



*“On Tuesday, power was restored to the surgery. The phones started ringing again. Some patients were affronted that we had not answered the day before. Others were grateful. Most seemed barely to notice our interruption, so caught up were they in their own problems.”*

### REFERENCES

1. CharliesNames. Name Arwen. Origin, meaning, pronunciation & popularity of the name Arwen. <https://charlies-names.com/en/arwen> (accessed 8 Dec 2021).
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## Arwen

According to *CharliesNames*, Arwen is a name of Welsh origin meaning ‘good’ or ‘fair’ but is better known as a character in *The Lord of the Rings* by JRR Tolkien. There, Arwen means in the elvish language, Sindarin, ‘noble maiden’.<sup>1</sup> How this came to be the name of the first storm of this season is not clear though since the criteria by which storm names are chosen are not published.<sup>2</sup> Anyway, none of those meanings rang true when it hit on a Friday night.

By early evening, the lights had flickered ominously and then failed. With the progressive encouragement to rely more on electricity and not fossil fuels, most households had nothing to fall back on. No light, no heat. For some, no water either.

The wind was responsible, obviously. It was force twelve on the Beaufort scale and yet that hardly does it justice either: windspeeds were way above the 64 knots needed for Arwen to qualify as a hurricane. Roofs and chimneys scattered but it was the falling trees that did most of the damage, and there were a lot of those.

It took a day just to clear a way to the village about a quarter of a mile away.

By Monday, quite a lot of homes had power restored but many remained without. In some of the small towns and villages, local leadership rallied community efforts around a central point — a pub or village hall. In others, that spark was missing.

Without power, there is not a lot that works. All the phones, even mobiles, became useless. My junior colleagues decided to go to the pub. Seeing patients there was difficult but the parish council had secured a generator: it was focal and warm.

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Our staff team all continue to turn up though some have endured a week without power or heat by now. They continue to conjure workarounds to keep our service

functioning. When we were asked for a list of vulnerable patients still without power so someone could ring them, we politely declined: few have an old enough phone and anyway we’d have a chat with the team at the pub if there was someone we were worried about.

Meantime, Omicron emerged as a national panic point, with the government suddenly extending and accelerating the COVID-19 booster programme. We had only just been asked whether we wished to booster the 40 year olds. It was a vexed debate — doing the right thing versus where to draw the line to protect ourselves and our teams —but we had said yes. And then immediately, here was force twelve mission-creep.

Integration is what has worked thus far — all those leadership efforts combining to make a whole greater than the sum of its parts. Yet top-down diktat and disparate competing providers undermine the stated integrationist agenda: capacity matters, yes, but coherence matters at least as much.

Integration is also what has worked in the wake of the storm. There too the leadership that has facilitated it has often come from surprising sources. From grassroots or the ground up. Just doing the right thing, enabling others to follow.

Perhaps that is the way in which the naming of Arwen makes sense: not in its destructive adversity, but rather in creating the disruptive chaos that helps people find the good in themselves.

Amazing as its delivery has been, it is a pity that the vaccine programme has been made to operate in such parallel conditions.

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