



Chair's report for the reporting period 17 March 2025 - 16 March 2026

Introduction

This is my fifth year as Chair of Shoreham District Ornithological Society (SDOS) and I've decided that it should be my last. I have enjoyed the privilege of working with a fantastic team of Council colleagues and together we have ensured that SDOS is a thriving, friendly, and highly respected organisation. I've also enjoyed the support of many other SDOS members who volunteer their time and make SDOS what it is.

Against this backdrop, it's my pleasure to present this performance report to our April 2026 AGM and you will see that we have achieved a huge amount. The remainder of this report is structured around our four Aims for the year and illustrates how successful we have been.

Aim 1 To promote the study of birds, especially within the society's recording area

Our events programme - SDOS walks and talks

We delivered **24** walks for members and there was a total of **490** attendees (approximately **20** members/guests per walk). Two of our walks in 2025 attracted **34** attendees each: the butterfly walk at Steyning in August and the Brooklands Park walk in December.

We also ran our second ever overnight (two day) minibus outing, to great acclaim.

There were **seven** well supported indoor talks covering a range of birding and conservation topics.

External walks and talks

We supported **11** nature focused walks hosted by external groups and gave talks to two local organisations. These activities were rewarded with donations totalling £375 for SDOS funds.

Our newsletters

We produced **two** high quality newsletters, and approximately **75%** were delivered on line, so reducing printing and distribution costs. Our newsletters continue to be a valued benefit of membership of the society.

The user group

Throughout the year the number of postings remained buoyant and this private group remains the principal way of sharing news on sightings. It has been great to see some new members posting on the group.

Membership

For the first time in the society's history we had over **410** members.

Aim 2 To promote the protection of birds and their environment, especially within the SDOS recording area

Activities with a conservation focus

We were very active on the conservation front, particularly but not exclusively in the Shoreham area. Over the year in question we:

- Provided a grant of £1,000 towards to the cost and installation of marker buoys on the RSPB Adur Estuary Nature Reserve
- Contributed to the development of a Habitat Management Plan for the Adur SSSI
- Submitted a formal report to Adur District Council regarding the ecological value of Shoreham airfield. This was in the context of the development of a new Adur Local Plan
- Had numerous meetings and discussions with staff and Councillors from Adur District Council, advocating for nature recovery and nature friendly policies
- Objected to an inappropriate planning application at Gatewick Farm (near Steyning)

Monitoring and recording of wild birds

Members were involved in the BTO Wetland Birds Surveys on the Lower Adur Estuary and Shoreham Beach Local Nature Reserve. In addition, members carried out regular bird surveys at Cissbury Fields, Mile Oak Farm and adjacent farms, and ad-hoc surveys at New Salts Farm and Widewater Lagoon.

Worthing Swift Group

The Worthing Swift group has identified **22** nests in the study area and two house builders have agreed to install swift nest boxes in new developments locally. This group has successfully engaged with the wider public through leafleting and social media and is making a visible contribution to conservation in Worthing.

Aim 3 To work with the local community to promote an interest in birds and their knowledge of local conservation issues

Outreach, education, awareness raising

At the request of local farmers, we carried out three farmland bird surveys.

We designed the artwork for three interpretation panels that were installed at New Monks Park 'Country Park'.

SDOS provided ornithological advice and other support to two nature focused groups operating in Shoreham (World of Widewater and FoSB).

We wrote **15** articles for publication in neighbourhood magazines in Shoreham and Southwick.

We participated in a community fair in Old Shoreham where we helped to promote greater awareness of the Adur SSSI and SDOS.

Educating and inspiring people through social media

Our use of social media continues to grow and we are active on X (formerly known as Twitter), Instagram, and YouTube. We also have over **2,300**, subscribers to our Facebook Group. By using social media, we are able to extend our reach and influence to ever larger audiences. We are very grateful for all the work on the Comms front from a hard working volunteer.

Aim 4 To maintain systems and resources - for the efficient running of the society

We completely redesigned our website - this was a major project led from within the society, so avoiding very expensive external consultancy. We are very proud of the new look and visits to the website have increased significantly.

During the year under report, we completed **5** risk assessments to cover our walks and talks programme.

At least **2,000 hours** were donated by Council members to ensure the smooth running of the society. This spans developing the new website, managing membership, finances, IT, documentation, newsletters, conservation work and 'back office' processes.

Final thoughts

During the year under review, Sarah Hunt stepped down from her role as legal adviser and we thank her for all of her hard work, specialist guidance, and support as a valued SDOS Council member. Sarah is now spearheading the newly formed Friends of the Adur SSSI group and we wish her and her colleagues every success.

Everything that the society has achieved is down to the hard work and dedication of Council colleagues and other members who volunteer their time and expertise. Without our volunteers, we would not be able to offer an extensive programme of walks and our very popular indoor talks, nor support conservation initiatives, and enthuse hundreds of people to enjoy wild birds. On behalf of Council I thank you all.

Tony Benton
Chair - SDOS

16 March 2026