



## **1. Membership**

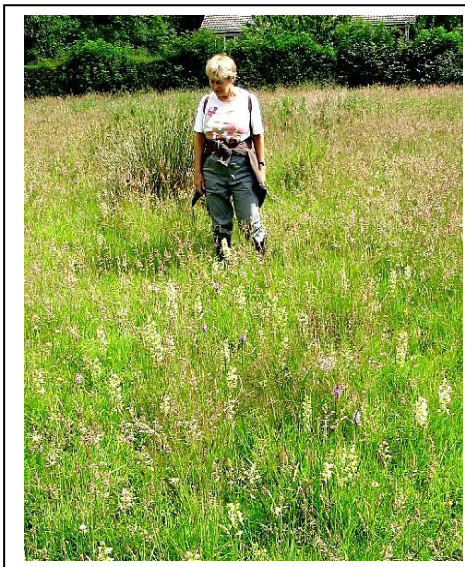
The local membership has risen slightly from 652 memberships in 2022 to 683 in 2023. This equates to 1,212 members. However, we only have consent to contact 299 memberships, that's 44%, to let them know about our activities.

## **2. Our thanks to Jan, Norman and Tony**

At our 2023 AGM Jan Harbidge, Norman Still and Tony Rogers have decided to retire from our committee.

Jan has been an SWT member since 1987, initially with the Clyde and Strathkelvin Group, she joined our group's committee when she moved to Stirling in 2007. Jan has been a very active member latterly as the Group's Secretary and we will certainly miss her contribution.

In the photograph Jan is admiring the butterfly orchids in a meadow behind Plean Primary School in 2012. An application had been submitted to build houses on this site. Although our planning team was unable to stop the development it was only allowed to proceed if the orchids were transferred to another appropriate site. They were moved into another orchid meadow in the adjacent Plean Country Park. The subsequent annual orchid counts showed the population there increased as a result. Sadly, all that remains of the meadow is the name of the estate...Orchid Park.



Tony Rogers was another long serving member of our group and was elected onto the committee in 2008.

Whilst attending an evening lecture on moths by the local recorder Professor John Knowler, Tony learnt how poor our local moth records were. To try and do something about this our group obtained a grant for a mercury vapour moth trap.

Tony organised the resultant 'Moth Group' who concentrated their efforts on the moths on our Cambus Pools reserve. 14 recorders carried out 23 monthly surveys sometimes with as many as 6 traps. They caught 3,288 moths which belonged to 228 different species, an amazing effort.

In the photograph Tony (right) is moth trapping with two other local group members, Roger Gooch (centre) and Stuart Bence (left).

Norman has been a member of our committee for the past 2 years but he has been assisting the committee, particularly our treasurer, for many years as the independent verifier of our group accounts.

Our thanks go to Jan, Norman and Tony for their input and we wish them well in the future.

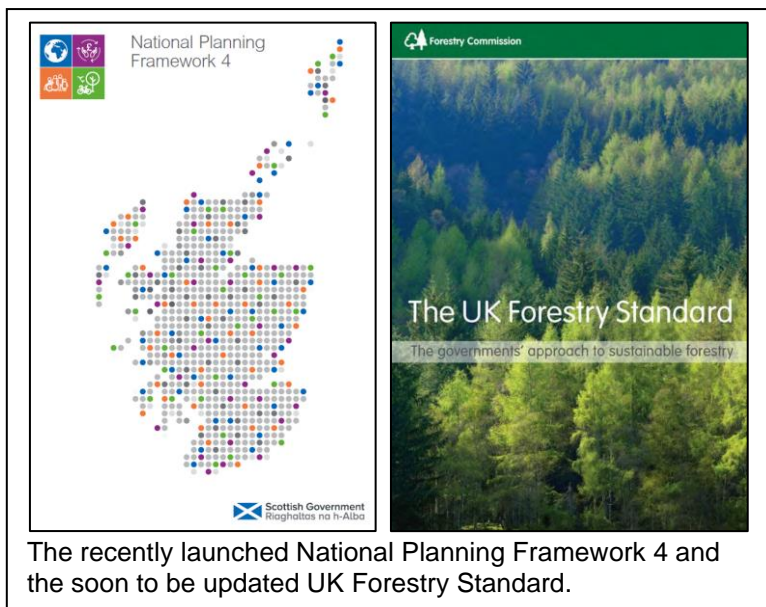
### 3. The Planning Team's work over 2022-2023

Liz Albert, Coordinator for the Planning Team, would like to tell you about the valuable work that our team of eight volunteers have carried out this over the past twelve months.

We, the Planning Team, have been focussed on Standing up for Biodiversity through three main strands of work. We have:

1. Continued with our weekly monitoring and responded to selected Planning Applications in Clackmannanshire Council and Stirling Council areas. We have adopted the same approach to our responses to Scottish Forestry Felling / Restocking Applications and new 'Woodland Creation' Proposals.

2. Spent a lot of time and effort on seeking to influence / improve key Scottish Government Planning and Forestry documents which regulate how decisions are made. For Council Planning Applications, the focus was National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4). NPF4 was put in place in February 2023 and should be a significant help to our work, as it clearly states that the intertwined Climate Change and Biodiversity Emergencies are the top priorities, above Economic Development. We are now using quotes from NPF4 in our responses for significant Planning Applications.



The recently launched National Planning Framework 4 and the soon to be updated UK Forestry Standard.

For Scottish Forestry, this document is United Kingdom Forestry Standards (UKFS). There was a concerted effort among environmental NGOS and charities like Scottish Wildlife Trust, RSPB, Buglife, Trees for Life and so on, to run National Working Groups who prepared submissions to the most recent review of UKFS. The Review of the UKFS is due to be published in 'Spring 2023'.

3 Continued to organise our pattern of Training Events for our Team. Titles of recent events were:

- Woodland and Planning
- Ponds and Watercourses and Planning
- Ecological Impact Assessments and Planning.

Our next one will be on 'Enhancing new development sites for Bats / Bat Habitat / Bat Roosting Sites / Bat Food Sources'. There's a lot to learn!

We always welcome more members to our Team to help with our Work. At present, we would especially like new members with an interest in Woodland / Forestry work, but everyone is welcome. If you might be interested to learn more about our work, link here to our website:

<https://www.swtstirling.org.uk/what-we-do/standing-up-for-wildlife>

and here:

<https://www.swtstirling.org.uk/what-we-do/recruitment-info-for-planning-team>

If you would like to speak to me by phone about our work, to help you decide if you are interested, please use the Contact Us page on our website below, and your enquiry will be passed on to me.

<https://www.swtstirling.org.uk/contact-us>.



## 4. Stirling & Clackmannanshire Local Group survey

Last year we surveyed our members, you may remember receiving the email or submitting a response. We asked a few questions so that we could gather your views' on the future format of our talks programme and the events you would like to see us organise.

Almost 75% of the respondents said that would be very likely or likely to attend a talk in person. While 65% said they would prefer to have the option of attending our talks online.

Almost 88% of respondents said that they would like to participate in practical activities. Our Conservation Group are working to develop a programme of events for the summer and autumn.

## 5. Winter talks

In response to the results of our member survey our winter talks programme for 2022-2023 was run using a 'hybrid format'. The committee put a lot of time and effort into understanding how this hybrid approach might work. We also invested in the equipment necessary to ensure our online audience had the best experience. Each talk presented new challenges but no major glitches, and by the end our talks were running pretty smoothly.

Our talks were held at a new venue, St Ninians Old Parish Church Hall, whilst simultaneously being broadcast via Zoom. This enabled members to attend in person or online. Our audience numbers were pretty stable throughout, with 25-35 attending in person and 10-20 joining online. All our talks were recorded and are available to view on the [SWT YouTube](#) channel. Individual links have been inserted into the description of each talk.

Our first talk of the 2022-23 programme, held in October, was by David Mardon, who spoke about '[Restoration of Montane Woodland and Scrub on Ben Lawers National Nature Reserve](#)'. David worked for the National Trust for Scotland leading conservation work on Ben Lawers NNR.

In November Keith Broomfield, a well-known Scottish nature writer, talked us through a year in the life of the River Devon with '[If Rivers Could Sing](#)'. A fascinating journey along one of our local rivers from its source in the Ochils to its confluence with the River Forth at Cambus.

To round off 2022 Dr David Trudgill provided a talk on '[Orchid Decline in Scotland & Our Orchid Meadow](#)'. David spoke about the orchid meadow that he and his wife have created at their home near Blairgowrie and the wider issues that orchids in Scotland face.



David Trudgill's orchid meadow (Image by David Trudgill)

Our first talk of 2022 was held in February. Philip Munro spoke about the '[South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project](#)' and how it aims to reinforce the small, isolated and vulnerable population of Golden Eagles in the Scottish Borders and Dumfries & Galloway through a series of translocations.

In March our programme was brought to a close with a talk on '[Bats and Trees \(Radio-tracking Tree-roosting Bats in the West of Scotland\)](#)' by John Haddow of the Central Scotland Bat Group. John has worked with bats for over 40 years and was keen to learn more about where they roost in trees, particularly if a tree is lost.

Thanks, as always, go to the speakers and my fellow committee members for delivering a very successful programme of talks.



Roosting bats (Image by John Haddow)

## 6. Frog Orchids ... 40 years and still flowering

In 1983 John Mitchell drew the Local SWT Group's attention to plans to convert a large area of wild flower meadows between Kippen and Fintry (Balgair Muir) into a conifer forest. An outcrop of alkaline cornstone in this area produced a particularly rich meadow flora including fragrant orchid, lesser butterfly orchid, frog orchid and field gentian.

Patrick Stirling-Aird, the chairman of the group, approached the developers who agreed to leave a small area containing the frog orchids unplanted and to strim it annually to compensate for the loss of sheep grazing. In 1995 our SWT group resurveyed the site with the intention of registering it as a potential Local Nature Conservation Site. There were still 87 flowering frog orchids at the time but the numbers then declined to 11 in 2009. As a result, we took over the annual winter strimming and the August flower count and have managed to keep the colony flowering.



The photograph (2015) shows a patch of original meadow which was still supporting 42 frog orchids but by this time they were surrounded by mature conifer forest. Pam Murdoch who originally spotted the diminutive orchids 40 years ago is accompanied by John Gallacher senior ecologist of Tilhill Forestry.

## 7. Web Site and social media

Our online presence continues to be an important means of communicating with our members and the wider public. Our group's website <http://www.swtstirling.org.uk/> has kept members and non-members informed of our online talks and AGM as well as current campaigns and volunteer opportunities.

This information is also posted on our [Facebook](#) and [mastodon](#) pages along with lots of interesting facts. Our website, facebook and mastodon pages are the best places to go to find out about our activities. My thanks go to our dedicated committee members who keep these up to date.

## 8. The Committee

Thanks are due for the enormous amount of work done by the committee as well as the many other SWT members who have helped during the year.

Chair  
Treasurer  
Planning Team Coordinator  
Group Secretary  
Minutes Secretary  
Moth Group Organiser  
IT Advisor and Mammal Group Convenor  
Facebook Organiser  
Cambus Pools Reserve Convenor  
Committee member  
Committee member  
Committee member

Chris Cathrine  
Guy Harewood  
Liz Albert  
Jan Harbidge  
Michael Christie  
Tony Rogers  
Gabi Rice-Grunert  
Melissa Shaw  
Roy Sexton  
Tom Palmer  
Stuart Bence  
Norman Still