



Annual Report
2023-2024



Introduction

High Weald Swifts was incorporated as a charity on 30 August 2023, and this Report covers the first full accounting period of its operations as a charity.

Constitution

High Weald Swifts is a charitable incorporated organisation and has the registered charity number 1204521. The charity's address is 21 Woodfield Road, Tonbridge, TN9 2LG. The trustees, who have remained the same since incorporation, are Martin Garwood, Cheryl Mason and Justin Holmes.

Aims

The objects of High Weald Swifts are “to promote for the benefit of the general public the conservation and protection of the common swift, *Apus apus*, in the administrative districts of Tonbridge and Malling, Tunbridge Wells, Maidstone and Wealden, in particular but not exclusively by: (1) educating the public about common swifts and in particular about the rapid decline in the common swift population, the causes of it and what can be done to prevent further decline; (2) engaging in educational projects in schools and other settings; (3) undertaking surveys of nest sites; (4) identifying and protecting existing nest sites; (5) promoting and supporting the provision of additional nest sites, including by making grants; (6) promoting and supporting growth in the population of insects, which are the common swift’s food; and (7) liaising with homeowners and other landowners, local authority planners, property developers and other organisations and individuals to promote measures to help conserve the species.”

Activities

Primary schools project



Over the year the charity has worked with three primary schools in Tonbridge (Sussex Road Primary School, St Margaret Clitherow Roman Catholic Primary School and Slade Primary School). Nest boxes and caller systems have been supplied and installed at Sussex Road and St Margaret's, and arrangements are being made for a visit to St Margaret's to make a presentation to the pupils about swifts and swift conservation. Our efforts to install swift boxes at the Slade have not yet been successful, largely because the school lies in a conservation area and it has not been possible to obtain any definitive guidance on whether the installation of a swift box would be in breach of the conservation area regulations.

The success of this project is encouraging and in the financial year 2025 the trustees may consider expanding it to other schools in the charity's area.

Trinity Arts Centre, Tunbridge Wells

Martin Garwood continued to support the Trinity Arts Centre in Tunbridge Wells, where swift boxes have been installed in the tower.

Cranbrook School



The trustees had already developed a relationship with Cranbrook School when, in January 2024, the charity received a substantial donation from the funeral collection of a late resident of Cranbrook via Edward Mayer. The donation was used to purchase nest boxes and a caller system for installation at the school, and Martin Garwood followed that up by leading a walk with the school's Ecology Club.

Lobbying developers and local authorities

This is work which the charity's trustees undertook prior to the charity's formation, and it continues, although successes are rare. Cala Homes, the developer of a substantial new housing estate on the south-western edge of Tonbridge at Haysden, has agreed to include 8 nest boxes, although this is some way short of being one nest box per dwelling. Shanley Homes, the developer of housing at River Walk in Tonbridge, have agreed to install some swift boxes in the development. Liaison with local Councillor Mark Hood of the Green Party has contributed the imposition of a condition on the redevelopment of the River Centre car park that the development include swift boxes.

Local Nature Recovery Strategy

HWS trustee Justin Holmes participated in various workshops organised by Making Space for Nature, the body created to produce the Kent LNRS. He advocated for the inclusion of measures to conserve and promote urban wildlife, including swifts, in the LNRS.

Justin Holmes also provided comments on the Sussex LNRS.

Talks

All three trustees gave a number of talks to local organisations during the year, including the Kemsing Wildlife Group, the RSPB, Horsmonden Women, Bearsted Climate Action Network, and a community group in Ticehurst. In July Martin Garwood and Justin Holmes spoke to an informal cluster of local farmers. Further afield, Cheryl Mason gave a talk in Margate in June, and Martin Garwood volunteered on the swift stall at BirdFair.

Answering individual enquiries

The trustees frequently receive requests for advice and assistance from members of the public, either via the internet or in person, and are always very happy to help. Enquiries have been received from individual house holders, a wildlife group in Sevenoaks, Frittenden and Staplehurst churches, and Bearsted Climate Action Network, who are at the beginning of a possible project to install swift boxes at Bearsted station as part of a Community Rail Project.

Walk Tonbridge Guided Walk



Martin Garwood and Justin Holmes led a walk organised by Walk Tonbridge to visit the house martin colony at Sussex Road Primary School and the swift colony in Woodfield Road. The event was oversubscribed and the participants donated £104 to the charity's funds.

Stalls

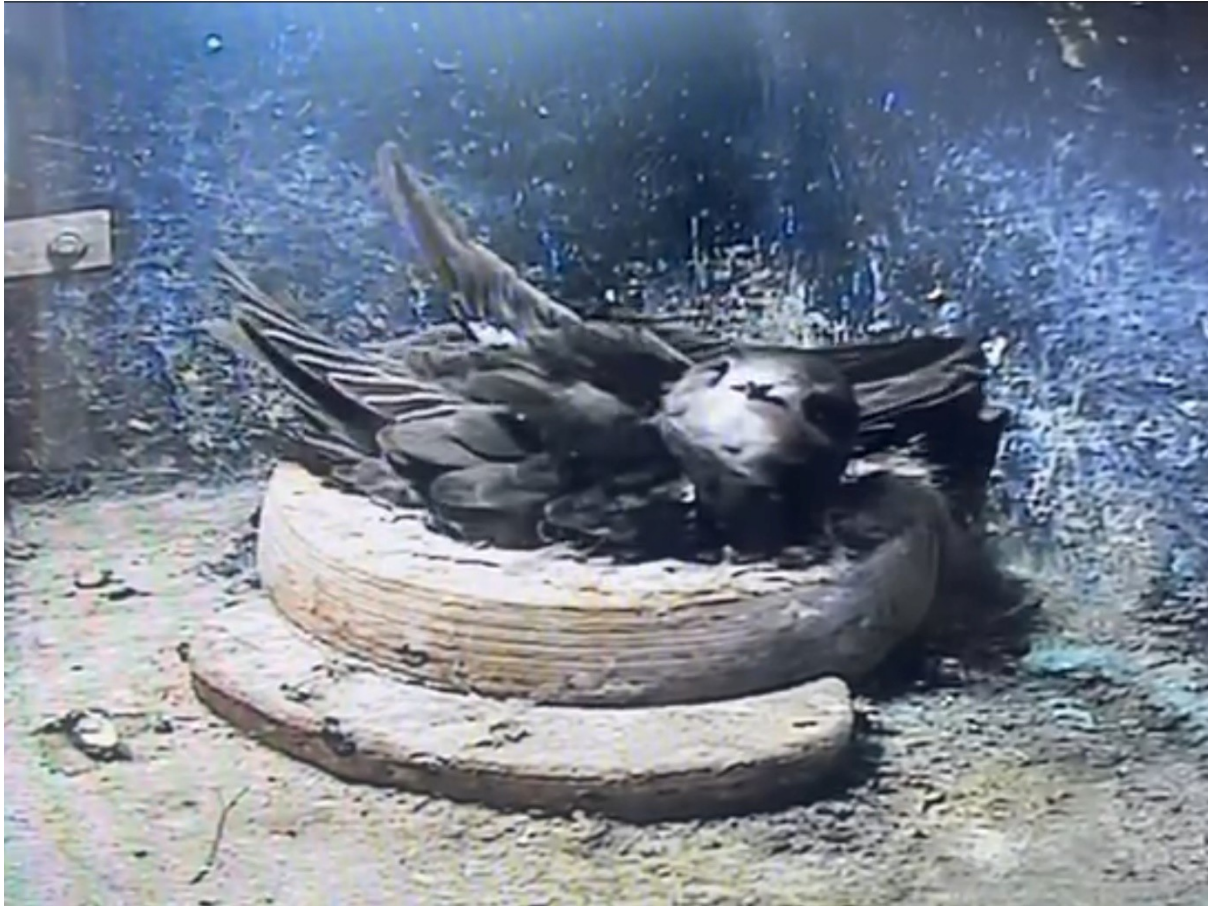


During the year the trustees ran stalls at Cranbrook Goes Nuts In May, Goudhurst Fete and the Pantiles market (the latter during Swift Awareness Week). Public engagement was encouraging and significant sums were raised from public donations. The trustees are looking at enhancing the range of items available for members of the public to buy, whilst continuing to concentrate on encouraging the installation of nest boxes.

Next year, if Tonbridge Calling is being held, the trustees would aim to repeat their successful attendance. If not, the trustees will consider whether to take a stall at one of the other market events held in Tonbridge during the year.

Swift surveys

The trustees themselves undertook swift surveys and also encouraged supporters to do so. An online form for reporting survey results has been developed and shown to work successfully, and volunteers conducted surveys for us in Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells.



Achievements

The trustees estimate that approximately 20 new nest boxes will have been installed this year because of our work, and we have been able to spread the word about swifts and the ways in which we can help them to a substantial number of people. We have also attempted to influence future planning policy in Kent by our participation in the development of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

Finances

Accounts for the year are contained in an appendix to this report.

The trustees are grateful to those who have supported High Weald Swifts during the year.

High Weald Swifts

Registered Charity No. 1204521



Accounts

For the period from 1 September 2023 to 31 December 2024

Income and expenditure

Income

| | | |
|-----------------------|----------|----------|
| Donations | 1,751.32 | |
| Grants | 1,700.00 | |
| Gift Aid on donations | 117.26 | |
| Total income | | 3,569.08 |

Expenditure

| | | |
|---------------------------|--------|----------|
| Swift boxes and equipment | 957.05 | |
| Publicity materials | 656.11 | |
| Postage | 18.15 | |
| Webhosting | 444.20 | |
| Insurance | 63.42 | |
| Pitch fees | 48.00 | |
| Total expenditure | | 2,186.93 |

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| Net income | | <u>1,382.15</u> |
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Balance sheet

Assets

Bank balance:

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|---|---------------|----------|
| Restricted funds: balance of Ten Percent Foundation grant | 561.12 | |
| Unrestricted funds | <u>821.03</u> | 1,382.15 |

Swift boxes:

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|---|---------------|--------|
| Stimpson: 2 @ £25.50 | 51.00 | |
| Impeckable 4-hole: 2 @ £0 (donated seconds) | 0.00 | |
| Impeckable 1-hole: 2 @ £86 | 172.00 | |
| Impeckable 2-hole: 1 @ £148 | 148.00 | |
| Action for Swifts flat-pack: 3 @ £20 | 60.00 | |
| Action for Swifts with bat back: 1 @ £50 | 50.00 | |
| Action for Swifts moulded plastic: 2 @ £0 | 0.00 | |
| Swift brick: 2 @ £30 | 60.00 | |
| Peak Boxes base-entry: 1 @ £45 | 45.00 | |
| Peak Boxes front-entry: 10 @ £38.75 | <u>387.48</u> | 973.48 |

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|--------------|-----------------|
| Total assets | <u>2,355.63</u> |
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|--------------------|------|
| <i>Liabilities</i> | 0.00 |
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|------------|-----------------|
| Net assets | <u>2,355.63</u> |
|------------|-----------------|