

Severn Area Rescue Association Annual Report and Accounts 2024



Multi-Disciplinary Volunteer Search and
Rescue Team with Fifty Years of
Lifeboat Service on the River Severn



Registered Charity CIO 1193634

FOREWORD

I am proud to report that 2024, SARA's 52nd year in operation, saw a record number of 'callouts' across the various disciplines and SARA stations. January again saw significant flooding in Gloucester and Tewkesbury, with many of the local crews assisting with rescue from flood waters and welfare checks. The power of the River Severn is a constant reminder of why SARA was started back in 1973.

There were many wonderful events held across the 7 stations in 2024, with the opportunity for the public to show support and engage with teams of volunteers at open days and fundraisers. These events are essential to SARA's continued operations as they generate significant income for the Charity, which remains a volunteer-only organisation with no central funding. As importantly, however, they are also a great opportunity both to get very close to the crews, their stories and equipment (and even ride on the boats) and for SARA to deliver on one of its key missions - to advance public safety, particularly in and around water

I am pleased to report that the new Board of Trustees has continued to drive the organisation forward, with the development of the excellent '2030 Strategy'. This provides a clear path for the Charity to thrive and excel alongside the professional and other voluntary search and rescue services with which SARA works on a regular basis. As ever, safety of the volunteers and maintaining rescue assets to the highest level are paramount.

I wish the Board, management teams and all the volunteers every success in 2025 and thank you for your continued support.



The Rt. Hon. The Countess Bathurst

In 2024, SARA volunteers attended 150 separate operations:



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Reference and Administrative Details

The Severn Area Rescue Association is the largest independent multi-disciplinary volunteer search and rescue team in the UK. It is also the largest independent lifeboat service in the UK, second only to the RNLI, with 14 operational boats, of which five are declared lifeboats, and approximately 200 personnel.

Registered Charity CIO Number	1193634
Registered Address	The Lifeboat Station, Beachley, Chepstow, NP16 7HH
Independent Accounts Examiner	Helen Tinsley FCCA, Azets, Wolverhampton
Bankers	Lloyds Bank Plc

Objectives

The objects of the Association, as stated in its Constitution are:

1. The protection of life and property by the provision and maintenance of a rescue service incorporating both marine operations and land operations) with, in particular, specialist skills in swiftwater / flood, land search, lifeboats, rescue boats, marine rescue and cliff rescue;
2. To assist Government Departments and Agencies and County and Local Authorities in their provision of emergency services; and
3. To advance public education in outdoor safety, particularly in and around water.

The Association is non-profit making, and financed by voluntary contributions, grants from any public or private organisations, and any such fundraising activities or commercial arrangements as the Executive Committee recommends to the Trustees.

The Achievement of the Objects of the Charity

The policies adopted by the Executive Committee during the course of the year have met the objects of the Charity in the following ways:

- Through the Association's 7 rescue stations and one sub-station attending 150 callouts during the year, all tasked by the principal emergency services.
- Through the provision of Water Safety scenarios for schools and other interested groups to raise awareness for everyone, especially children, to become more 'water aware'.
- Through the ongoing provision of recognised training courses held both internally and externally to promote the professionalism of the organisation.

The Trustees have given due regard to the guidance from the Charity Commission on public benefit, and consulted with the emergency services across the relevant area, and are satisfied that the objectives and activities of SARA provide a public benefit.

Structure, Governance and Management

SARA is governed by its Constitution. Certain 'non-executive' powers are reserved for the Board of Trustees with specific powers delegated to the Executive. The Trustees have final overall legal responsibility for the organisation and its governance. Non-Executive Trustees serve for a term of three years, being appointed at the Annual General Meeting; the CEO, Deputy CEO and the CFO are ex-officio Trustees.

The Trustees of the CIO in the year were:

Keith Beckett (Chair of Trustees)
Mark Carwardine (Chief Executive Officer)
Judith Harvey
Ian Morgan
Shaun Egan (Deputy CEO)
Richard Newhouse (CFO)
Gareth Raymond from Nov 2024

The Executive Committee is responsible to the Trustees for the overall running of the association in relation to all financial, safety, legal and operational matters. Its members during the year were:

Chief Executive Officer (CEO)	Mark Carwardine
Deputy CEO	Shaun Egan
Chief Financial Officer	Richard Newhouse
General Executive Officer	David Hill
Fundraising Officer	Joe Challinor from Dec 24
Association Secretary	Ian Roberts to Mar 24, thence Sally Holloway
Beachley Station General Manager	Mark Powell
Newport Station General Manager	Richard Dainty
Tewkesbury Station General Manager	Alan Martin
Sharpness Station General Manager	David Palmer
Upton Station General Manager	David Williams
Wyre Forest Station General Manager	Ian Lofthouse
Cotswolds Station General Manager	John Dutton to Oct 24, thence David Wright

Additional technical and specialist managers were co-opted at the Executive level being:

Executive Land Search Manager	John Dutton
Executive Rope Rescue Officer	Andy Torbet
Executive Inland Water Officer	Matt Davies from Mar 24
Medical Officer	Jon Dallimore
Wellbeing Officer	Kathy Donaldson to Mar 24, thence Martin Holloway
Communications Equipment Manager	Chris Thornton
PR Officer	Richard Newhouse

The Committees for the Beachley, Newport, Tewkesbury, Sharpness, Upton, Cotswolds and Wyre Forest Rescue Stations are responsible for the day-to-day running of each respective Station.

The Operations of the Charity

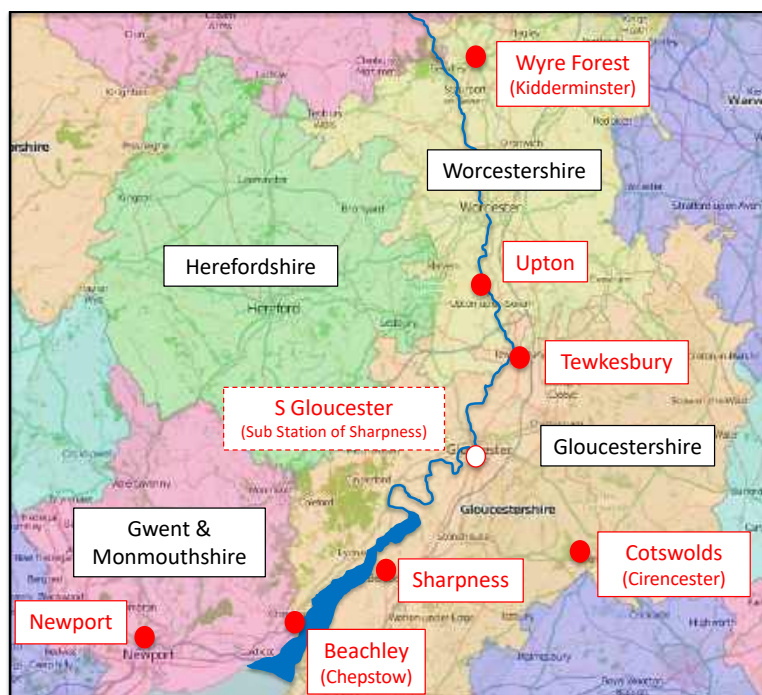
SARA's Mission Statement is:

To protect life and property through the provision of a professionally trained,
specialist rescue service for marine, flood and land search incidents

The principal area of marine operations comprises the Bristol Channel and the Severn, Wye, Avon, and Usk rivers. Typical situations involved vessels suffering breakdown or damage by grounding, becoming lost in severely restricted visibility - a particularly dangerous situation in the tidal Severn - and searching for missing people. As a Lifeboat Organisation, SARA complies with the Rescue Boat Code of Practice (RBCP) and is a founder member of the National Independent Lifeboat Association (NILA).

Inland operations extend to the West of England and the Midlands and South-East Wales. SARA is an Associate Member of Mountain Rescue England and Wales (MREW) and is part of the South West England Rescue Association (SWERA). SARA's technical and flood rescue standards are assured by qualifications from Rescue3Europe, which comply with national standards

SARA works closely with the statutory emergency services – Police, Fire & Rescue and Ambulance Services, likewise HM Coastguard – also with neighbouring and related volunteer rescue organisations. These particularly include the RNLI at Portishead, Penarth and Barry, the Coastguard helicopter based at St Athan, Longtown Mountain Rescue Team and the South Wales Search and Rescue Dogs Association (SARDA(SW)), to name just a few. There is a strong mutual relationship with Gloucester Cave Rescue (GCRG) whose members often participate in land search operations as integrated search party members. Further details of SARA's operational roles are provided in the Annex.



The SARA Rescue Stations

Why SARA? A Short History!

The inaugural meeting to form the organisation which became SARA was held in 1973, and the charity was formally created in 1976, as 'The Severn Auxiliary Rescue Association'. Its headquarters were at Tutshill - near the current Beachley station. At this time the RNLI did not cover river estuaries, such as the River Severn. There was felt to be a need for rescue organisation responsible for this hazardous stretch of river, particularly following the closure of the Aust Ferry after the opening of the Severn Bridge in 1966. In 1985 SARA also became an official Mountain Rescue Team in the role of Cliff Rescue for the Wye Valley, and SARA Beachley Station was designated as a 'Mountain Rescue Post'.

In 1986 a second station was opened at Sharpness, primarily in response to a tragic loss of life in the Sharpness area and the name of the organisation was amended to what it is today. A station was opened at Wyre Forest in 2004, to cover the upper Severn area. In 2014 Wyre Forest Station moved into the Fire Station at Kidderminster, under a co-hosting arrangement, and in early 2021 moved again into the new Kidderminster Tri-Service 'Emergency Hub' Station.

In 2011, following major flooding, a Joint 'Water Rescue Centre' opened in Tewkesbury, as a strategic alliance between Gloucester Fire & Rescue Service, SARA and Gloucestershire County Council, and the new SARA Tewkesbury Station became SARA's fourth.

For many years, emergencies in Newport were attended to by crew from SARA Beachley. In 2014 an equipment hub was placed in Newport, and in 2015 a base was established at Malpas Fire Station. Following a major bequest, new boats were purchased in 2016 and the Newport Lifeboat Station was established, within the Malpas Fire Station, becoming independent from Beachley in 2019.

The small independent 'Water Emergency Incident Response' (WEIR) team at Upton-upon-Severn elected in 2019 to merge with SARA, forming SARA Upton Station in 2020. SARA's seventh station SARA Cotswolds, based at Cirencester Fire Station, was established in mid-2021 to provide a base for land search in eastern Gloucestershire.



A Missing Person Search Briefing in the Cotswolds



Training in Flood Rescue, from a vehicle in the dark, at Cardiff White Water in October

Chair of Trustees' Report

I am delighted to report that SARA goes from strength to strength, having had a busy and successful 2024. There have been significantly more call-outs this year than last, and this level of support to our communities doesn't happen without the dedicated, professional and enthusiastic members that form the SARA family. I would like to pass on most sincere thanks from the Board of Trustees for the commitment of all our members, whether directly operational or in vital support roles; you are at the heart of our mission and are very much valued for the Service you provide.

The Board of Trustees has seen some personnel changes. Ben Nyland had joined us but, due to personal commitments also had to retire from the Board in 2024. We also recruited Gareth Raymond as a co-opted Trustee who brings significant financial expertise to the non-Executive Board membership; his candidature will be presented to the AGM in March 2025, where I very much hope he will be elected. Additionally, Richard Newhouse had announced that he wished to step back as SARA's CFO. We are lucky to have recruited Chris Burgess to replace Richard. Chris joins us with significant business and financial expertise and his full appointment will also be subject to election at the Mar 25 AGM.

We published the SARA Strategy in 2024. This document sets the direction for SARA over the next 5 years and will be used by the Board to guide and inform decision making.

In accordance with this Strategy, the Board has focussed on SARA's continued financial health, and ensuring that our funds are spent in direct support of our Charitable mission. Our strategy also states that we will ensure that we have the right standard of equipment and facilities to ensure our people are safe and well equipped to deal with the hazardous circumstances they face. So, it is really pleasing that our accounts report a near doubling of spend on the necessary equipment, facilities and repairs, whilst also retaining a healthy overall financial position. I'm also glad to say that our vision of operating very much as 'One SARA' has been guiding the way that this spend has been achieved. 'One SARA' recognises the unique needs of each station and discipline but, also very much recognises the benefits and efficiencies we get by being mutually supportive and coherent.

The Board's focus on safety led to a significant safety exercise being conducted in the Autumn of 2024 at Beachley. This was a great success, in particular because we learnt a lot of valuable lessons and I'm keen that we repeat the format again in 2025, perhaps focussed on a different discipline and station.

Additionally in 2024, the Board supported an expansion of SARA's services to include a dog section and drone capability. Both are in development and not yet 'declared' facilities but, when fully qualified, will add significant value to the SARA overall capability.

Finally, the Board has been supporting the Executive in examining the organisation and governance of SARA to seek an efficient and effective set of arrangements that will properly support SARA's planned scope and scale of activity in the future. These draft arrangements are being concluded and will be presented to the Mar 25 AGM for agreement as they will require some changes to the SARA Constitution.

SARA is a healthy and financially sound Charity that is absolutely focussed on delivering high quality lifesaving and rescue services to the Communities it serves; I look forward to continuing our success and improvements through 2025.

Keith Beckett
Chair of Trustees



Presenting founding Chairman Jim Hewitt with his Certificate for 50 Years' Service



SARA Lifeboat 2 escorts a motor cruiser which had reported an engine fire



Some recently qualified members of Beachley's Land Search Team

CEO Report on 2024

2024 was book-ended by flood response. In February we were in action in Gloucester Tewkesbury, and we were delighted to be invited to meet HRH Duke of Gloucester in Tewkesbury when he came to look at the damage caused by the flooding. Storm FRED in November caused extensive flooding in the Monmouth area. At one point in the Sunday evening we had four flood teams in action at the same time, and then two of those teams were then sent to Yate in South Gloucestershire to assist with the response there.

SARA declares 6 flood rescue teams on the National Asset Register (NAR), more than any other organisation in the country. In December we hosted another of the three yearly Assurance Visits from the National Fire Chief's Council (NFCC), who administer the NAR, this time at SARA Sharpness. I am delighted to say that we received another very positive report.



Flood Response operations in Monmouthshire in November

Another highlight of the year was also at Sharpness. On a beautiful evening in July many members from across the organisation were awarded the King's Coronation Medal, recognising 5 or more years of service at the time of King Charles' Coronation in 2023, as shown on the front cover of this report. The medals were presented by our Chairman, and then a BBQ was enjoyed by all.

With 150 callouts last year, 2024 was our busiest since records began. There is rarely any particular pattern, unlike some teams in tourist hotspots, but one factor this year was the increasing number of callouts at Newport. The close relationship between our team in Newport and the local Fire Service is a factor here, and has led to at least one life being saved by our lifeboat. Similarly in Gloucester the team at SARA Sharpness work closely with Fire Service, and there was a successful rescue from the water in May.

Sadly in our area there are a lot of searches which we know will not lead to a rescue, often over several days or over a longer period. During 2024 there were several long-running lifeboat searches in the Severn, the last of which was brought to a conclusion in early 2025. Another in the River Ebbw near Newport had involved a number of stations taking the lead on different days, with multiple searches at different states of the river. The recovery came eventually, towards the end of another

long day of searching, with crews from both Beachley and Newport combining skills to overcome difficult access to the location.

As well as operations in our area, we have provided 'mutual aide; support to Wiltshire Search & Rescue ('WilSAR') on multiple occasions, also to Oxfordshire SAR and Longtown Mountain Rescue Team. And they have supported our operations, both with people and with specialist equipment.

Sometimes a year goes by without any call for our technical rope rescue. This year we had two callouts in close succession on the Wintours Leap cliffs near Chepstow. One was for an injured climber, and sadly one involved a fatality. The many practice sessions we have run with the 'Larkin Frame', which helps to get a stretcher up and over the cliff edge, paid off. A little later there was a search involving a cliff above the River Severn above Gloucester, and the ropes came out again – that time the missing person was found safe somewhere else.

In 2023 we bought the base vehicle for a new Incident Command Unit (ICU), to be based in Gloucestershire. A small, dedicated team worked on that through the winter and early part for 2024, and delivered a stunning result for a fraction of the cost which some other teams have paid. The new ICU(South) was commissioned at a small ceremony at Beachley in September, attended by some key donors, and representatives of important organisations.



The new Incident Control Unit (South)

This year MREW Casualty Carers, our advanced first aiders, became known as 'Remote Rescue Medical Technicians' (RRMTs). A training course for new and re-qualifying RRMTs, jointly run with Avon & Somerset Search & Rescue, culminated in an exam weekend in June, and in a separate course some of our more experienced RRMTs were trained and qualified to formally verify death. This should reduce issues on callouts, particularly the unnecessary involvement of already busy ambulance crews. Later in the year we had the first training in the use of Penthex as a pain relief medicine, following its inclusion in the MREW Drugs Formulary; this will allow us to phase out the use of Entonox.

Participation in 'multi-agency' training, with other volunteer teams and with the emergency services, continued apace. There was a spectacular rope rescue training exercise at Portishead docks, using one of the large cranes, superbly organised by our friends at Prusik Rescue, and a multi-team land

training day in the Forest of Dean, organised by Glos Cave Rescue. In the autumn there was a flurry of flood rescue training exercises at Cardiff White Water Centre, one of which included a session in the evening with the lights off, to practice working in the dark. We hosted Gloucestershire Fire Service at a rope rescue event near Chepstow in the summer, and later they invited us to join in a terrorism-response exercise at the Fire Service College.



One of our RRMTs dealing with several 'exercise casualties' on a multi-agency exercise

We have maintained our strategy of creating and using internal instructors where possible. With the help of a Government (UK SAR) grant we now have two more flood rescue boat operator instructors in addition to our SRT instructors, all with the Rescue3 scheme. At the time of writing we now have 18 such boat operators qualified. We also upskilled our rope rescue instructors, so that we now have four 'Rope Rescue Technician Instructors' and have run our first internal RRT course. On the land search side, 8 search party leaders did the MREW 'Search Planning and Management (SPM1) course, further strengthening our search management capability, and two others attended the annual MREW Party Leader Course in North Wales.

The Search Dog Unit we set up in 2023, affiliated to NSARDA, continues to develop. Training has been intense, and during 2024 2 dogs passed the stock test (providing confidence that they will not chase sheep!) and have been formally accepted as 'Trainee Search Dogs'.

I am delighted that the organisation has continued to deliver as much as it has. But it does involve a lot of hard work in the management teams to make it all happen, and really too much falls to too few people, and there are always some vacancies in our management structure. In order to try to increase our efficiency, we have spent quite some time in the latter part of the year considering the setup of our management arrangements. One of the simpler ideas has been to give the rescue stations greater flexibility in how they set up their management committees. Each station differs in its capabilities and in size, so one format definitely does not suit all.

At the SARA level, we realised that we have retained the same Executive Team arrangement that we had with just 2 stations focusing on lifeboat operations, despite now having 7 stations and a much more complex set of operations. After much debate we have now decided to establish a Senior

Leadership Team with a greater range of SARA-level roles. I very much look forward to bedding in the new system during 2025.

I am eternally grateful to all of our team members, both operational and supporting members who are all volunteers, for making all of this possible. Also to those who also serve on the management teams at station and at the association level; very few of who joined SARA to get involved in these matters. And, as always, for the support of their families. Thank you all!

Mark Carwardine
Chief Executive Officer





Practising rescue operations in a frozen Upton Marina



A 4x4 Driver Training Course in the Mendips



A Rope Rescue Training Exercise using a crane at Avonmouth Docks



And another on Fly Wall in the Wye Valley

Fundraising

SARA raises funds for services through applications to charitable foundations and trusts, bids for appropriate statutory contracts, supported by individual and corporate donations, and community fundraising activities and support.

SARA is registered with the Fundraising Regulator, has a Fundraising Complaints Policy and Procedure and adheres to The Code of Fundraising Practice. Any Fundraising Complaints received by the charity are recorded and acted upon as set out in the procedure. There were no complaints received about fundraising, or any other matters, during 2024.

SARA has no paid fundraisers and does not pay for the services of any fundraising organisation or people.

Review of Risks

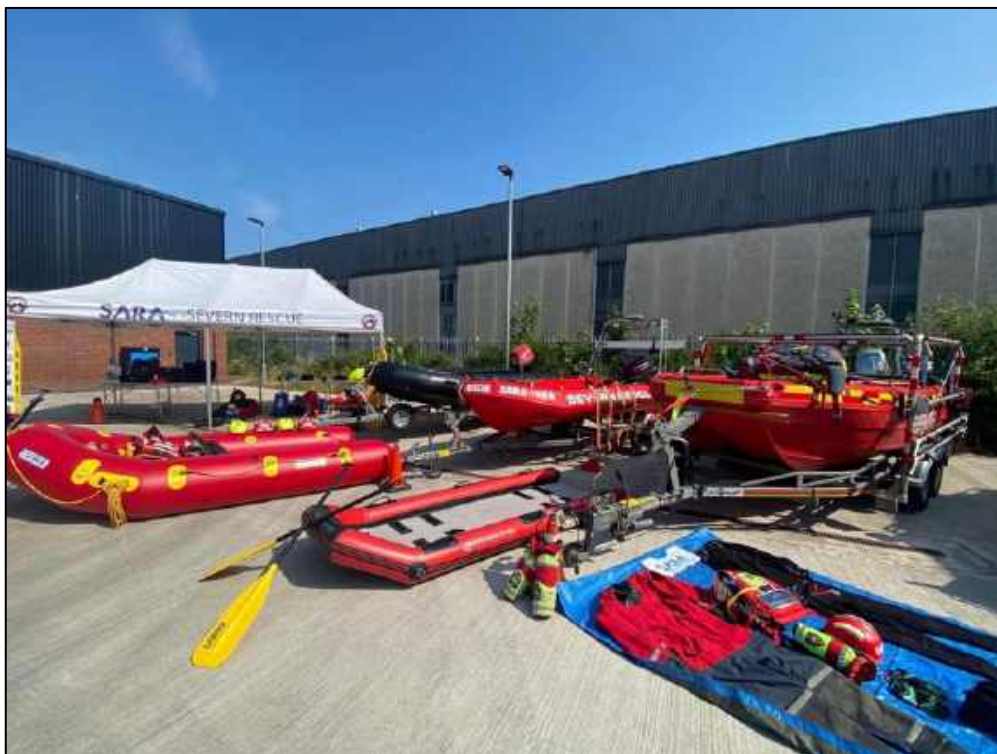
The Trustees and Executive Committee conduct an ongoing review of the major risks to which the charity is exposed, and processes and controls are in place to mitigate those risks.

The Association has Standard Operating Procedures which each member must follow. Whilst SARA is not bound by the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 (as it is part of Mountain Rescue England & Wales (MREW) which is exempt from the above Act), the Trustees' policy is that the Association should use this legislation as 'good practice' for SARA operations.

SARA carries insurance policies to cover health and safety risks, include some insurance cover provided through policies arranged by Mountain Rescue England & Wales (MREW). The Executive Committee continues to monitor Insurance policies to ensure they are adequate for SARA's purposes.



SARA Lifeboat 3 'Swift and Bold' rescuing ducks on the River Wye at Chepstow, following the annual Great SARA Duck race



Ready for an Open Day at Kidderminster Fire Station



All set for a day of fundraising in the sun



'Cardboard Dave' hosting a visit of local Brownies to SARA Upton



SARA Wyre Forest helping Santa to visit their area!

Financial Review

2024 was another strong year for SARA financially, thanks in large part to our generous supporters and hard-working fundraisers. We are particularly grateful for the ongoing financial support of the Police and Crime Commissioners, a number of local charitable funds, and our local councils. Also noteworthy is that we have, finally, opened two investment accounts during the year (with CAF and CCLA). The result of that is the increased interest income this year, at £6.7k.

In December the Board confirmed that an appropriate target level of unrestricted reserves is £100k, roughly 6 months operating costs. We closed the year with just under £87k, though we are anticipating the proceeds from the disposal of several assets in the first half of 2025.

We are holding a large restricted fund which will pay for the new Beachley Launch Tractor (now on order), and the 'shed' to house it (still being designed). We added £60k to the Major Asset Fund, and this has just enabled us to order replacement engines for SARA Lifeboat 1 (now 10 years old), and two new 4x4 vehicles.

Spending this year included two other 4x4 vehicles, to replace older one at our Sharpness and Newport stations. We spent heavily on rescue PPE for our crew, including the £31k which was designated for that purpose at the end of 2023. Some of the other investments are described in the CEO's report.

My thanks to everyone who has helped with the book-keeping, with passing through invoices promptly, with helping to keep costs down and submit spend requests ahead of time. These all make my role easier, and enable me to help ensure that funds are there when we need them, so we can continue to help other people when they need it the most.

I am stepping down as CFO, having done two years officially in the role and several before in contributing to running the finances. I am remaining in SARA as an operational member, and am delighted to be able to hand over to Chris Burgess with the finances in good shape.

Richard Newhouse
Chief Financial Officer



The fleet of Land Search vehicles, on a callout in the summer

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES OF SARA

I report to the Trustees on my examination of the financial statements of Severn Area Rescue Association (the Charity) for the year ended 31 December 2024

Responsibilities and Basis of Report

As the Trustees of the Charity you are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act).

I report in respect of my examination of the charity's financial statements carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act. In carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act.

Independent Examiner's Statement

Since the charity's gross income exceeded £250,000 your examiner must be a member of a body listed in section 145 of the 2011 Act. I confirm that I am qualified to undertake the examination because I am a member of ICAEW, which is one of the listed bodies.

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the charity as required by section 130 of the 2011 Act; or
2. the financial statements do not accord with those records; or
3. the financial statements do not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a true and fair view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the financial statements to be reached.

Azets

Helen Tinsley FCCA
Azets
First Floor
St David's Court
Union Street
Wolverhampton
WV1 3JE

Dated: 23 May 2025

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES INCLUDING INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

	Notes	Unrestricted funds 2024 £	Restricted funds 2024 £	Total 2024 £	Unrestricted funds 2023 £	Restricted funds 2023 £	Total 2023 £
Income and endowments from:							
Donations and legacies	3	155,168	80,167	235,335	177,931	65,770	243,701
Charitable activities	4	85,082	13,667	98,749	80,804	7,832	88,636
Other trading activities	5	620	-	620	1,279	-	1,279
Investments	6	6,757	-	6,757	1,812	-	1,812
Other income	7	1,303	-	1,303	21,393	-	21,393
Total income		248,930	93,834	342,764	283,219	73,602	356,821
Expenditure on:							
Raising funds	8	10,460	2,258	12,718	13,153	-	13,153
Charitable activities	9	246,395	56,729	303,124	227,788	26,912	254,700
Total expenditure		256,855	58,987	315,842	240,941	26,912	267,853
Net (outgoing)/incoming resources before transfers		(7,925)	34,847	26,922	42,278	46,690	88,968
Gross transfers between funds		131	(131)	-	40,461	(40,461)	-
Net (expenditure)/income for the year/ Net movement in funds		(7,794)	34,716	26,922	82,739	6,229	88,968
Fund balances at 1 January 2024		487,764	47,368	535,132	405,025	41,139	446,164
Fund balances at 31 December 2024		479,970	82,084	562,054	487,764	47,368	535,132

The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year.

All income and expenditure derive from continuing activities.

BALANCE SHEET

AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2024

	Notes	2024 £	£	2023 £	£
Fixed assets					
Tangible assets	14		236,501		247,134
Current assets					
Debtors	15	26,813		40,374	
Cash at bank and in hand		304,491		259,600	
		331,304		299,974	
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	16	(5,751)		(11,976)	
Net current assets			325,553		287,998
Total assets less current liabilities			562,054		535,132
Income funds					
Restricted funds	17		82,084		47,368
<u>Unrestricted funds</u>					
Designated funds	18	135,619		123,621	
General unrestricted funds		344,351		364,143	
			479,970		487,764
			562,054		535,132

The financial statements were approved by the Trustees on 23 March 2025

Richard Newhouse

Mr R J Newhouse
Trustee

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

1 Accounting policies

Charity information

The Severn Area Rescue Association, also known as SARA is the largest independent multi-disciplinary volunteer search and rescue team in the UK. SARA is also the largest independent lifeboat service in the UK, second only to the RNLI.

1.1 Accounting convention

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the SARA constitution, the Charities Act 2011, FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland" ("FRS 102") and the Charities SORP "Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102)" (effective 1 January 2019). The charity is a Public Benefit Entity as defined by FRS 102.

The charity has taken advantage of the provisions in the SORP for charities not to prepare a Statement of Cash Flows.

The accounts are prepared in sterling, which is the functional currency of the charity. Monetary amounts in these financial statements are rounded to the nearest £1.

The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention. The principal accounting policies adopted are set out below.

The charity is a public benefit entity.

1.2 Going concern

At the time of approving the financial statements, the trustees have a reasonable expectation that the charity has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. Thus the trustees continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting in preparing the financial statements.

1.3 Charitable funds

Unrestricted funds are available for use at the discretion of the trustees in furtherance of their charitable objectives unless the funds have been designated for other purposes.

Designated funds are set aside by the Trustees as a form of Unrestricted Fund, for the purpose of financing future purchases or replacement items.

Restricted funds are subject to specific conditions by donors as to how they may be used. The purposes and uses of the restricted funds are set out in the notes to the financial statements.

1.4 Income

Income is recognised when the charity is legally entitled to it after any performance conditions have been met, the amounts can be measured reliably, and it is probable that income will be received.

Cash donations are recognised on receipt. Other donations are recognised once the charity has been notified of the donation, unless performance conditions require deferral of the amount. In this case income is deferred until those conditions are fully met or the fulfilment of those conditions is within the control of the charity and it is probable that they will be fulfilled.

Income tax recoverable in relation to donations received under Gift Aid or deeds of covenant is recognised when the reclaimed tax is received.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

1 Accounting policies

(Continued)

Legacies are recognised on receipt or otherwise if the charity has been notified of an impending distribution, the amount is known, and receipt is expected. If the amount is not known, the legacy is treated as a contingent asset.

Grant income is recognised when the charity is legally entitled to it after any performance conditions have been met, the amounts can be measured reliably, and it is probable that income will be received.

Income from trading activities includes income earned from trading activities to raise funds for the charity.

No amount is included in the financial statements for volunteer time in line with the SORP. Further detail is given in the Trustee's Annual Report.

Investment income is earned through holding assets for investment purposes. Interest income is recognised as the charity's right to receive payment is established.

1.5 Expenditure

Liabilities are recognised as expenditure as soon as there is a legal or constructive obligation committing the charity to that expenditure, it is probable that a transfer of economic benefits will be required in settlement and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably.

Expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and has been classified under headings that aggregate all cost related to the category. Where costs cannot be directly attributed to particular headings they have been allocated to activities on a basis consistent with the use of resources.

Fundraising costs are those incurred in seeking voluntary contributions.

Support costs are those that assist the work of the charity but do not represent charitable activities and include office costs, governance costs, and other administrative costs. They are incurred directly in support of expenditure on the objects of the charity. Where support costs cannot be directly attributed to particular headings they have been allocated to cost of raising funds and expenditure on charitable activities on a basis consistent with use of resources.

Irrecoverable VAT is charged as an expense against the activity for which expenditure arose.

1.6 Tangible fixed assets

Tangible fixed assets are initially measured at cost and subsequently measured at cost or valuation, net of depreciation and any impairment losses.

Depreciation is recognised so as to write off the cost or valuation of assets less their residual values over their useful lives on the following bases:

Freehold land and buildings	straight line over 25 years
Plant and equipment	straight line over 4 & 5 years

The gain or loss arising on the disposal of an asset is determined as the difference between the sale proceeds and the carrying value of the asset, and is recognised in the statement of financial activities.

1.7 Impairment of fixed assets

At each reporting end date, the charity reviews the carrying amounts of its tangible assets to determine whether there is any indication that those assets have suffered an impairment loss. If any such indication exists, the recoverable amount of the asset is estimated in order to determine the extent of the impairment loss.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

1 Accounting policies

(Continued)

1.8 Cash and cash equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents include cash in hand, deposits held at call with banks, other short-term liquid investments with original maturities of three months or less, and bank overdrafts. Bank overdrafts are shown within borrowings in current liabilities.

1.9 Financial instruments

The charity has elected to apply the provisions of Section 11 'Basic Financial Instruments' and Section 12 'Other Financial Instruments Issues' of FRS 102 to all of its financial instruments.

Financial instruments are recognised in the charity's balance sheet when the charity becomes party to the contractual provisions of the instrument.

Financial assets and liabilities are offset, with the net amounts presented in the financial statements, when there is a legally enforceable right to set off the recognised amounts and there is an intention to settle on a net basis or to realise the asset and settle the liability simultaneously.

Basic financial assets

Basic financial assets, which include debtors and cash and bank balances, are initially measured at transaction price including transaction costs and are subsequently carried at amortised cost using the effective interest method unless the arrangement constitutes a financing transaction, where the transaction is measured at the present value of the future receipts discounted at a market rate of interest. Financial assets classified as receivable within one year are not amortised.

Basic financial liabilities

Basic financial liabilities, including creditors and bank loans are initially recognised at transaction price unless the arrangement constitutes a financing transaction, where the debt instrument is measured at the present value of the future payments discounted at a market rate of interest. Financial liabilities classified as payable within one year are not amortised.

Debt instruments are subsequently carried at amortised cost, using the effective interest rate method.

Trade creditors are obligations to pay for goods or services that have been acquired in the ordinary course of operations from suppliers. Amounts payable are classified as current liabilities if payment is due within one year or less. If not, they are presented as non-current liabilities. Trade creditors are recognised initially at transaction price and subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method.

Derecognition of financial liabilities

Financial liabilities are derecognised when the charity's contractual obligations expire or are discharged or cancelled.

1.10 Debtors and creditors receivable / payable within one year

Debtors and creditors with no stated interest rate and receivable or payable within one year are recorded at transaction price. Any losses arising from impairment are recognised in expenditure.

1.11 Investment policy

Current asset investments are short term highly liquid investments and are held at fair value. These include cash on deposit and cash equivalents with a maturity of less than one year.

A subsidiary is an entity controlled by the charity. Control is the power to govern the financial and operating policies of the entity so as to obtain benefits from its activities.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

1 Accounting policies

(Continued)

1.12 Taxation

The charity is an exempt charity within the meaning of schedule 3 of the Charities Act 2011 and is considered to pass the tests set out in Paragraph 1 Schedule 6 Finance Act 2010 and therefore it meets the definition of a charity for UK tax purposes.

2 Critical accounting estimates and judgements

In the application of the charity's accounting policies, the trustees are required to make judgements, estimates and assumptions about the carrying amount of assets and liabilities that are not readily apparent from other sources. The estimates and associated assumptions are based on historical experience and other factors that are considered to be relevant. Actual results may differ from these estimates.

The estimates and underlying assumptions are reviewed on an ongoing basis. Revisions to accounting estimates are recognised in the period in which the estimate is revised where the revision affects only that period, or in the period of the revision and future periods where the revision affects both current and future periods.

The only key accounting estimates included in the financial statements relate to the useful lives of the assets and the period over which they are depreciated. The trustees decide the useful life and determine the depreciation rates.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

3 Donations and legacies

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total
	2024 £	2024 £	2024 £	2023 £	2023 £	2023 £
Donations and gifts	90,667	33,400	124,067	60,391	20,325	80,716
Legacies receivable	24,500	10,000	34,500	82,135	-	82,135
Grant Income	29,247	36,267	65,514	31,913	45,445	77,358
Sponsorships	2,190	500	2,690	1,092	-	1,092
Donated goods and services	8,564	-	8,564	2,400	-	2,400
	<u>155,168</u>	<u>80,167</u>	<u>235,335</u>	<u>177,931</u>	<u>65,770</u>	<u>243,701</u>

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

4 Charitable activities

	Charitable activities 2024 £	Charitable activities 2023 £
Fundraising events	90,949	86,486
Service level agreement	7,800	2,000
Charitable rental income	-	150
	<u>98,749</u>	<u>88,636</u>
Analysis by fund		
Unrestricted funds	85,082	80,804
Restricted funds	13,667	7,832
	<u>98,749</u>	<u>88,636</u>

5 Other trading activities

	Unrestricted funds 2024 £	Unrestricted funds 2023 £
Other trading income	<u>620</u>	<u>1,279</u>

6 Investments

	Unrestricted funds 2024 £	Unrestricted funds 2023 £
Interest receivable	<u>6,757</u>	<u>1,812</u>

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

7 Other income

	Unrestricted funds	Unrestricted funds
	2024	2023
	£	£
Net gain on disposal of tangible fixed assets	866	15,200
Other income	437	6,193
	<u>1,303</u>	<u>21,393</u>

8 Raising funds

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total Unrestricted funds	
	2024	2024	2024	2023
	£	£	£	£
<u>Fundraising and publicity</u>				
Other fundraising costs	10,460	2,258	12,718	13,153
	<u>10,460</u>	<u>2,258</u>	<u>12,718</u>	<u>13,153</u>

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

9 Charitable activities

	Charitable activities 2024 £	Charitable activities 2023 £
Depreciation and impairment	50,619	56,445
Fuel	11,788	15,353
Training	18,928	20,441
Insurance	32,778	36,911
Consumables	18,299	8,953
Repairs and maintenance	72,273	38,235
Equipment purchases	60,798	39,489
Communications	9,592	9,139
Regulatory compliance	1,057	1,081
	<u>276,132</u>	<u>226,047</u>
Share of support costs (see note 10)	22,227	21,875
Share of governance costs (see note 10)	4,765	6,778
	<u>303,124</u>	<u>254,700</u>
Analysis by fund		
Unrestricted funds	246,395	227,788
Restricted funds	56,729	26,912
	<u>303,124</u>	<u>254,700</u>

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

10 Support costs

	Support costs £	Governance costs £	2024 £	Support costs £	Governance costs £	2023 £
Heat, light and water	11,229	-	11,229	12,970	-	12,970
Printing, postage and stationery	244	-	244	308	-	308
Computer costs	3,329	-	3,329	2,031	-	2,031
Travel costs	619	-	619	219	-	219
Bank charges	2,211	-	2,211	2,566	-	2,566
Other support costs	3,375	-	3,375	2,380	-	2,380
Rent and rates	1,220	-	1,220	1,401	-	1,401
Accountancy fees	-	4,200	4,200	-	6,668	6,668
Legal and professional	-	565	565	-	110	110
	<u>22,227</u>	<u>4,765</u>	<u>26,992</u>	<u>21,875</u>	<u>6,778</u>	<u>28,653</u>
Analysed between						
Charitable activities	<u>22,227</u>	<u>4,765</u>	<u>26,992</u>	<u>21,875</u>	<u>6,778</u>	<u>28,653</u>

Accountancy fees contain costs for the independent examination of £2,080 (2023: £1,950) and other accountancy services of £2,120 (2023: £4,718).

11 Trustees

None of the trustees (or any persons connected with them) received any remuneration, benefits or expenses from the charity during the year.

12 Employees

There were no employees during the year.

13 Taxation

The charity is exempt from tax on income and gains falling within section 505 of the Taxes Act 1988 or section 252 of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992 to the extent that these are applied to its charitable objects.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

14 Tangible fixed assets

	Freehold land and buildings £	Plant and equipment £	Total £
Cost			
At 1 January 2024	397,751	1,203,444	1,601,195
Additions	-	40,560	40,560
Disposals	-	(22,822)	(22,822)
At 31 December 2024	397,751	1,221,182	1,618,933
Depreciation and impairment			
At 1 January 2024	270,765	1,083,295	1,354,060
Depreciation charged in the year	12,681	37,938	50,619
Eliminated in respect of disposals	-	(22,247)	(22,247)
At 31 December 2024	283,446	1,098,986	1,382,432
Carrying amount			
At 31 December 2024	114,305	122,196	236,501
At 31 December 2023	126,985	120,149	247,134

15 Debtors

	2024 £	2023 £
Amounts falling due within one year:		
Trade debtors	1,138	7,534
Other debtors	4,690	9,803
Prepayments and accrued income	20,985	23,037
	26,813	40,374

16 Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	2024 £	2023 £
Trade creditors	1,369	5,622
Accruals and deferred income	4,382	6,354
	5,751	11,976

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

17 Restricted funds

The income funds of the charity include restricted funds comprising the following unexpended balances of donations and grants held on trust for specific purposes:

	Movement in funds				Movement in funds			
	Balance at 1 January 2023	Incoming resources	Resources expended	Transfers	Balance at 1 January 2024	Incoming resources	Resources expended	Transfers
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Glos OPPC Grant (1)	1,126	5,000	(4,233)	-	1,893	5,000	(6,650)	-
Beachley Station CCTV & Vehicle Radio	2,625	-	(2,423)	(202)	-	-	-	-
Cotswold Station Start-up	10,129	419	(434)	(4,590)	5,524	-	(4,377)	-
Cotswold Station Crew Van	16,984	5,426	-	(20,669)	1,741	800	(1,838)	-
SARA Lifeboat 14 Engine Replacement	1,150	-	-	-	1,150	2,000	-	-
Sharpness Station Building Maintenance	4,996	4,323	(689)	-	8,630	-	(6,276)	-
SARA Lifeboat 6 Trailer Replacement	3,129	-	-	-	3,129	-	-	-
Other small restricted funds (2)	1,000	8,141	(9,141)	-	-	7,857	(5,502)	-
Incident Control Unit Fit-out	-	8,500	(754)	-	7,746	-	(7,746)	-
Beachley Launch Tractor & Shed	-	1,506	-	-	1,506	37,127	(3,911)	-
Cotswolds Station New 4x4 Vehicle	-	250	-	-	250	10,805	-	-
PPE	-	15,937	(7,916)	-	8,021	11,412	(2,576)	-
Persimmon Homes Grant (3)	-	5,000	(282)	-	4,718	-	(2,862)	-
Mental Health First Aid Training	-	2,600	-	-	2,600	-	(920)	-
Sharpness Station New Pressure Washers	-	1,500	(1,040)	-	460	-	(388)	(72)
Upton Station Vehicle Replacement	-	15,000	-	(15,000)	-	-	-	-
Tewkesbury Station Replacement 4x4	-	-	-	-	-	1,680	-	-
Estate of Annette Davey - SARA Sharpness	-	-	-	-	-	5,000	(4,941)	(59)
Search Dog Unit	-	-	-	-	-	1,153	-	-
Newport Station Replacement 4x4	-	-	-	-	-	11,000	(11,000)	-
	41,139	73,602	(26,912)	(40,461)	47,368	93,834	(58,987)	(131)

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

17 Restricted funds

(Continued)

(1) Annual grant from Office of Police & Crime Commissioner for Gloucestershire, for equipment and training for land-based search and rescue.

(2) Restricted income amounts under £5,000, which were spent directly for the purposes given. In 2024 this included a £3,500 government grant for Flood Boat Operator instructor training, £2,500 specifically for equipment for Wyre Forest Station and funds a memorial bench at SARA Sharpness.

(3) Grant for technical rescue training and equipment.

Treatment of assets purchased using restricted funds - default position is to unrestrict the asset when purchased and transfer to unrestricted funds.

There have been transfers in the year of the small remaining balances in some of the restricted fund items back into unrestricted funds. These transfers total £131 and are not considered material for the accounts.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

18 Designated funds

The trustees recognise the importance of maintaining the set of boats and vehicles, and ensuring their replacements on a timely basis. To this end a Major Asset Fund has been established to aid in this endeavour.

	Balance at 1 January 2023	Movement in funds		Balance at 1 January 2024	Movement in funds		Balance at 31 December 2024
	£	Transfers in £	Transfers out £	£	Transfers in £	Transfers out £	£
Major Assets Replacement (1)	50,000	54,000	(24,000)	80,000	60,000	(20,000)	120,000
Tewkesbury Station New Van Fit-out	-	26,265	(25,259)	1,006	-	(87)	919
Upton Station 4x4 Fit-out	-	10,000	(5,030)	4,970	-	(4,970)	-
Purchase commitments H1 2024	-	6,645	-	6,645	-	(6,645)	-
PPE	-	31,000	-	31,000	-	(31,000)	-
Beachley Launch Tractor	-	-	-	-	10,000	-	10,000
Purchase commitments H1 2025 (2)	-	-	-	-	4,700	-	4,700
Incident Control Unit Fitout	-	-	-	-	10,000	(10,000)	-
	<u>50,000</u>	<u>127,910</u>	<u>(54,289)</u>	<u>123,621</u>	<u>84,700</u>	<u>(72,702)</u>	<u>135,619</u>

(1) The Major Assets Fund was initiated at the end of 2021 with £50,000 to support this, to be supplemented with other funds specifically raised for these purposes. It is envisaged that the use and replacement of monies within the Major Assets Fund will be an ongoing activity.

(2) Purchases agreed in Q4 2024 but not executed by year-end, target completion by end of Q1 2025.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

19 Analysis of net assets between funds

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total
	2024	2024	2024	2023	2023	2023
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Fund balances at 31 December 2024 are represented by:						
Tangible assets	236,501	-	236,501	247,134	-	247,134
Current assets/(liabilities)	243,469	82,084	325,553	240,630	47,368	287,998
	<u>479,970</u>	<u>82,084</u>	<u>562,054</u>	<u>487,764</u>	<u>47,368</u>	<u>535,132</u>

Cash at bank and in hand at the year end was £304,491, of which £82,084 was restricted, and £135,619 designated by the trustees for a particular purpose. This leaves an unrestricted cash balance of £86,788 at the year end date.

20 Related party transactions

Transactions with related parties

During the year the charity entered into no transactions with related parties.

21 Subsidiaries

Details of the charity's subsidiaries at 31 December 2024 are as follows:

SARA Trading Limited - Registered in England (company number 11820156), incorporated 11 February 2019. The company has no share capital and is limited by guarantee. The charity has given a guarantee of £100, and is the relevant legal entity by virtue of the ability to appoint and remove trustees. The three officers of the company are also trustees of the charity. The company provides commercial training and organises events to raise funds for the charity. The company had net assets at 28 February 2024 of £305 (2023 : £13,831). The company made no donations to the charity during the year (2023: £18,500).

The charity is not required to prepare consolidated accounts.

22 Contingent liability

As referred to in note 21, in the unlikely event of the subsidiary company SARA Trading Limited being wound up, the charity have guaranteed a payment of £100.

Annex A: SARA's Operational Role and Tasks

SARA is a multi-disciplinary volunteer search and rescue organisation and is the designated rescue service for an area of over 20,000 km² on and around the Severn. It provides:

- Lifeboat cover for large parts of the Rivers Severn, Wye, Usk and the Bristol Avon*
- Cliff rescue, particularly for the lower Wye Valley climbing areas including Symonds Yat
- Mud rescue
- Swift water and flood rescue
- Land Search

SARA operates from seven rescue stations, at Newport, Chepstow (SARA Beachley), Sharpness, Tewkesbury, Upton-upon-Severn, Kidderminster (SARA Wyre Forest) and at Cirencester (SARA Cotswolds). SARA Crew receive 'callouts' through a combination of dedicated Pagers and through SMS messages using the SARCALL system.

Lifeboats and Mud Rescue

SARA is the designated rescue service for the Rivers Severn, Wye and Usk. The SARA lifeboats, based at Beachley, Sharpness and Newport are tasked by HM Coastguard, largely in response to 999 calls.

The River Severn below Gloucester is used for around 350 commercial ship transits per year and the lower Wye around 150. The Severn also has over 500 registered leisure craft transits between Gloucester and Sharpness alone each year, and many more that are not counted. The tidal range on the Severn at Beachley, and on the Wye at Chepstow, is 15 metres (the second highest in the World!), which means that the river changes within a few hours from a wide expanse of deep water, to narrow shallow channels weaving through extensive sandbanks.

In addition, the tidal current on the Severn reaches 12 knots; this can lead to very turbulent river conditions in even a moderate wind. Most of the way to Gloucester the riverbed is very broad, with a narrow and winding navigable channel, marked with numerous buoys, beacons and transits. The margins of all the tidal rivers have wide and thick mudbanks below the high-tide levels, and in places the exposed mud leads out to rocky islands at low tide.

Typical incidents for SARA include vessels grounding, or losing power hence requiring urgent assistance to avoid grounding. People have been rescued from islands or ledges where they were being cut off by the tide, or actually plucked from the mud. On other occasions boats, and other floating hardware, are broken loose by the water and drift with the fast currents and have to be recovered. On average lifeboats are launched operationally around once a week (50-60 launches per year).

*SARA's declared area of lifeboat operations, for which it is tasked by HM Coastguard, is the Severn, north from a line between Newport and Clevedon to Maisemore Weir near Gloucester, and the tributary rivers Wye (to Bigsweir Bridge), Usk (to the M4 Bridge) and the Avon (to Bristol Docks). If required in exceptional circumstances, SARA Lifeboats can extend beyond this area, using a re-fuelling stop at Newport, to operate north of a line from Barry to Weston Super Mare.

The SARA lifeboats area also features several high bridges – notably the M48 Severn Bridge but also the A48 in Chepstow and several in Newport. SARA is often called out to a 'person at risk' on a bridge. The majority, but sadly not all, are resolved directly by the Police. However, a lifeboat is always launched so as to be ready. Recoveries are therefore not uncommon, but SARA has successfully rescued people from the water below a bridge.

Land Search

SARA provides land search capabilities in support of the Police. SARA has signed Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) in place with the Police Forces for Gloucestershire, Herefordshire & Worcestershire, the West Midlands, Shropshire, West Mercia and Warwickshire. These Police Forces request SARA support for 'Missing Person' searches in their respective areas, and teams from the various SARA Stations work together as appropriate to the search area location.

Such missing person searches can range in duration from less than an hour to spanning several days and may become 'recovery' rather than rescue operations. SARA is able to deploy one of its two Mobile 'Incident Control Units' (ICUs) to support such searches and other operations; searches are managed from the ICU, which is the focus for liaison with the Police and other agencies. SARA's MoUs with the Police are to assist with any search, in any terrain, for a vulnerable missing person – including urban searches if required.

SARA is also a member (Associate Member since Jan 2021) of Mountain Rescue England and Wales (MREW). Generally, MR teams deploy into mountainous environments (or at least challenging ones); in the SARA area the more technical areas would include the Wye Valley, Forest of Dean, Wyre Forest or Cleeve Hill.

In addition, all neighbouring Search & Rescue and Mountain Rescue teams back each other up, providing mutual aid when required. SARA is frequently involved in operations involving the Wiltshire, Oxfordshire, West Mercia or Longtown teams, and less often Warwickshire, Staffordshire and Central Beacons.

Cliff Rescue

SARA Beachley is a specific base for the Cliff Rescue in the Lower Wye Valley, where the cliffs around Wintours Leap, Symonds Yat and other walls are a popular destination for climbers of all abilities. It is estimated that there are 3,000-4,000 climber-days per year in the Lower Wye Valley. There are also a number of disused quarries in the area, in which accidents involving non-climbers happen.

SARA has an MoU with Gloucester Fire & Rescue Service (GFRS) for effecting cliff rescue operations, and an increasingly close relationship with South Wales FRS (some of the cliffs are on the Welsh side of the Wye). The SARA rope rescue training is based on Rescue3 qualifications, also used by the Fire and Rescue services which facilitates interoperability. SARA has in-house Technician-level instructors.

There is a further close relationship with Gloucestershire Cave Rescue Group (GCRG), which also has rope rescue trained personnel and relevant equipment, which are available as required. Conversely SARA is available to provide surface support to cave rescue operations, and indeed is integral to the contingency plans for caves such as 'Otter Hole' in the Wye Valley. Rope rescue operations are thankfully rare, but joint exercises are conducted with the FRS and GCRG.

Inland Water and Flood Rescue

Swift Water is defined as 'that moving fast enough to produce sufficient force to present a life and safety hazard to a person entering it'. Operations in inland water' are referred to as 'Swiftwater Rescue' or 'SRT' tasks and include life-saving rescue. However, due to the time-sensitive nature of water incidents these are often search and if necessary, recovery operations. Their initiation is often by a combination of Police, FRS or Coastguard. Dependent on the water concerned, a small boat may be deployed, or a floating platform, in addition to crew directly in shallow water. SARA has the ability to launch such small boats in almost all rivers, with no requirement for slipway or road access to the riverbank. Such small boats are referred to as 'Rescue' boats; SARA prefers rigid rescue boats to reduce the risk of punctures from the use of inflatables.

SARA Swift Water crew are qualified to the national standard, and we have in-house instructors for DEFRA Mod 3 (rescuers) and Mod 4 (boat operators) under the Rescue3 scheme. The Swift Water Teams are also able to deploy on flood rescue operations nationally, as Flood Response Teams. DEFRA, through the National DEFRA Flood Rescue group, coordinate the Flood Response Team deployments nationally. SARA has 2 x 'Type B' and 4 x 'Type C' declared teams of 7, shared between its 7 Stations, which need to be ready for deployment anywhere in the country. SARA has a proven track record of deploying around the UK on such incidents including Essex (2014), Devon (2014) and Yorkshire (2015/16).

First Aid and Casualty Care

All SARA crew are trained, at minimum, in basic first aid. A number of SARA crew are further qualified to the much higher level of 'Casualty Care' as defined by MREW. In addition, a number of crew are professional paramedics, nurses or serving as Community First Responders.

First aid equipment is carried during all searches and in all SARA vehicles; depending on the nature of the operation, equipment such as Oxygen, portable defibrillators, back- and neck-stabilization boards may be taken into the field.

Education and Training Provision

SARA provides training and education to the wider community through a variety of routes. These include:

1. **Emergency Services Training.** For the Emergency Services, SARA provides lifeboat training. For example, SARA Beachley has an ongoing relationship with the South West Ambulance Services Trust to provide structured, water-based rescue training for members of their Hazardous Area Response Teams (HART). This provides specialist knowledge, training and experience of working with boats, including in the tidal waters of the Severn Estuary.
2. **School Visits.** The SARA stations frequently host visits from and undertakes visits to local primary schools, Scouts and Guides Units, etc. These are designed to be educational as well as fun, informing young people of the dangers of the water and other aspects of the local area of which they may be unaware.
3. **Outreach Activities.** SARA frequently participates in relevant 'community outreach' activities such as the Drowning Awareness Weeks, again providing education about the avoidance of risks as well as information concerning SARA and other emergency Services.

Event Safety Cover

Most years SARA also provides safety and first aid cover to local outdoor-based events, generally sports related. These are usually events which involve water, and/or off-road running, such as rowing regattas, raft races, triathlons and off-road running races. SARA undertakes this role for several reasons:

1. To support the local community. SARA has historically provided this service at a discount to the notional cost, in order to facilitate and support these local events to a greater extent than alternative organisations would be able to. The number of such races and events supported continues to rise, as local organisations realise the capabilities which SARA can bring to their events.
2. To raise SARA's profile. SARA is usually paid for providing the service, albeit at hugely discounted rates for community groups to enable these to be viable, but for many members of the public spectating, this is an excellent opportunity to see SARA in action.
3. To put SARA's skills into play 'in the field' and provide real-world experience.



Providing safety Cover for a Rowing Regatta, one of many which SARA covers each year

Annex B: Summary of SARA Capabilities

Inland Missing Person Search

- Foot based open-area search, including open area, wooded and steep / very steep terrain
- Able to establish and manage a safe system of work for other services on difficult terrain
- Water search, including from the bank, in the water on foot, on small inflatable craft and on small powered boats
- Field-based search control facility, independent of any infrastructure
- 4x4 vehicles capable of transporting a loaded stretcher to a road
- Search planning, management and record-keeping to Mountain Rescue standards

Water operations

- Boat- and foot-based search and rescue anywhere upstream from the M4 Second Severn Crossing (and below it if needed), at all water levels and all but the most extreme weather conditions
- Tidal water operations compliant with HM Coastguard Rescue Boat Code, with B-Class and D-Class lifeboats. B-Class capable of operating in almost all weathers and rescuing 6 x casualties at a time
- Inland water operations compliant with DEFRA Flood ConOps, with Type B (powered boat all-SRT) teams, all Rescue3 qualified
- Swiftwater teams able to operate in fast and/or shallow inland water by day or night, with and without inflatable rafts & platforms
- Able to launch & recover a small boat almost anywhere
- Water operations interface with land-based teams
- Able to equip and transport specialists eg Ambulance HART, forensic officers etc.

Mud Rescue

- Able to operate on and across the tidal mud in the Severn and Wye Estuaries, whether accessed from the bank or from the water
- Able to extract a casualty from the mud, and transport them up to dry land or down to a boat

Cliff and Steep Ground (Gloucestershire-Based)

- Fully equipped team for working at height and on steeply sloping ground, all Rescue3-qualified.
- Focused on the Wye Valley climbing areas and Cotswolds, deployable across the SARA area
- Able to access and manage casualties, and transport up or down a slope / cliff
- Able to establish and operate off-vertical or horizontal systems eg cableway or high-line (aka Tirolean) systems
- Able to equip and transport specialists eg Ambulance HART, forensic officers etc

Advanced First Aid

- Mountain Rescue-qualified Remote Rescue Medical Technicians (formerly 'Casualty Carers') on all callouts
- Team doctors usually deployed, else available as remote support to RRMTs.
- Provision of Advanced Life Support including use of airways and oxygen
- Management of trauma including spinal injuries
- Use of appropriate basic pain relief medication
- Capable of operating in any terrain, however steep or in water

Command and control

- 24x7 immediate response callout handling team able to discuss potential SARA response and mobilise accordingly
- JESIP-trained Incident Commander ('SARA OIC') deployed as part of any operation, plus team leaders within each operational team
- VHF and Airwave radios
- Land and water teams practiced at working with HMCG helicopter

In Memory



Hugh Inwood, who passed away in January 2024



The Memorial Bench, at SARA Sharpness