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Wessex Water Community Fund
Impact report for Round 1 (grants made April 2020)

Summary of funded projects and impact on beneficiaries

Grant recipient	Project	Amount Awarded	Number of beneficiaries	Number of volunteers involved	Theme	Outcomes
Bridport Community Shed	Creating a repair café for vulnerable beneficiaries, as a 'quiet space'	1500	12	6	Older people	Build of Repair Café improved the Community Shed facilities and assisted with social distancing, enabling the support of isolated people during the pandemic
Bus Stop Club	Community Café supporting vulnerable residents in a deprived estate	1500	30	8	Poverty and disadvantage	Alternative hot meal and grocery delivery service with wellbeing checks, addressing food poverty and isolation caused by the pandemic
Dorset Mind	Eco-therapy social prescription group	1500	35	16	Mental health	Reduced isolation, improved mental health & self-confidence and renewed sense of community; addressing the exacerbation of these issues caused by the pandemic
Faithworks Wessex	Supporting Storehouse project for rough sleepers by installing a shower	1500	12	4	Homelessness	Extension granted to 30/06/21
Friends of Stour Connect	Expansion of community café	1500	140	35	Community support and development	Alternative spend to form Covid 19 Action Group, responding to requests for help & deliveries from those shielding, expanding hot meal deliveries and dementia services
Gillingham Community Church	'Open Door' community hub providing access to support services	1500	30	10	Poverty and disadvantage	Funds used to provide household packs (including cleaning essentials and toiletries) and support gas/electricity costs

Langton Matravers Parish Council	Public water Dispenser for Public Conveniences at Putlake	900	0	0	Environment and improving surroundings	Less use of plastic bottles in the future plus health benefits of drinking water.
MyTIME	Respite activities for young carers during young carers week	900	23	1	Young carers	Took place in August with lower numbers but relieved the growing isolation of these young carers exacerbated by lockdown, helping to maintain mental wellbeing
The Alcohol Education Trust (AET)	Outside tap for drinking water at new community site, Pavilion in the Park	1200	-	-	Environment and improving surroundings	Less use of plastic bottles in the future plus health benefits of drinking water and use of tap for the raised beds and bird station
Thorncombe Village Shop Association Ltd	To provide the shop with a new disabled loo with a grab rail.	1500	50	2	Community support and development	Improved experience of using community shop and cafe, which in a rural village is a key service to reduce isolation, especially for older people
Weymouth Skatepark Association	Water reful machine for skatepark supporting young people	1500	300	2	Health, wellbeing and serious illness	Less use of plastic bottles and young people drinking more water whilst taking part in sport
TOTAL		£15,000	632 beneficiaries	84 volunteers		

How the grants benefitted the groups

- 2 groups report that the grant helped them to raise funds from other sources – a total of £7250
- 3 groups report that the grant helped them to develop new links or partnerships with other groups
- 6 groups report that the grant helped them to publicise or raise awareness of their services

Thanks to Wessex Water and Dorset Community Foundation

“Thank again for support through Wessex Water during 2020. It was an unprecedented year for everyone, but especially those who were struggling on low budgets. The meal project was really appreciated and our volunteers enjoyed being involved too.”

“Without this initial funding, diverted into the Covid 19 Action Group, we would have struggled to meet the needs of our community in the early days of Lockdown 1”

“We are very grateful to you for your support. The children so needed these days out after lockdown, and we wouldn't have been able to provide this service without your support.”

“This grant has given us the chance to purchase what would be considered a luxury purchase for our charity. We have high running costs and this would be an item on our wish list but most likely not affordable for our charity. It's had a huge positive outcome already.”

Reports and case studies submitted by the groups

1) Bridport Community Shed

(Due to government lockdown restrictions and delays to project, an extension was granted to 30th July 2021.)

We have used DCF funds to refurbish and modify two wooden storage sheds, creating a comfortable new space for welcoming visitors. Its new windows and doors allow in plenty of natural light and ventilation, it has a level floor and ramp to the yard outside to facilitate movement, and electricity & sink for making tea. We refer to this space as the Repair Cafe, Informal conversations and feedback from users show that it supports improved physical & mental health.

We are very satisfied that our dedicated volunteers have managed to commit to this construction project, despite the period of lockdown and its aftermath. This was a very welcome grant and we appreciated the flexibility to proceed at our own pace once received. The new space significantly improves the yard we lease from the Town Council. At a difficult time for everybody, particular those vulnerable to loneliness and isolation, it is helping us provide a safe and secure space for people to socialize and fix things, make do and mend. We have a policy of reducing waste, re-using scrap material, avoiding single-use plastic, minimising use of chemically treated timber, and sorting all rubbish for recycling. By running a repair service we also avoid broken household items getting thrown away. Among the various materials re-used for crafts are textiles, scrap timber and wax candles, as well as re-purposed packaging materials such as corks, tetrapacks & boxes.

COVID 19 has forced us to modify all our operations, limiting numbers of people on site (managed by pre-booking) and sanitising our workspaces and tools routinely. Rather than attending perhaps 50 people during this time, our core group of users has been 12. The new Repair Cafe helps with social distancing. We are preparing for re-opening once the current lockdown ends. As well as the Repair Cafe we have also added two new areas to allow us to work outdoors, making for a more social distanced workspace. We secured some adequate small grant funding to install this. We are developing new relationships with local groups wishing to use our space and services, including social prescribers from the medical centre, an amateur dramatics society, and playground associations.

Case study

We had a visitor to the Shed wanting the handle of her grandad's garden fork to be repaired, for sentimental reasons. We worked together with her on it, with a successful outcome. With her new-found confidence, She has since completed a number of jobs round her house that she says she wouldn't otherwise have attempted. The Shed provided her with a place to acquire some essential skills, and the assurance of somewhere she can turn to for help when needed.

2) Bus Stop Club

Due to the pandemic we had to close our cafe. Along with other funding, the grant enabled us to run a very successful hot meals project during the first lockdown due to COVID-19 an alternative. We cooked and delivered 890 hot meals during the period March to June 2020. We were able to provide hot meals for our own CAP (Christians Against Poverty) debt clients, disadvantaged families, and individuals who were shielding during this time; 60 very vulnerable families in total. Meals were delivered 3 days per week and each Friday we also included a bag of donated groceries. Most of those volunteers and staff used to meeting up and supporting individual clients, turned up 3 days per week for food delivery. We were able to pay mileage to those who were going further than our local area. Our befrienders and helpers also took it as an opportunity to do a health and welfare check 3 times a week, to make sure other needs were met.



Any needs or safeguarding concerns were fed back the bus Stop Club Safeguarding lead. We liaised with other covid groups and foodbanks during this period, particularly with the Allendale Community Centre and Wimborne Foodbank. First Point were able to refer a number of their clients for meals too. Everyone enjoyed the meals. It also helped them not to feel so isolated particularly the ones who were shielding during this time. Single parents especially felt it helped them to all eat better during that period of no school. One Mum undergoing cancer treatment was helped immensely through receiving meals; this family continued to receive groceries on Fridays until Easter 2021.

The service and feedback gave us the idea to offer individual coaching for anxiety management from September 2020 as our post covid response to levels of stress in the population, and in particular, some of our own clients. This new initiative has been running since that time with some very good personal outcomes.

Case studies

We support a family of 5 in West Moors. During this time, meals were delivered and health and welfare checks carried out by their key worker. One of these days, delivering their meals the key worker discovered that Dad had a fall and injured his arm, so had to be taken to hospital. The arm was broken. So thanks to our visit this was dealt with quickly and calmly, and we ensured that for the next few weeks they were coping and had everything they needed.

A client with health difficulties who we had supported for a while through our debt programme was shielding during lockdown. She was receiving hot meals. Sadly we then discovered she had been financially abused by a friend who had been doing shopping for her. She had not felt able to tell us she was having to rely on others to bring shopping in, and when we discovered this situation, after liaising with the police, we immediately put a team of 5 people around her to support in different ways and at different levels. Her family also stepped up their support and put online shopping in place. The police did not take the case further at this time, but the client then attended our anxiety management sessions and is now much more resilient and has realised she should have explained to us what was happening. Now her key worker keeps in touch every week. We were not able to prevent what happened, but we were able to give support in the aftermath of the trauma experienced.



3) Dorset Mind

Dorset Mind used the grant to fund our ecotherapy gardening group the GAP project. The purpose of this was to support residents of Dorchester who have mild to moderate mental health challenges through therapeutic gardening. It is an inclusive project that aims to help people over the age of 16, most of them who have experienced loneliness and isolation and may well be disengaged from the community. We have also engaged young people with mental health conditions and have run sessions for families who have a family member struggling with mental health illness. The project has helped these families to connect through the common purpose of gardening and helped them to find ways to understand each other and work together more successfully as a family unit. Community volunteers have been active throughout, developing and maintaining the allotments. Food produce we have grown has been donated to Dorchester Foodbank. The benefit of this project has been to bring together communities to create a safe space to help people with mental health issues for many years to come. Dorset Mind has plans to role this project out in other areas of Dorset and has been in discussions with other organisations to find suitable locations.

Additionally, we have worked with a local primary school to encourage the children to get involved with gardening, eventually we hope the children can come and work on the site but so far due to covid restrictions we have worked with them in the classroom, growing plants and painting pebbles for the allotment with positive messages. We have also begun to create a reflection garden for people who are grieving due to losing a loved one.

The impact of Government restrictions and lockdowns has caused us huge challenges with this particular project as it has restricted the amount of people we can have at the allotments. We have followed the rules and continued to run the project face-to-face when we can with social distancing measures in place but we have also found other ways of engaging with the community via social media, online platforms and in a school – for example, encouraging them to try gardening projects at home with our facebook community page <https://www.facebook.com/thegaprojectdorchester>. We have had 21 unique participants who have accessed direct support at the allotments, although we have worked with a further 14 children who have not been able to attend the site. All the participants are keen to continue working with the project and continue helping out with gardening.

This project has: Helped improve mental health for participants, Helped to build stronger family units, Helped to bring the community together, Provided volunteering opportunities, Provided fresh produce for the local foodbank, Helped engage children with nature and growing.

“I feel calmer when I'm at The GAP Project”

“I wasn't really interested in gardening but now I am interested in how to grow vegetables”

“Watering the plants today gave me a sense of purpose, I felt I was taking the time to look after the plants”

“I noticed the colours, the birds chirping and the herbs growing”

“I really enjoyed being creative with natural things to make Christmas wreaths”

“I enjoy taking the time to be outside as I don't have space to grow things at home”

Case studies

1. The participant is a lady who lives alone. She doesn't have any friends or family and feels isolated and lonely. This participant attended three sessions in October. The first session she planted spinach, kale and garlic. The focus was to plant and then nurture these each week and feel a sense of ownership. We talked throughout the session. On the second session we again talked and focused on weeding, watering and planting seeds. On the third session she worked with a volunteer on positive pebbles. Using paints to write words and paint pictures that made her feel happy. These were then placed around the pond in the eco garden. She also completed some nature-based art to hang on the gratitude tree. We spent some time in the eco garden focusing on mindfulness techniques. The participant felt her coming to talk was helpful and she felt less lonely when attending the sessions. She did feel useful and part of a community but felt her mind was still overwhelmed by low mood and anxieties about finances. I signposted the lady to Dorset Mind befriending service and provided information on further support areas for finances. We also discussed meditation apps and mindfulness exercises to try at home.

2. The participant is a gentleman in his 70's who has been attending sessions every Monday for the last few months. He was a farmer and is used to being active and outdoors. A change in his health with Parkinson's and Louis dementia resulted in selling his farm and moving to a small house. In the last month he has lost his dog and finds it frustrating being at home. When outside and attending The GAP Project, he is very happy, but at home he suffers from low mood. This participant was reluctant to participate in fine motor skill activities such as sowing seeds. However, we started planting bulbs in November ready for spring. Having gained confidence using large pots and bulbs and subsequent sessions he asked to plant smaller bulbs and sow seeds from plants. This is a huge step in confidence and fine motor skill activity for this client. He reported feeling his mood had improved and he felt increased confidence. The participants wife also commented on how happy he is attending The GAP Project.

4) Faithworks Wessex

(Due to government lockdown restrictions and delays to project, an extension was granted to 30th July 2021.)

We put a shower into our training centre for those recovering from homelessness. We have now brought the carpentry workshop into St Johns church hall that has already been the base for our "seed team" (gardening); so up to 12 trainees will be using the hall at some point in the week. Our trainees are doing physical work, and may be living in shared accommodation, so having a shower at the end of a session is a huge boon - and makes them more likely to attend regularly. In turn this makes accommodation retention and improved mental health more likely.

The installation has been challenging because of how difficult it has been to get tradespeople and materials – we are on our 4th arrangement! One of our team who has building skills prepared the area to reduce the time required from others.

Case study

"Hi, my name is Ben. Last year I was in a really bad place, my dog died, I had family issues, and eventually I started to run out of money. I had to sleep on the streets and started to feel really depressed. I was helped by sleep safe who looked after me and helped me get into accommodation and off the streets. I was then invited to go to the storehouse and workshop where I was taught carpentry. What i loved the most was making hedgehog houses, I started to become passionate about hedgehogs because they are endangered. I am now in the process of making my own website and have a dream of running my own hedgehog house business, I even had my first website order last week! ,I have purpose now, a dream and hope for the future. I am looking forward to my future."

5) Friends of Stour Connect

This Grant was diverted into the Covid 19 Emergency rather than our community café. The funding was utilised to ensure that Friends of Stour Connect offices were still manned by our Project Manager at the start of the Pandemic. This was of huge importance since some Trustees were medically vulnerable and were self isolating. The funding to maintain our Project Managers continuance on a self-employed basis meant that we were able to engage and assist with managing volunteers for the Covid 19 Action Group formed and have an ability to respond to the many enquiries. This made an enormous difference in the early days to the lives of those people in our community who were told to shield. Services provided by co-ordinated volunteers include delivering food, prescriptions, and specialist equipment. The Grant enabled us to have a structure in place to take on and manage volunteers, rewrite policies and procedures, maintain and answered phone line, as well as assisting us to start to apply for other funding that the needs of our community were demonstrating. The continued presence of the Project Manager also meant we were able to continue with some projects - Hot Food Deliveries (numbers increased) and our Dementia specialist project (online and phone only). Over Lockdown 1 we co-ordinated some 3500 visits across Sturminster Newton and North Dorset.

6) Gillingham Community Church

(Due to government lockdown restrictions and delays to project, an extension was granted to 30th July 2021.)

The pandemic meant we were unable to operate Open Door in the normal way with clients dropping into the hub. Instead this was done remotely via telephone calls, to those we knew and those referred to us via different agencies and local surgeries. The funding was used to help support the vulnerable, disadvantaged and those struggling financially; provide household packs of general cleaning items and other essentials that are not provided by the Food Bank. It also helped to pay for gas/electricity bills for those using prepaid meters. This support has been particularly beneficial to those in our local community during the last year with many experiencing a drop in income or unemployment due to the Covid 19 lockdown. We raised additional funds from the Martin Lewis Covid fund.

Knowing that help is readily available helps people to feel valued and cared for by the community and to realise that there is help and support available. The support is given freely and without judgement helping to remove the stigma of asking for help. This has helped to restore faith in the local community and encouraged the disadvantaged and vulnerable to come forward for help, reducing isolation and the feeling of being alone.

We are in the process of purchasing our own building in Gillingham High Street which will enable us to expand the work we do in the community and offer a wider range of support to the vulnerable, disadvantaged and unemployed. We hope to expand this further to supporting those with mental health issues as we believe there is an increase need in the community for this type of support, the volume of which cannot be meant purely by council services. This new project will require a significant increase in the funding we require and we are currently pulling together the costs of the project to enable us to seek funding.

Case studies

X and Y were greatly distressed when we first met them in early December. Having always handled their finances well and never asked for help before, it was hard for them to accept that they were in very real need. Their work in the hospitality sector had completely dried up with the onset of the first national lockdown in March 2020 and they had been living on their savings. With bills to pay and a family to feed, they found themselves facing Christmas with no reserves. Our first step was to reassure them that they had come to the right place and that and it was a privilege to help them. Not only were we able to give them non-perishable food to feed their family for the next few days, but also a household pack, containing toiletries and household cleaning items. They were very pleased to receive this pack as they had felt that toiletries seemed a luxury that that hadn't dared to think they would receive help for. They were overjoyed to also find we could put some money on their gas card and electric key as they were living on the emergency supply, so this enabled them to cook.

As with many of our clients, Z thought that the help we provided was not there for 'people like me' She had been referred to us by her housing officer and came to us exhausted and dejected, embarrassed at finding herself having to ask for help. Her hours as a dinner lady and cleaner at a primary school had reduced significantly since Covid struck and her already tight budget had become even harder to manage. She had struggled on, paying the household bills and looking after her husband and resident grandchildren, at the expense of herself and her own health. Reassured that we totally understood her situation and that she had no need to feel embarrassed, Z was able to accept enough food for her family along with a household pack containing essential toiletries like toothpaste and toilet roll and some cleaning items like washing up liquid and washing powder. We were also able to help her by providing gas and electric onto her card and key. She had been worrying about how low her electric and gas had been getting and was about to go into the emergency provision.

7) Langton Matravers Parish Council

The public water dispenser was fitted to the outside of our public toilet block at Putlake as planned, using the grant. We hope it might mean less plastic bottles dumped in the environment, both by locals and by those visiting our Parish. We know the postman uses it regularly!

8) MyTIME

Unfortunately, we were unable to run the three activity days in Young Carers' Week as planned due to lockdown restrictions. Our activity days were able to recommence once lockdown restrictions had been lifted in August, but at this stage our plans changed as we felt it was important for health and safety reasons that the activity day ran outside. We, therefore, took two separate age groups to Burnbake Ropes Course on two separate days where each group enjoyed four hours of climbing on the high ropes and low ropes courses. Lunch was provided. In total, we took 23 children - this was less than intended, but it was necessary to take smaller groups so that we could ensure the social distancing of all children at all times.

This grant created the opportunity for young carers to socialise and make friends, and thus helped to tackle their feelings of isolation. Participants were able to see for themselves that they are not alone in their caring roles, and to feel that, in fact, they belong to a community. Three of the children involved have since started attending our weekly Zoom youth Group, and so are now in regular contact with other children whose circumstances closely reflect their own. This may prove significant as these children grow older because they are now establishing for themselves an important support network which is visibly improving their self-esteem and mental wellbeing. The grant also allowed all participants to take some time for themselves, to try new things and to relax away from their caring responsibilities, so gave the mental health and welfare of these children a significant boost after the trials and hardships of lockdown. Finally, because the activity involved climbing, this grant also helped many of the children involved to develop key life skills and important mindsets such as perseverance, ambition and self-worth.

Participant feedback indicates that: • 87% enjoyed the activity very much, • 60% experienced an activity they'd never tried before, • 73% felt that their self-confidence had improved, • 80% felt that their team-working skills had improved, • 94% made at least one friend, • 87% felt part of a community, • 87% would like to take part in another MYTIME-sponsored activity in future.

"I faced my fears today."

"In school I have to explain everything all the time, but my friends still don't understand. I like days like today because everyone here is in the same situation, so I don't have to explain anything."



Case study

In any group of young carers, there's always a range of characters, and this weeks group were no different to any other. Some were bold and brave, and would have been swinging from the treetops within the first five minutes had they had the chance. Others were more apprehensive - fearful of heights, or nervous about meeting new people. One girl, in particular - the one with the bright green raincoat - seemed almost frozen to the spot when she arrived. She was quiet. Shy. She knew none of the other children and looked uncomfortable. I understood her position. After months of lockdown, this was new to us all, and nobody could have blamed her for needing time to warm up. First things first, we ate some lunch. Caught up on everything we'd missed during lockdown. Shared thoughts and feelings about going back to school. Several of the more nervous children seemed visibly to relax within minutes, and to open up. But the little girl in the bright green raincoat remained mute. I kept an eye on her. Tried to put her at ease.

After lunch, the instructors arrived and introduced themselves. They gave the kids their harnesses and helmets, and led them off towards the high ropes. By now, the children were laughing and joking with one another, chatting as if they'd known each other for years. All except one. The little girl in the bright green raincoat. I caught her eye and gave her a smile.

As the first child prepared to brave the dizzying heights of the high ropes course, I turned away to grab myself a helmet. I put it on, clipped it up, stepped into my harness. When I turned back, I couldn't believe my eyes. The child was already at the very tip-top of the course, swinging from monkey bars some thirty feet up in the sky. Even more amazing? It was the girl in the bright green raincoat. As she made her descent, the other young carers whooped and cheered, and by the time she reached the floor, a very definite smile had spread across her face. As less confident climbers stepped forward one by one to take their turn, the little girl in the bright green raincoat showed patience and enormous kindness in supporting them to overcome their fears. By the end of the day, she was giving instructions, sharing techniques and asking others for their advice. She was one of the gang - almost a different child to the child that had arrived that morning. It's remarkable: the difference that just one day can make.

For some, a group of supportive peers can have huge impact. For others, it's about having the chance to try something new, and turn off from everyday stresses. For the little girl in the bright green raincoat, it was about excelling at something and feeling accepted and admired by her peers. Before she left, she completed a survey for us. She ticked the box that said she'd gained more confidence. She ticked the box that said she'd made friends. Even better, she ticked the box that said she'd like to come back and take part in another MYTime activity. And who knows the impact that the next day out might have on her.

9) The Alcohol Education Trust (AET)

The grant was used to install the pipework and outdoor tap to the Pavilion which will service the raised beds and bird feeding station, and the pipework to an outdoor drinking water fountain outside of the Pavilion for use by members of the public using the park. The Duchy of Cornwall are building the water fountain feature itself which will not be operational until the autumn due to Covid 19. The Pavilion in The Park however, opens on April 16th, providing shelter, loos, refreshments and a community space, everything is in place from our point of view and The Duchy just have to connect to the services our builders have put in. The Duchy estimate to complete works by September 2021.

The availability of free drinking water for park users will mean that families will be able to use the park and its free facilities without incurring any cost for water. We will hold lots of events at the Pavilion and a regular Park Run which will draw people from further afield. Already we have rugby tots, a weekly park run and three exercise classes starting this summer. Although the water fountain is not yet operational, our provision of public loos is making these activities possible and the water fountain will be a great addition saving participants money and ensuring they stay hydrated. There are two days of family activities this August for example. Without Pavilion in the park, these activities would not be possible. The building is due to open on April 16th.

By supporting us in providing free drinking water to visitors to The Great Field, this will also be of great benefit to those exercising, families using the play equipment, for dog walkers and the general public, meaning they don't have to spend money on staying hydrated. There will also be less plastic waste as users can fill up their own water bottles. The outside tap will also provide water for the bird feeding station and for the raised beds, allowing us to improve the environment for wildlife.

Coming Soon

Pavilion in the Park

A great place to meet, eat, play, work and relax

Opening Spring 2021, the Pavilion in the Park is a sustainable, multi-purpose community venue

- Family and dog friendly cafe
- Meeting room for events, clubs and businesses
- Sheltered veranda and picnic tables
- Public toilets for park users
- An extensive play area for children and young people is being built by the Duchy of Cornwall, opening Summer 2021

Office space for youth charity the Alcohol Education Trust - find out more at info@alcoholeducationtrust.org or phone 01300 320869



Generously supported by:



the heart of the park

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10) Thorncombe Village Shop

The grant was used to instal a new disabled loo with grab rail and to decorate the walls and ceiling. Approx. 50 people have used the new/improved community facilities. We continually get praised for our shiny new Loo. It has made a huge difference to the comfort of those using the shop and its cafe. The shop and cafe is a boon to all members of the community and we hope that this will continue as we strive to keep making sufficient profit to be viable. We hope now to move on to the next project which is to raise sufficient money for a mechanical awning to the front of the shop to protect people from adverse weather.

11) Weymouth Skatepark

We have placed a cold water dispenser inside the skatepark that uses tap water only. This is a non-contact water dispenser that has helped us to not only encourage more young people and adults to drink more tap water but has also helped to reduce the amount of bottles of water purchased thus reducing plastic waste. The machine is contactless - you just place your own bottle under it, and it dispenses the correct amount of cold tap water. We had to remind our users that they needed to bring their own bottles with them to use, they soon got into the habit of that as many have them for school use. The dispenser counts how many bottles it has filled and displays the number and that indicates how many plastic bottles have been saved for being used and disposed of. This educates our young people into the difference one machine can make to our environment, living right by the sea we feel it's an important message to get across to our young people. This little machine has had a huge impact already and it's helped to encourage a lot more people to drink cold tap water. An unexpected positive change was that we took plastic bottled water off of sale from our snack bar, this reduced income slightly but these things have to be done if we are to reduce plastic waste. We are also registered as a water refill station for members of the public to use as well as our customers. The water is there for everyone to drink for free.