



THE HIGHLANDS SUPPORT REFUGEES SCOTTISH CHARITY NO. SC047492
Trustees Annual Report From 1 st July, 2024 to 30th June 2025

Trustees' Annual Report

Please find enclosed the annual report together with the financial statements and the independent examiner's report from the 1st July, 2024 to 30th June, 2025 from the Trustees of The Highlands Support Refugees.

Reference & Administrative Information

Charity Name The Highlands Support Refugees Charity No. SC047492

Charity Founding date 7th June, 2017 (THSR existed as a non-incorporated company from early 2016 - 7 th June, 2017)

Charity Address:

James Shewan (Chair)

17 Stratherick Gardens

Inverness

IV2 4LX

Current Trustees:

Secretary filled at present time by interim secretary Anne-Marie Foot. Committee continue to try and recruit a volunteer to take on the role

Lynn Bremner and Clunie Conochie – Joint Treasurers

James Shewan - Chair

Lorna Skinner (became trustee in 2024)

Current Committee/Board Members:

Anne-Marie Foot

Sarah MacRae (stepped down 2024)

James Shewan

Sandra Smith

Lorna Skinner

Lynn Bremner

Kathleen Barry

Andrea MacKenzie

Clunie Conochie

Resignations from committee 2023-2024:

Sarah MacRae (summer 2024)

Anne-Marie Foot voted in by committee as interim Secretary until post is filled at 2024 AGM

*

Structure Governance and Management Constitution

The Highlands Support Refugees is a Scottish Incorporated Charitable Organisation (SCIO). It is governed by its constitution. The charity was granted charitable status by OSCR on 07/06/2017. Appointment of Trustees The Trustees of The Highlands Support Refugees help form the board of the charity and normally meet on a monthly basis. The board may at any time appoint any person to be a charity trustee - by way of a resolution passed by majority vote at a board meeting. Under the constitution, there must be a minimum of four and not more than ten elected trustees.

Management

The trustees are responsible for the strategic direction, decision making and governance of the charity. The trustees are particularly aware of their responsibilities for Health and Safety at depot sites around the Highlands and Islands where donations are collected, sorted and distributed. In addition to Employers and Liability insurance cover, our trustees and volunteers have up-to-date first aid qualifications. As well as Trustees the charity's board is made up of unofficial committee members who help guide and support the charity. Objectives and Activities Charitable purposes. The organisation's purposes are: To provide relief to those affected by the refugee crisis across Europe, the Middle East and the rest of the World. By bringing people together from across the Highlands to provide practical support to combat the refugee crisis and to provide support to refugees re-homed across the Highlands and Islands.

The promotion of religious and racial harmony by promoting awareness of the refugee crisis across the Highlands and changing public perception about refugees. Activities Our main activities include: Collecting donations of clothes, medical materials, food and monetary donations from people and communities across the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. Distributing these donations to Refugee camps across Europe, the Middle East and the rest of the World.

Distributing aid to re-settled refugees in the Highlands and Islands region and helping provide them with household goods. Selling items not suitable for donation at car boot sales and on Ebay. We are often invited to speak to local groups about our ongoing work, experiences in refugee camps, and information regarding the current refugee crisis.

These groups include church and faith groups, primary and secondary schools, Scouts, events organised by the Highland Council, and local political groups. Organising inclusive events in the region to promote refugee solidarity and bring together refugees re-settled in the area. To provide a means for refugees in the region to meet people from the local community and vice versa. Fundraising events to provide finances to fund the charities activities.

Liaising and working with other similar organisations to better distribute aid and establish new links with other refugee camps and areas affected by the refugee crisis. Funding and promoting trips for local members of the community to volunteer at refugee camps abroad. So far we have had 19 THSR volunteers volunteer at refugee camps across Europe. At the time of writing, two volunteers (F&A) have returned to Turkey to volunteer there. This volunteering is carried out by individuals and not as volunteers for THSR. Lobbying government and local councils to re-settle more refugees in the region and help combat and end the refugee crisis in general.

See below AGM for 2025 for update on Charities activities over the last year.

THSR AGM Thursday 15th January, 2026 1800hrs – 1930hrs
Inverness Impact Hub & Zoom

1. Apologies

Anne Marie

2. Attendees

Lorna Skinner, James Shewan, Kathleen Barry, Clunie Conochie, Lynn Bremner, Linda Bruenn, Anna Scott, Andrea, Claire Mackay, Dorothy McDonald, Andrea, Florence

3. Welcomes

Introductions

Need to be out of the Impact Hub no later than 1930

4. Chair Report

THSR's main activities and focus this year include sending smaller shipments of donations to refugee camps across Europe with less of a focus on a few large containers a year.

We have been fundraising through various means but are running out of funds as Clunie will detail in her report and are now in a position where our energies need to go into fundraising over the coming funds so we can start sending shipments again.

We continue to collect donations across the Highlands via drop off points and our depot in Hilton which we rent from the council for free.

We continue to provide aid in form of clothes and other supplies to asylum seekers, their families and other refugees in the Highland area and have been working closely with resettlement officers. And we continue to donate funds to a variety of refugee Action groups and aid groups on the ground to aid with shipment and the collection of provisions.

One big highlight of the year was THSR celebrating its 10th anniversary which was held at Inshes Church Hall in the autumn and involved a number of performances from celebrated refugee artists and musicians from across the region as well as a ceilidh and spread of food. THSR also managed to raise some funds at the event and awards of service were given to Sarah MacRae who stepped down from the committee last year.

Sadly, over the last year across Scotland and the Highland region, we have seen the rise of the far right rallies on our streets and the deliberate spreading of disinformation about asylum seekers and refugees. This has lead THSR to take certain measures to safeguard its volunteers and also social media channels which have been subject to abuse and infiltration.

To counter this THSR have been engaging and working partnership with the Highland Council, Compass Collect, attending Scotland far-right scoping meeting, and the Highland Integration Network to counter the rise in anti immigrant and asylum rhetoric and misinformation. THSR volunteers continues to visit schools to work with children and teach them about asylum seekers and refugee rights and share with them the work we do. We recently developed a partnership with Lochardil Primary school and hope to develop a similar one with Cauldene and have some of their teachers and children attend the depot soon.

Unlike previous years THSR has done little in the way of outreach work directly with asylum seekers due to departure of Hannah and Jude who lead strongly on this. We do recognise that a growing number of volunteers are coming forward and expressing an interest in this area and we will discuss this topic as part of plans for 2026 section.

5. Secretary Report and summary of donations sent 2025 – James to read on behalf Anne Marie who is away on her travels

6.

THSR made four shipments this year:

Two to Calais
Sarajevo

Samos and Ukraine.

We worked with a Dutch charity in getting the last two shipments to their destinations.

In total we shipped approximately 700 boxes of clothes (men, women and children), 120 sleeping bags and 100 rucsacs. In addition we sent tents, sleeping mats, suitcases, holdalls.

We collected a large number of sleeping bags from belladrum in August. These were then washed by volunteers before they were sent to their destination.

As usual, the paperwork for shipments is complex. It is getting more and more so as time progresses. We also had a challenge in getting our last donation of the year to Calais as the two receiving charities had not renewed their import license. This led to delays in sending donations to France.

We made the decision two years ago to stop using the rented containers in Muir of ord. This allowed us to send donations overseas more quickly. However, in order to really make this work, it is proposed that we work closer with our Dutch colleagues. Shipments could still be sent via distribute Aid. But if it's financially advantageous to ship ourselves using a team of volunteers then we should consider this option.

2025 shipments to date: Current tally since 2015 approx. approximately 66 shipments of aid in the form of a van full of boxes, palletised boxes, 20 and 40 ft containers full of aid. To 9 different countries which include France, Ukraine, Greece, Lebanon, Iraq, Turkey, Syria, Serbia, Germany.

6. Treasurer's Report (Clunie) (covers last financial year and current account balance) Overview since last AGM on 13th November 2024

We have been in a very secure financial situation for several years and there is now some change in this. Because of these changes, I have gathered figures from this year end and the two previous ones as I think that may be helpful to see where the changes are occurring.

These comparative figures for our total bank and paypal balances at the end of financial years (30th June) may help to show the picture :

2022-23 : £9,441
2023-24 : £15,269
2024-25 : £6787

Balance on 14/1/2026 : £4,272.58

It should be noted that £3000 of our balance is held in our PayPal account as our agreed reserve. Our working finance is therefore only £1272. This is enough to meet our ongoing costs but not enough to fund another shipment.

The decrease between 30/6/2025 and 14/1/2026 is due to our shipment in December to Calais which cost £2214.30. This shipment was significantly more expensive than others due to it being in December.

In some respects this indicates a very successful year due to the number of shipments we have sent and resettled families we have been able to assist. It is important to note that the decrease in funds does not reflect any unnecessary expenditure. Much has been done to cut expenditure over the last

1-2 years and it is difficult to see how we can do any more to decrease it.

The main issue lies in the drop in our income and fundraising will need to be our focus in 2026.

INCOME:

It is helpful to see these comparative changes in our overall income from these annual returns :

2022-23 : £7755

2023-24 : £12576

2024-25 : £3633

Donations : Generally, our individual donors continue to be very loyal although we have lost two donors with the closure of the Fort William premises and another donor has reduced her payments due to retirement.

Fundraising :

This is the area where there has been a considerable change. This highlights the issue :

2022-23 : £3117

2023-24 : £3886

2024-25 : £490

We have been fortunate to have had very generous supporters who have undertaken various fundraisers for us but in the last year we only received £150 though this. The remaining £340 raised was by selling on Vinted.

This is a matter we need to give serious consideration to.

EXPENDITURE:

Our two main areas of expenditure are :

- (1) the work around our charitable activities, specifically sending shipments of donations to refugees and assistance to refugee families settled in the Highlands
- (2) our premises expenditure

(1) Our charitable activities

Our increased expenditure since last year is due to the increase in shipments we have undertaken and the donation we made to Medical Aid for Palestine.

All our shipments have been through Distribute aid with whom we have a good working relationship. The complications of exporting our donations has resulted in few organisations with the knowledge and licences for us to ship through.

Financial year 2024-25

4 Payments relating directly to charitable activities	
Shipment with Direct Aid to Calais	1,525
Shipment with Direct Aid to France	1,677
Shipment with Direct Aid to Calais	1,732
Shipment with Direct Aid to Sarajevo	1,675
Assistance to refugee families settled in the Highlands	798
Donation to Medical Aid for Palestine	1,400
Total	8,807

Previous years :

2022.23: £12,901 (included two full container shipments to Lebanon and Greece)

2022.24: £2,039

(2) Expenditure on premises/storage :

These are the figures for expenditure on premises:

2022-23 : £5548

2023-24 : £3406

2024-25 : £2814

There has been a further reduction in our running costs and I think it would be difficult for us to reduce these costs any further. The move to British Gas has been extremely cost effect and our bills have continued to be much lower than with the previous supplier.

We have managed to reduce our premises expenditure further by reducing our insurance by over £400 since the accounts of 24-25.

Conclusion :

For several years we have been in a very secure financial position but this is changing. It is not a critical situation as we have a working balance for our ongoing financial needs and continue to hold our reserve of £3000 in our PayPay account. However, for the first time in many years, we do not have the money to finance a shipment without having to fundraise specifically for it. This has implications for the collection of donations and possibly, even, how we would respond to support for any newly arrived resettled families.

There has been a significant drop in income due to the lack of fundraising by our supporters, along with a decline in fundraising by THSR itself. It is difficult to know what has caused the former, possibly support has been directed to other immediate humanitarian situation eg Gaza?

Whatever the causes, our focus for the year 2026 will need to be on fundraising, either by ourselves or by some of our many supporters.

7. Hilton premises – Kathleen

Great group of volunteers working well together

Currently there are 170 boxes currently 80 womens, 50 childrens, + blanket and toiletry

Aban aid continues + inverness mountaineering club

Vinted account

8. Social Media Communications – Lorna

New facebook page. Business page. Messenger button. Shetland volunteer, Lala has been helping us. New page better than old one.

9. Current Committee re-election

Are all Trustees happy to remain Trustees? Invite anyone to become a new Trustee.

All current Trustees are happy to remain in post.

Re-election of Office Bearers

Everyone resigns and are re-elected and proposed by someone and seconded by another person

List of Current Trustees and Office Bearers

James Shewan – Chair proposed by Andrea, and seconded by Clunie

Lorna Skinner – Trustee proposed by Kathleen and seconded by Andrea

Clunie Conochie – Joint treasurer propose treasuter James, seconded by Lynn.

Lynn Bremner – Joint treasurer proposed Claire, Lorna seconds

Anne Marie – Secretary, Propose Andrea, seconded Kathleen

Current Trustees

Lorna Skinner

Clunie Conochie

James Shewan

Lynn Bremner

Committee Members

Clunie Conochie

Andrea Fraser

Lorna Skinner

Lynn Bremner

Kathleen Barry

James Shewan

Anne-Marie Foot