



Annual Report 2025



Introduction

This Report covers the activities of High Weald Swifts in the calendar year 2025.

Constitution

High Weald Swifts is a charitable incorporated organisation and it has the registered charity number 1204521. It was incorporated as a charity on 30 August 2023. 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 continued its work with three primary schools in Tonbridge (Sussex Road Primary School, St Margaret Clitherow Roman Catholic Primary School and Slade Primary School). Martin Garwood and Justin Holmes visited St Margaret Clitherow and led lessons for Year 4 and 5 pupils about swifts and swift conservation. After initial concerns about planning restrictions, two swift boxes containing a total of three nest chambers were installed at the Slade Primary School.

West Malling

The Trustees worked closely with West Malling Parish Council and local volunteers. As a result, 8 swift boxes were distributed in the village, and several more were put up by local residents and businesses.



Lobbying developers and local authorities

Successes continue to be rare. The Trustees are hoping that they will be able to influence Vistry Homes to include swift boxes in its large forthcoming development in Pembury.

During the year Cheryl Mason raised the question of the incorporation of swift bricks into a new development in Ticehurst called Newington Court, and the developer agreed to incorporate swift and house martin nesting spaces.

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.

We're pleased to say that the LNRS was published in November 2025, and that swifts are listed in it as a priority species. The strategy recommends the following principles for supporting wildlife recovery in the urban environment (URB2):

“Integrate year-round wildlife habitat, shelter, forage and food in new and existing developments by designing in, and retrofitting, features and landscaping that are maintainable, sustainable and appropriate to local species.

Features to support wildlife (all installed in accordance with best practice guidance) could include:

- Swift bricks
- House Martin artificial nest cups
- nest boxes
- bat tiles
- Hedgehog highways
- bug hotels
- reptile refuges.

Landscaping could include food plants, structural features for hibernation and overwintering, a mosaic of habitats and varied landforms and water features.

Particular priority should be given to Local Nature Recovery Strategy priority species associated with the urban

environment, where the population is locally significant or species known to be declining.”

Appendix 3.1 of the strategy notes that there should be a focus on “increasing the number of breeding sites by provision of nest boxes and swift bricks”.

On its own, the LNRS will not be sufficient to increase the number of swift nest boxes, since it has only persuasive force, but the Trustees hope that when taken in conjunction with the government’s changes to National Planning Policy, the number of boxes included in new developments will increase.

Justin Holmes also provided comments on the Sussex LNRS, and publication of the final LNRS for Sussex is awaited.

Kent and Sussex Railway

Martin Garwood and Justin Holmes attended a “Green Fun Day” at the Tenterden station of the Kent and Sussex Railway. We advised the railway on possible locations for swift boxes, and the railway has acquired some boxes for erection on its carriage sheds at Tenterden.

Hawkhurst

Cheryl Mason organised surveys in Hawkhurst during the breeding season and identified a number of occupied nests. Residents local to the colony have been circulated and asked to indicate whether they would like to have a swift box, and there has been a positive response. Cheryl has also liaised with Hawkhurst Men’s Shed, and the shedders have offered to make swift boxes for us to our preferred design for the price of the materials involved. The first dozen swift boxes have been delivered and are of high quality, and we are delighted to be able to collaborate with them in this way.

Talks

All three trustees gave a number of talks to local organisations during the year, including the inaugural Tunbridge Wells Climate and Nature Fair, which is to be repeated on 3 May 2026. Further afield, Martin Garwood again volunteered on the swift stall at BirdFair.

The Trustees have also written articles in many local publications, including the *Tonbridge Town Crier* and the *Benenden Times*.

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.

Walk Tonbridge Guided Walk



Martin Garwood and Justin Holmes again 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. Participants donated £96 to the charity's funds and enquiries in relation to new swift boxes were received.

Liaising with other swift groups

The trustees continue to liaise with other swift groups in the region (as part of the RSPB's Kent for Swifts Group) and nationally through the Swift Local Network.

On 10 July 2025 Cheryl Mason and Martin Garwood attended a meeting organised by the High Weald Landscape Partnership to discuss swift conservation projects in Kent and Sussex.

Cheryl Mason also attended the SLN Conference in November 2025.

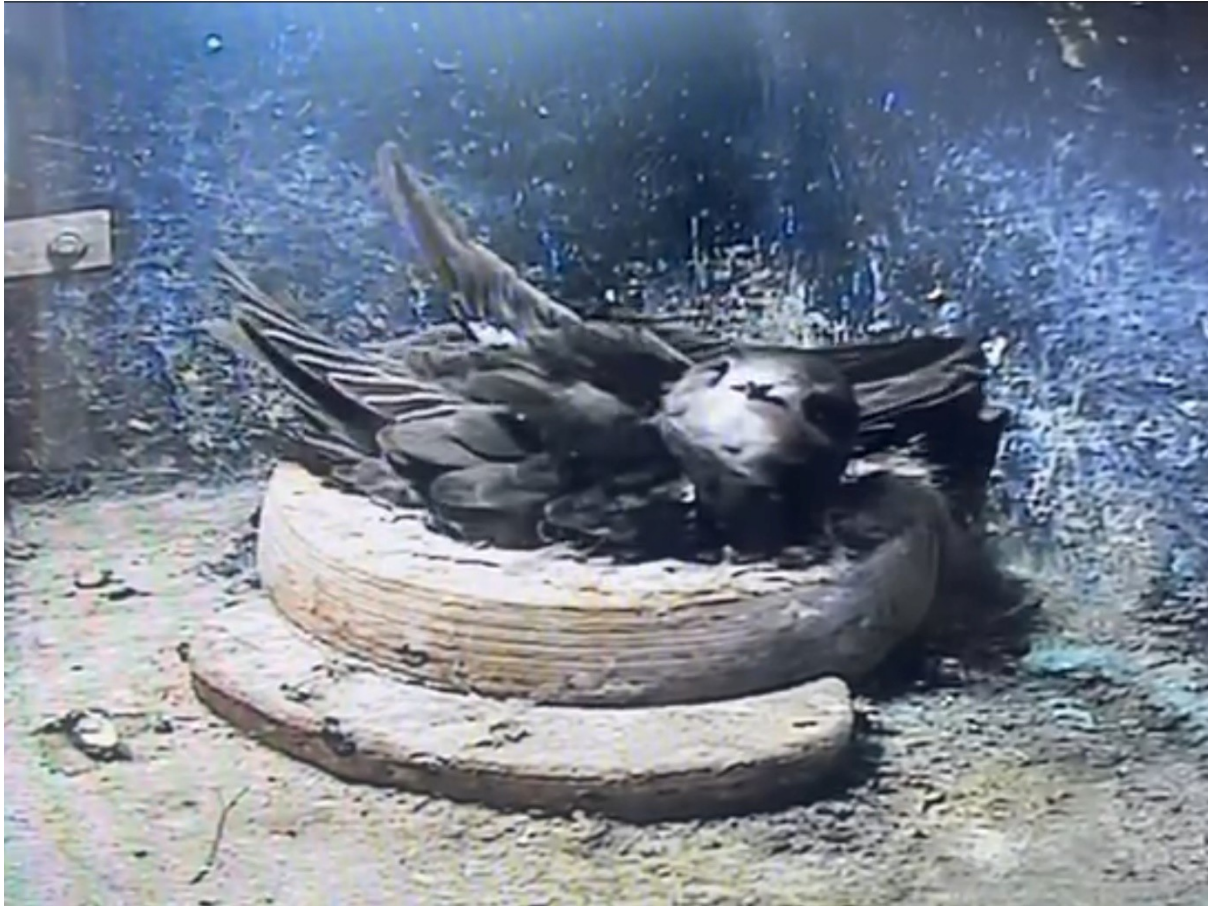
Stalls



During the year the trustees ran stalls at Cranbrook Goes Nuts In May, Goudhurst Fete, Hawkhurst Fete, the Tunbridge Wells Climate and Nature Fair, and Tonbridge Artisan Market. Once again, public engagement was encouraging and significant sums were raised from public donations. We have found on the stall that the main focus is on explaining the difficulties which swifts are facing, although often members of the public are understandably confused about the differences between swallows, house martins and swifts and we do our best to explain them.

Swift surveys

The trustees themselves undertook swift surveys and also encouraged supporters to do so. Survey results collected on Swift Mapper are proving to be invaluable evidence and we are encouraging supporters to use it whenever possible.



Achievements

The trustees estimate that approximately 50 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 January 2025 to 31 December 2025

Income and expenditure

Income

Donations	3,059.49	
Grants	0.00	
Gift Aid on donations	289.00	
Total income		3,348.49

Less expenditure

Swift boxes and equipment	1,521.60	
Publicity materials	207.93	
Postage	9.45	
Webhosting	294.00	
Bank charges	38.86	
Insurance	131.96	
Pitch fees	5.00	
Purchase of goods for sale	43.26	
Total expenditure		<u>2,252.06</u>

Net income		1,382.15
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Balance sheet

Assets

Bank balance:

Restricted funds: balance of Ten Percent Foundation grant	0.00	
Unrestricted funds	<u>2,478.58</u>	2,478.58

Swift boxes:

Action for Swifts Model 30: 6 @ £32	192.00	
Action for Swifts with bat back: 1 @ £50	50.00	
Swift brick: 2 @ £30	60.00	
Peak Boxes old-style: 4 @ £45	<u>180.00</u>	482.00

Total assets		<u>2,960.58</u>
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<i>Liabilities</i>		0.00
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Net assets		<u>2,960.58</u>
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