

**REFUGEE RESCUE
TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT
1 APRIL 2023 TO 31 MARCH 2024**



The trustees present their report and the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 March 2024.

Reference and administrative details

Registered charity name: Refugee Rescue Registered charity number:

Charity Commission Number 105156 & HMRC Number NI00583

Charity's principal address: 58 Leyland Meadows, Ballycastle, BT54 6JX

The trustees

The following trustees served the charity during the year;

Mr. Paul Kerrigan

Mr. Jamie Bourke

Mr. Richie Heard

Mr. Joby Fox

Structure, Governance, and Management

Refugee Rescue is governed by a formally adopted constitution. The charity is managed by a Board of Trustees who meet regularly to oversee the organisation's strategic direction, operations, and compliance.

The trustees are responsible for ensuring that the charity adheres to its legal obligations under the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008 and continues to serve its beneficiaries effectively.

Objectives and Activities

The principal objective of the charity is to help alleviate the relief of human suffering and the saving of lives of refugees and displaced people who are affected by war, conflict or other crisis by providing, or assisting in the provision of sea rescue and the relief of refugees in need by providing, or assisting in the provision of shelter and humanitarian support and by any other charitable means as the trustees see fit.

The trustees have taken instruction on the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008. They have considered in particular the obligations imposed under the public benefits test and can confirm that the charity meets the criteria set down therein. Refugee Rescue became registered with The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland on 4 April 2016.

Achievements and Performance

In 2023–2024, Refugee Rescue delivered a year of intense operational activity, marked by significant humanitarian interventions, ongoing vessel maintenance, expanded public engagement, and continued partnership working. Despite increased political hostility and legal restrictions targeting civil search and rescue (SAR) operations in the Central Mediterranean, the charity remained steadfast in its commitment to saving lives at sea. Central to this mission was Mo Chara, our fast rescue rigid-hulled inflatable boat (RHIB), which was deployed from the SEA-EYE 4 across five major SAR missions in partnership with German NGO Sea-Eye.

The operational year began with a critical refit and maintenance phase for Mo Chara, carried out with the support of a dedicated team of volunteers and part-time technical specialists. In April 2023, work included engine servicing, antenna repairs, radar and radio testing, hatch replacements, and structural assessments. Following successful sea trials, Mo Chara was declared mission ready. This work was made possible through unrestricted voluntary donations received earlier in the year and marked a turning point after a financially constrained period in which fieldwork had been scaled back.

Additional shipyard work continued into late April as both Mo Chara and the SEA-EYE 4 underwent further maintenance. To enable comprehensive repairs, the vessels were dry-docked and surveyed, ensuring full accessibility for structural improvements and system checks. This period also saw the integration of new personnel into the Refugee Rescue team, including Richard Green, a maintenance assistant with a maritime background and NHS engineering experience, who undertook remote support from the UK and fieldwork on location.

As SEA-EYE 4 was relaunched in early May, final preparations for deployment resumed. Safety equipment was renewed, crew uniforms and gear replenished, and additional parts installed on Mo Chara to ensure operational resilience. Training sessions began in confined harbour settings and continued into open sea operations, preparing RHIB crews for high-risk rescues in volatile waters. Over the course of the year, several volunteers joined our engineering and maintenance team, including Guillem and Joan, both of whom made valuable contributions to ensuring Mo Chara's continual readiness.

Between May and March, Refugee Rescue participated in five major SAR missions. These operations occurred in some of the world's most dangerous maritime migration corridors — between Libya, Malta, Lampedusa, and southern Italy — where conditions for people in distress are often fatal. Across these missions, the crew of Mo Chara, in cooperation with Sea-Eye and German Doctors, directly contributed to the rescue of over 350 individuals, including children, unaccompanied minors, and survivors suffering from fuel poisoning, dehydration, trauma, and exposure.

One of the year's earliest missions resulted in the rescue of 17 people in calm seas, followed two days later by a second rescue of 32 more individuals in deteriorating weather conditions. All 49 survivors were brought to safety in the Italian port of Ortona. However, despite the professionalism and life-saving success of this mission, the SEA-EYE 4 was detained by Italian authorities for conducting a second rescue — a breach of new legislation which prohibits multiple rescues per deployment, a policy that fundamentally contradicts international maritime law and the duty to rescue.

This pattern of obstruction and criminalisation of SAR activities repeated throughout the year. On multiple occasions, Mo Chara and the SEA-EYE 4 were subjected to state interference, including threats from Libyan Coastguard vessels funded by the European Union. During one mission, our RHIB teams were aggressively charged by a Libyan patrol boat after attempting to render assistance to a boat in distress. On another, crews were forced to flee as the Libyan Coastguard captured the people before they could be rescued, preventing a humanitarian intervention.

Nevertheless, the teams continued their mission. Refugee Rescue and Sea-Eye completed operations that saved 114 people from three separate vessels, 106 individuals including 45 minors over Christmas, and 144 people during one of the final deployments of the year — some of whom had been at sea for up to five days. The onboard medical team, provided by German Doctors, was instrumental in saving the lives of unconscious survivors, administering critical fuel poisoning treatment in high-pressure scenarios, and facilitating emergency airlifts in extreme weather.

Alongside field operations, Refugee Rescue continued to engage in strategic communications and public outreach. In partnership with children's author and illustrator Kate Rafiq, the charity collaborated on *We Are Here* — a book that sensitively explores displacement through the eyes of a child. The publication was launched as part of Refugee Week 2023, with events held in Birmingham (hosted by Celebrating Sanctuary) and Belfast (in partnership with Belfast Exposed). Charity representatives, including Alex McMaster, led readings and presentations, further strengthening public awareness and encouraging fundraising support.

Over the course of the year, the charity launched targeted appeals to raise funds for equipment, including protective clothing, VHF radios, and new safety systems. Social media channels were used to share mission updates, training videos, and urgent funding needs. These appeals helped the organisation maintain transparency with supporters and generated contributions to enable maintenance and operations ahead of our next drydock period scheduled for January 2024.

Despite the continued success of our humanitarian efforts, the challenges Refugee Rescue faces are becoming more acute. In 2023 alone, over 2,000 people are estimated to have drowned or gone missing in the Central Mediterranean. In this climate, European policy increasingly prioritises deterrence and criminalisation over protection and rescue. Refugee Rescue continues to advocate for adherence to international maritime law and reaffirms its commitment to never turning away from people in distress at sea.

As 2023–2024 concluded, Mo Chara remains fully operational and has already begun missions in 2024. The team continues to train, deploy, and respond, even during festive periods such as Christmas and New Year. We are deeply grateful to our donors, volunteers, partners, and supporters who made this year possible — enabling Refugee Rescue to continue doing what it was founded to do: save lives at sea.

Financial Review

From 2019–2020 to 2022–2023, Refugee Rescue experienced a sustained decline in income, reflecting the cessation of grant funding and a reduction in voluntary donations. Total income fell from £186,317.00 in 2019–2020 to £57,895.92 in 2020–2021, and then to £23,311.47 in both 2021–2022 and 2022–2023 — an overall reduction of 88% compared to 2020 levels.

Expenditure followed a similar trajectory, though the rate of reduction was less severe. Spending fell from £162,719.49 in 2019–2020 to £61,997.84 in 2020–2021, and then to £41,211.66 in 2021–2022, remaining at the same level in 2022–2023. These reductions reflect the charity’s strategic scaling back of activity in response to reduced income. However, the fall in income outpaced cost reductions, resulting in a surplus of £23,597.51 in 2019–2020, followed by a deficit of £4,101.92 in 2020–2021, and significant shortfalls of £17,900.19 in both 2021–2022 and 2022–2023.

These sustained deficits over two consecutive years placed the charity under financial pressure and required careful management to ensure that core operations could continue. Expenditure in 2022–2023 totaled £41,211.66, comprising £1,321.76 in fundraising costs and £39,889.90 on charitable activities. Income for the year was £23,311.47 — all of which was unrestricted. No restricted funds or grant income were received during the year.

The resulting net deficit of £17,900.19 reduced the charity’s available reserves significantly. Unrestricted funds brought forward at the start of the year (1 April 2022) stood at £20,713.45. By year-end (31 March 2023), reserves had fallen to £2,813.26, highlighting the urgency of renewed fundraising and donor engagement to support the charity’s continued humanitarian operations.

In 2023–2024, the charity experienced a modest recovery in income, with voluntary donations and reimbursements totaling £20,841.38. Although this represents a slight increase from the previous two years, it remains well below pre-2021 levels. Expenditure increased to £33,310.27, reflecting a necessary reinvestment in operations, including £26,892.41 in wages related to SAR craft maintenance and specialist training. As with the previous year, no grant income or restricted funds were received.

The charity recorded a net deficit of £12,468.89 for the year. However, due to a relatively strong opening balance of £27,371.33, it closed the year with £14,902.44 in unrestricted funds. While this position demonstrates short-term financial stability, the trustees remain mindful of the need to secure additional funding to support future operations and protect the organisation’s ability to respond to humanitarian crises. The charity continues to operate on a going concern basis and is actively pursuing strategic funding opportunities to support long-term resilience.

Related Party Transactions

During the accounting period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024, two trustees received a combined total of £16,900.00 for the provision of professional services to the charity. These services related specifically to the technical maintenance of the charity’s Atlantic 75 Search and Rescue (SAR) craft and the delivery of specialist training required for operational readiness.

Both trustees are volunteer members of the RNLI with extensive operational knowledge of the Atlantic 75 vessel and were engaged due to the highly specialised nature of the services provided. The Board of Trustees is satisfied that these services could not have been sourced externally without compromising operational continuity or safety standards.

All payments were made in accordance with the charity's governing document and conflict of interest policy. The trustees in question did not take part in any decision-making related to their own remuneration.

Trustee Reimbursements

During the financial year ending 31 March 2024, a total of £1,009.82 was reimbursed to trustees in respect of out-of-pocket expenses incurred during the course of their duties. These expenses related specifically to travel and accommodation while undertaking activities on behalf of the charity. No trustee received remuneration or any other benefit for their role as a trustee, other than professional services disclosed separately under Related Party Transactions.

Statement of Compliance

In setting our objectives and planning our activities for the year, the trustees have given careful consideration to the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland's guidance on public benefit to ensure that the activities have helped to achieve the charity's purposes and provide a benefit to beneficiaries.

Responsibilities of the Trustees

The Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008 requires the Trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity at the end of the year and of the incoming and outgoing resources for the year then ended.

In preparing those financial statements, the Trustees are required to select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently, making judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent. The Trustees must also prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue its activities.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008 and applicable accounting standards. The Trustees are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Trustees' approval of financial accounts

I confirm that:

- (i) To the best of my knowledge and belief, the accounting records reflect all the transactions entered into by the charity in the years 2023 and 2024¹.

Signed on behalf of the Trustees.

PAUL KERRIGAN

Date: Monday, April 21, 2025

Name: Paul Kerrigan

Position: Treasurer

¹ These accounts were ratified by the Board of Trustees via email communication, in accordance with the provisions of the charity's governing document permitting decisions by written resolution. Unanimous approval was recorded and a quorum of trustees participated in the decision.

Independent examiner's report to the charity trustees of Refugee Rescue.

I report on the accounts of the Group for the year ended 31st March 2024, which are set out in this report.

Respective responsibilities of charity trustees and examiner

As the charity's trustees you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008.

It is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 65 of the Charities Act
- follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Commission under section 65(9)(b) of the Charities Act
- state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent examiner's report

I have examined your charity accounts as required under section 65 of the Charities Act and my examination was carried out in accordance with the general Directions given by the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland under section 65(9)(b) of the Charities Act.

My examination included a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also included consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts and seeking explanations from you as charity trustees concerning any such matters. My role is to state whether any material matters have come to my attention giving me cause to believe:

1. That accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 63 of the Charities Act
2. That the accounts do not accord with those accounting records
3. That the accounts do not comply with the accounting requirements of the Charities Act
4. That there is further information needed for a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination and have no concerns in respect of the matters (1) to (4) listed above and, in connection with following the Directions of the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland, I have found no matters that require drawing to your attention.

Signed:

Kennith Cruickshank

Name: KENNITH CRUICKSHANK

Date: Monday, April 21, 2025

1. Accounting policies

Basis of accounting

The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention and in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102).

The charity has adopted FRS 102 Section 1A and has taken advantage of the exemption from preparing a cash flow statement.

The financial statements have been prepared on a going concern basis, which assumes that the charity will continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. The trustees consider this basis to be appropriate.

The charity is a public benefit entity as defined by FRS 102. The financial statements are presented in Sterling, which is the functional currency of the charity.

Fund accounting

The charity has one type of fund for which it is responsible and which require separate disclosure as follows:

Restricted funds:

Donations received which are earmarked by the donor for specific purposes. Such purposes are within the overall aims of the organisation.

Unrestricted funds:

Funds which are expendable at the discretion of the committee in the furtherance of the objects of the charity. In addition, funds may be held in order to finance capital investment and working capital.

Funding received

Funding received is recognised in full in the statement of financial activities in the year in which they are receivable.

Other incoming resources

Incoming resources, including investment income are credited to the statement of financial activities when receivable. Fundraising costs include those costs incurred to facilitate the charities objectives.

Charitable expenditure

Charitable expenditure comprises those costs incurred by the charity in the delivery of its activities and services for its beneficiaries. It includes both costs that can be allocated directly to such activities and those costs of an indirect nature necessary to support them.

Period: 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024

Category	Unrestricted Funds (£)	Total Funds 2023–2024 (£)	Total Funds 2022–2023 (£)
Incoming resources			
Voluntary income	20,841.38	20,841.38	23,311.47
Grants	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total incoming resources	20,841.38	20,841.38	23,311.47
Resources expended			
Costs of generating funds	0.00	0.00	1321.76
Charitable activities	33,310.27	33,310.27	39,889.90
– of which: Wages ²	26,892.41	26,892.41	19,600.00
Total resources expended	33,310.27	33,310.27	41,211.66
Net incoming/outgoing resources for the year	-(12,468.89)	-(12,468.89)	-(17,900.19)
Reconciliation of funds			
Total funds brought forward	27,371.33	27,371.33	20,713.45
Total funds carried forward	14,902.44	14,902.44	2,813.26

The Statement of Financial Activities includes all gains and losses in the year and therefore a statement of total recognised gains and losses has not been prepared. All of the above amounts relate to continuing activities.

² Related Party Transactions

During the year, two trustees were remunerated for the provision of specialist professional services relating to SAR craft maintenance and technical training. These services, totaling £16,900.00, were essential to operational delivery and could not have been sourced externally without compromising safety and continuity. The payments were fully authorised, made in accordance with the charity's governing document and conflict of interest policy, and are further detailed in the notes to the accounts.

	Restricted Funds (£)	Unrestricted Funds (£)	Total Funds 2024 (£)	Total Funds 2023 (£)
2. Voluntary income				
Donations	0.00	20,841.38	20,841.38	23,311.47
Grants	0.00	0.00	0.00	-
	0.00	20,841.38	20,841.38	23,311.47

	Restricted Funds (£)	Unrestricted Funds (£)	Total Funds 2024 (£)	Total Funds 2023 (£)
3. Fundraising costs				
Fundraising Activity	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,321.76

	Restricted Funds (£)	Unrestricted Funds (£)	Total Funds 2024 (£)	Total Funds 2023 (£)
4. Costs of charitable activities by fund type				
Charitable Activities	0.00	33,310.27	33,310.27	39,889.90
Support Costs ³	0.00	728.82	728.82	-

	Restricted Funds (£)	Unrestricted Funds (£)	Total Funds 2024 (£)	Total Funds 2023 (£)
5. Costs of charitable activities by activity type				
Charitable Activities	0.00	33,310.27	33,310.27	39,889.90

6. Employee numbers

The average number of persons employed by the charity during the reporting year amounted to Nil.

7. Unrestricted income funds

	Balance at 1 April (£)	Incoming resources (£)	Outgoing resources (£)	Balance at 31 March 2024 (£)
General Funds	27,371.33	20,841.38	33,310.27	14,902.44

Statement of Assets and Liabilities (2023–2024)

Asset	Cost (£)	Depreciation to Date (£)	Net Book Value (£)
RHIB Boat	15,000.00	7,000.00	8,000.00
Two Outboard Engines	20,000.00	10,000.00	10,000.00
PPE & Safety Equipment	5,000.00	2,500.00	2,500.00
Total Fixed Assets	40,000.00	19,500.00	20,500.00
Current Assets (Cash at Bank)	-	-	14,902.44
Creditors	-	-	-
Net Assets			35,402.44

³ Support costs of £728.82 relate to essential SAR Asset Maintenance software.

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