents





Has your Trust recorded any patient safety incidents or near-misses in which the patient-loading system (ramp, tail lift, or stretcher loader) was identified as a contributing factor in the last three financial years (2022/23, 2023/24, 2024/25)? If yes, how many incidents were recorded in each year? [Details of individual incidents or patient information are not requested.]

Please refer to the table below. The Trust confirms that it holds part of the information requested. However, intermittent issues with Datix during 2024 have affected the availability of some records, and as a result, part of the requested information is not retrievable.

The Trust can confirm that this information exists. However, where an output represents fewer than 5 individuals or incidents in the period requested, we have not provided exact figures. This practice is known as data blurring, which serves to mitigate against the risk of possible re-identification of individual data subjects via data recombination (sometimes referred to as jigsawing). This risk is assessed in accordance with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) Anonymisation Code of Practice.

Year	Reported incidents	Harm reported
2022/2023	Less than 5	
	Less than 5	Low (Minimal harm caused)
2023-2024	Less than 5	
	Less than 5	Low (Minimal harm caused)
	Less than 5	(No harm caused)
2024-2025	19	
	10	(No harm caused)
	5	Low (Minimal harm caused)
	Less than 5	

B6 — Governance & Procurement Framework

14 Procurement Route

For the procurement of new ambulance vehicles and their loading systems, which of the following procurement routes does your Trust use? (Please tick all that apply.)





- a) NHS England national framework
- b) NHS Shared Business Services / Collaborative procurement
- c) Own trust procurement exercise (above OJEU/Procurement Act threshold) d) Own trust procurement exercise (below threshold / direct award)
- e) Other (please describe) For questions 6–9, which route applied to the vehicles procured in each year?

The Trust uses the NHS England national framework for the procurement of new ambulance vehicles and their loading systems.

15 Vehicle Specification Decision-Making

Who within your Trust is responsible for approving the vehicle loading system specification for new ambulance procurements (e.g. Fleet Director, Medical Director, Estates, Procurement)? Is this decision subject to formal Trust Board approval or delegated authority?

The Trust can confirm that vehicle loading system specifications for new ambulance procurements are considered through the relevant internal governance and fleet specification arrangements, including the Vehicle User Group chaired by the Head of Fleet. Decisions are made in accordance with delegated authority and the applicable procurement framework.

The Trust does not consider it appropriate to disclose the names of individual colleagues, or to identify specific internal colleagues or teams responsible for procurement decision-making beyond this level of detail. This is because procurement responsibilities form part of the Trust's internal operational and commercial governance arrangements, and disclosure could increase the risk of direct contact, undue influence, or interference with procurement activity.

Next steps

Some information held by the Trust is routinely published on our [website](#) and may be of assistance.

If you are dissatisfied with the Trust's response to your request, you have the right to ask for an internal review.





Requests for an internal review should be submitted within **40 working days** of the date of this response and should be sent to:

Richard Banks, Head of Corporate Governance at FOI@secamb.nhs.uk

The internal review will be conducted by an individual who was not directly involved in handling your original request, ordinarily the Trust's Data Protection Officer. We aim to complete internal reviews within **20 working days** of receipt.

If you remain dissatisfied following the outcome of the internal review, you may complain to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). The ICO generally expects complaints to be raised promptly following the completion of an internal review.

The easiest way to raise a complaint is via the ICO's website:

www.ico.org.uk/foicomplaints

Alternatively, you may write to:
Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
SK9 5AF

Yours sincerely,

Corporate Governance Team

South East Coast Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust

