



Roots
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ROOTS ANNUAL REPORT

- 2023 -

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WHAT WE DO

Roots is a french registered association based on the outskirts of Grande Synthe near Dunkirk. The services we provide include access to fresh water, access to showers, information and phone charging, hygiene supplies and camp maintenance.



Since one of the big evictions at the end of 2021 the role of Roots has changed considerably.



That big eviction resulted in people being moved to a site that had no access to running water. We responded to the situation, building water points on site and transporting water to the areas daily since that eviction, so that everyone in the camps had access to water. We've been running water throughout the day, every day ever since.

We now run our Information Hub which is also a covered, heated area , providing Wifi, charging for devices, access to information and games such as dominoes, connect 4, not forgetting football ! We maintain our hygiene and information projects as well, through up to date posters, and careful cleaning of the water points around the camp. As much as we have grown over the last 2 years our original ethos remains the same. Our first and foremost aim is to maintain a standard quality of living for the people in the Grande Synthe camp.

THE CONTEXT

The camp used to be predominantly made up of families, largely from the Middle East, but in the last couple of years, due to the conditions in Calais being so hostile, we have seen a lot more diversity in terms of the demographic of people staying there. The number of people in the area obviously fluctuates considerably, and can be anything between 300 and 1000 people, depending on the time of year and the weather. Everyone here wants to reach the UK for one reason or another. Over the summer of 2023, for example, we found that numbers in the camp were lower because there was a long period where the sea was relatively calm, and so people were able to leave more easily. At the moment there are about 500 people living there to whom we provide services on a daily basis.

Small camp evictions are really common, they can occur from once a week to every other day. These involve police removing tents and belongings from people and clearing the area for an extended period of time, but usually people are able to return to the area later the same day. The evictions are more commonly involving bringing in machines to turn up the ground of the previous camp to make it uninhabitable. Evictions are the product of the “hostile environment” policy employed by governments on both sides of the Channel. They are used in an attempt to make people feel unsettled, both physically and mentally, and to stop people from making a stable life and a home where they are. They are inefficient and wasteful in every regard, and are distressing to witness, let alone be a part of.

Our Growth

A few years ago, Roots was a much smaller organisation that primarily focused on recycling batteries into charging packs which were distributed by other organisations to people who needed them. We also took care of maintaining the camp area as a living space, including cleaning water points and removing litter, as well as conducting basic repairs on broken facilities there. Our work has always been environmentally influenced. Climate action is everyone’s responsibility, and so waste, and how we use and dispose of waste, is really important.





OUR WATER PROJECT

Our water project was developed at the end of 2021 as a direct response to a particularly large eviction which resulted in the informal camp at Dunkirk being moved to a site that had no access to running water. Access to water for people since then involves individuals having to walk across busy main roads to access water and many people are living over an hour's walk away, so it has become necessary to provide this access ourselves. This is one of our main projects and is the most vital service we provide.

OUR MISSION

- To make sure that everyone has access to drinking water within a safe walking distance from their home.
- To force the French State to recognise that the lack of access to water is a violation of basic human rights.
- For the French State to provide adequate basic services for displaced people living in Grande Synthe.

We have delivered over 2.7 million litres of water this year to around 50,000 people.

If we had given the equivalent out as bottled water it would have cost us over €360,000.00



How the project works:

We have an IBC inside our van which has a pump connected to it. We drive to the water source (about an hour on foot from the camp), hook the pipe up to the IBC and fill it up with 1000 litres of water. We then drive to the water points in the camp, which we have built, and hook the pump up to the IBC and pump the water into the water point. Each water point has taps which were given to us by Solidarity International which allows for more than one person to use the water point at any one time.

PROGRESS OF OUR PROJECT

Over the year we have made many improvements to the water project. These include:

- Moving the location of the water points depending on ease of access.
- Using the water points as spaces for people to access information.
- Responding to need by adding items hygiene items such as toothbrushes, shampoo, soap etc to the water points.

We estimate that we helped over 30000 people have access to safe drinking water over the year 2023*



30 000

*Data is based on a rough approximation of numbers of people who have passed through the camp in the last 12 months. Numbers are approximate as there is no non-invasive way of collecting this data.



REUSE & REPURPOSE



Much like our water points, the shower cubicles we provide are built from IBCs. These are fabricated in the warehouse from repurposed IBCs rather than new ones as they are not to contain water.

We fit the two IBC cages together and make a door, then slide the plastic back in and fix them together.

They are fully equipped cubicles with a door, a hook, a shower curtain and plumbing.



SUCCESSSES

We ran the showers in partnership with the Red Cross in the local gym

We ran these showers 2 days a week from 12:00 until 16:00.

Up to 100 people per day can shower with 6 showers running.

We provided 1902 hot showers in 2023



*This is in spite of the project not running for many months of the year. The project needs a minimum number of volunteers to run this project safely, and funding - plus a reliable vehicle. Unfortunately in 2023 we had many struggles to maintain this.

HYGIENE

Our hygiene project is the umbrella project for everything we do related to keeping the camp clean and tidy for people to live in. It's tied into the water and shower project: Each water point has a liquid soap holder, a shower gel holder, a shampoo holder and a washing up liquid holder, as well as bars of soap, razors and toothbrushes. When we fill up the water points we keep donated hygiene items such as toothpaste, toothbrushes, shower gel, shampoo, soaps and razors in the van to give to people who need them.



Maintaining a hygienic environment is incredibly important. We make sure that we are doing litter picking in camps every couple of days and have had various roles in the removal of rubbish over the year. The water points also have bins for people to put their rubbish in, for example food when people are washing dishes. Every time we fill water we do litter picks and clean the areas around the water points, and clean the taps every time we go to the water point.



Above: A volunteer prepares new bins for camp attaching rope handles .

Below: A volunteer from Calais Light delivering much needed hygiene products to our warehouse.



INFORMATION

We have an overarching information project also which again goes on behind the scenes. We provide information on the location of various services in the camp (for example distribution areas and power sources), as well as safety information for people living in the area.

We put up posters on all our water points in 10 languages about safety at sea. These posters have been approved by the lawyers of another organisation and provide legal safety information. The posters do not provide any information on how to get across the sea, but can be lifesaving for those who attempt the journey.



CHARGE AND WIFI

Charging and wifi is extremely important. We run charge and wifi through our Communication Hub, providing people on the ground with the ability to stay connected. Phone / power bank charging and access to data is incredibly important. Many of these people are away from family and friends and so need phones to remain connected to their communities. It is also a lifeline. People can access information about services on the ground, as well as safety information and emergency services if they need. It allows for autonomy and is a fundamental necessity.

**We have 192 charging spaces available
over 4 tables**





Charging is vital, not only because it allows people to communicate with loved ones and stay safe, but also because it provides a communal hub day-to-day.



HOW IT WORKS

- The tables are built in our warehouse from purchased trestle tables and plug sockets.
- We have a wifi box which provides wifi for the entire time we run the charging station, provided by a partner organisation, Jangala.
- The charging station runs twice a week from 10 am - 4 pm.
- We have 194 spaces, over 4 tables.
- The 4 charging tables are situated under gazebos and are equipped with european plugs as well as USB ports.
- We have a generator which runs off LPG gas to power the charging station.
- The charging station is dry and heated in winter, and provides welcome shade in summer.
- The gazebos were given to us courtesy of MiGreat, another organisation we have worked with.



Collaboration

We work closely with other organisations to provide consistent and useful services. Cooperation is essential to effective action and so we try to talk with people as much as we can.

Whether we are providing showers directly or indirectly throughout the year we have made sure the other associations can rely on us to support them, la Croix Rouge (Red Cross) run showers at a gymnasium twice a week, we provide all the towels and flannels and wash and dry them. When needed we also provide toiletries. RWC (Refugee Womens Centre) provide showers specifically for women and children and we also facilitate the provision of toiletries, towels and flannels and wash and dry them.

When we have groups come for the day, or the weekend we utilise these visits to make a positive impact on the litter situation in camp. Our litter picking days have been attended by fabulous volunteers from Care4Calais, Calais Action, Camcrag, Calais Light, RefYouMe



2023 also provided us with the ability to support RCK (Refugee Community Kitchen) in Calais. Due to volunteer numbers they can make the food but could not distribute so we began distributing upto 700 meals 3 times a week. We helped distribute in 2023 and will be continuing to do this into 2024. The total portions of food we distributed was 30,027 !!



THE ROLE OF THE STATE

As an organisation, our overall goal is to not have to provide these services.

It is the state's job to fulfil its basic human rights obligations, such as providing access to water and power. Throughout 2023 we have, alongside other associations in Dunkirk, undertaken meetings with the local authorities to try to resolve the issue of safe water access. We also signed an inter-association petition to stop the authorities turning up the land because it was a distribution site, sadly this is still happened regularly.

We believe that France is currently failing in its human rights obligations.

Evictions:

- Small evictions happened regularly throughout 2023, as well as a few large scale evictions, which involve moving campsite.
- Evictions of any scale involve refugees being routinely harassed, subjected to confiscations and arrests, and forced to witness violent acts against their property and persons.
- Our policy during evictions is to continue where possible with distributing water and maintaining water points.
- We had instances whereby we had been refused access to our water points during an eviction, and a couple of times our water points were either removed by the state and completely confiscated OR damaged when being removed. All of this comes at a financial cost to us.



SOURCES OF FUNDING 2023

2023 saw a huge overall of our our operations and management/trustees at Roots. We had to halt some services due to funding issues, and change the way we did others. Throughout these changes we are so very grateful for the continued support of **Catch a Smile**, who funded us consistently throughout the year, both with one-off payments, as well as a stable source of monthly income.

We are also grateful to the **Fondation Abbé Pierre** for providing us with a grant which covered the payments of fuel, insurance and some of the repairs to the vehicles for the year.

Also to **ForRefugees**, whose support in the form of grants throughout the year have helped us enormously.

Crowd Funding - Just Giving, Go Fund Me, Facebook and Insta

Crowd funding has traditionally been one of our main sources of income during previous years of Roots. In 2023 you can see it accounts for 18.7% of our overall income for the year.

This is a phenomenal amount of money for us and is one of our most successful ways to fundraise.

We have a long term fundraiser through Just Giving to help with our general costs of running.

We ran very successful crowdfunding campaigns, including one for a new generator, and another to help us fix the van so we could continue our water services.

Aside from larger donors, we also receive donations from other charities and personal donations from people. We are exceedingly grateful for our community.

Donations come not only in the form of money. We have received many donated items, such as gazebos, hygiene products, washing machines and even second hand tools! We also have a huge network of people who donate their time through volunteering with us at Roots, both on the ground and behind the scenes.

To those who have fundraised, spread the word, and offered us help, we thank you!



FUTURE PROJECTS - 2024

Originally, Roots worked solely on recycling batteries from donations into powerbanks and handwarmers for winter.

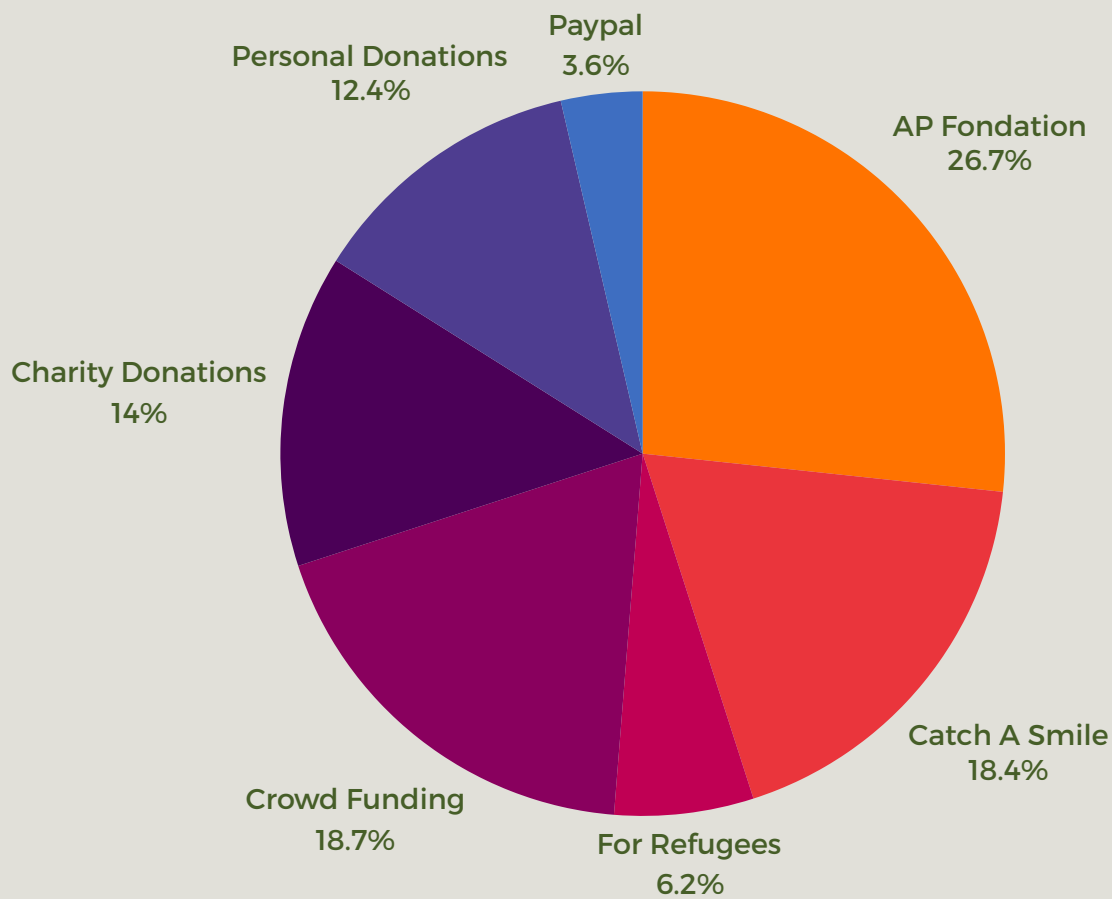
Since the need for water access in camp, our priority shifted to focus much more on that side of the operation. We still have some of the equipment from the old electronics workshop in the warehouse, but some of the equipment is outdated or broken and the project needs modernising. We are hoping to secure funding to re-start this project at the end of Summer 2024 in time to start making power banks for the winter months.

HOT SHOWERS FOR 2024

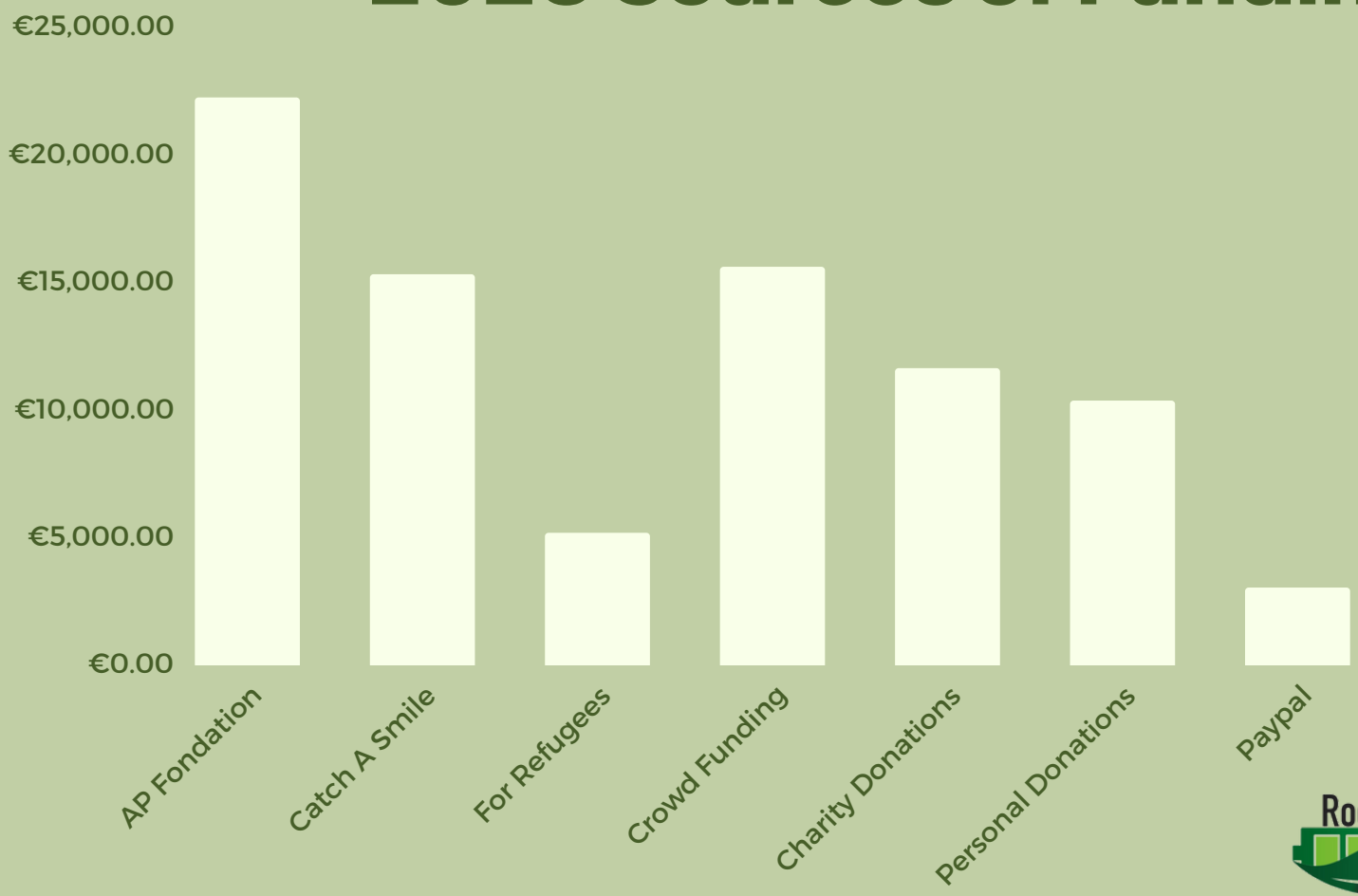
We hope to be able to re-install our hot shower project by the middle of August.

Like most projects funding and having the correct equipment (including vehicles) plus long term volunteers are always needed to ensure that once a project starts it can be maintained. We are really pleased that towards the end of 2023 we started to see more long term and regular volunteers back at Roots and are hopeful that we can secure the funding to operate the shower project once more. Whilst we have had difficulties in providing hot showers ourselves, we have remained supportive of the other associations who use a local gym by providing toiletries. We also provide, wash and dry the towels and flannels used.





2023 Sources of Funding



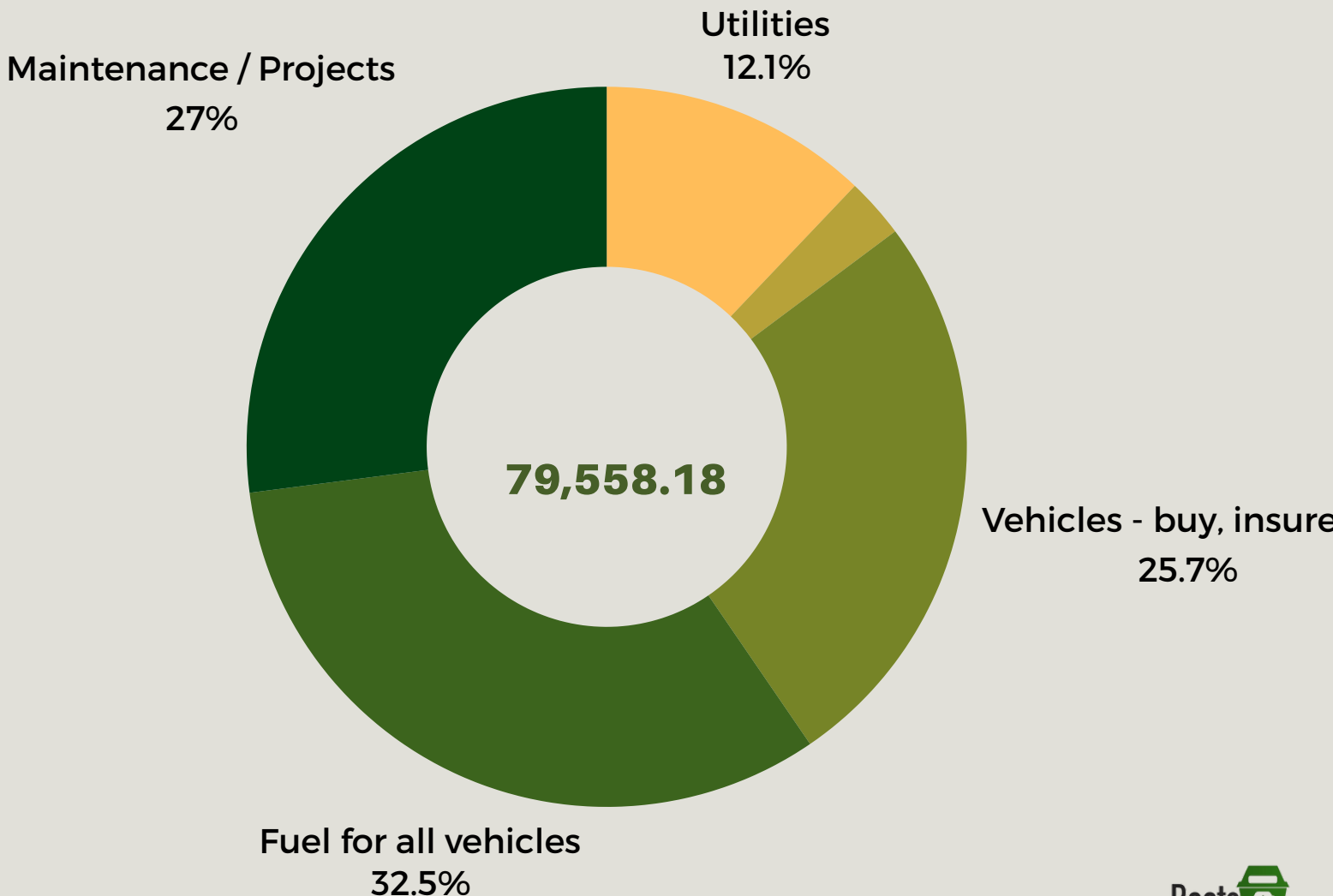
Expenditure

In March 2023 we moved to a bigger warehouse in Steene. This enables us to offer not just more services and the space to fabricate them, but also a washroom whereby we can facilitate the washing of towels for other organisations - La Croix Rouge and RWC - the womens centre.

It also means that we have a bigger space for building and equipment, meaning we can physically house everything we need for all the projects we run.

The warehouse is one of our biggest expenses over the year, but it is vital. It's our base, and in time we want it to become a hub for different organisations and projects.

Warehouse Rent, Ins	25984.12
Utilities	6482.11
IT, wifi, Office Supplies	1439.89
Vehicles - buy, fix, Insure	13747.47
Fuel for all vehicles	17418.82
Maintenance / Projects/LPG Gas etc	14485.77



SPENDING ANALYSIS

Unforeseen Expenses...

Unexpected vehicle repairs has been our biggest source of difficulty over the year.

Because we are still a small charity working on a small budget we have to buy our vans second hand (...often third or fourth hand!) and so they are liable to have more faults than newer vehicles. The nature of the work means that they are often driven off-road as well, which puts a higher stress on the vehicle.

We have tried to keep costs to a minimum but it has been difficult. We only allow competent and experienced drivers to drive our vehicles to minimise damages and incidents. Experienced drivers are also more likely to notice the beginnings of a fault than newer drivers, meaning we can investigate and solve potential problems before they develop into something more serious.

**Vehicle repairs cost us over €6000
in 2023**

A lot of the spending analysis on the following tables will include the same costs within each chart. For example, vehicle maintenance and insurance is divided between the projects, with the water project taking a larger share because of the vehicle use.

