SOC Clyde Branch
Annual General Meeting, Monday 13th April 2026

MINUTES

The SOC Clyde Branch AGM was held as an in-person meeting at the Partick Burgh Hall. Thirty persons were present.

1. Apologies
   Apologies were received from the following committee members: Emma Davies and Andrew Russell.

2. Minutes of previous AGM
   The minutes of the previous AGM had been available on the SOC and on the Birds in Clyde website for some time. There were no comments or issues raised.

3. Office Bearers' Reports

   3.1 Chairperson's Report
   Zul Bhatia presented the Chairperson's report. This is attached as Appendix 1.

   3.2 Secretary's Report
   Rebecca Dickson presented the Secretary's report. This is attached as Appendix 2.

   3.3 Treasurer's Report
   An unaudited summary of the accounts was provided by Liz Parsons.

   3.4 Recorder's Report
   In John Simpson's presented the Recorder's report. This is attached as Appendix 4.

   3.5 Outings Organiser's Report
   The outings report was shown on the screen, prepared by Ania Owsianka. This is attached as Appendix 5.

4. Election of Office Bearers

A notice had been published by the Secretary via the HQ email notice and the Clyde Branch Grapevine inviting nominations and volunteers to fill the Office Bearer positions. There had been no responses received to this invitation.

Therefore, your committee would like to propose that the following office bearers be elected

Chairperson – Zul Bhatia

Treasurer – Liz Parsons (looking to pass on her duties)
Secretary – Rebecca Dickson
Branch Representative on SOC Council – Zul Bhatia

This was approved by the meeting.

Appendix 1

Chairperson's report for 2025/2026

I have now been in post for just over eight years as Chair and I have continued to work closely with our Clyde Branch Committee which met twice this year (both online). There were no changes to the composition of the committee during the year and all members have expressed a willingness to continue for another year.

Monthly meetings in the period September to April continued. Our Branch Secretary, **Rebecca Dickson** has done an excellent job in arranging a varied programme. Her report gives more details about the talks. The average attendance this year has been 34 people per meeting – a significant decrease from last year's average of 44, although we did have 48 people at the joint meeting with the RSPB Glasgow group.

Outings continued to be very popular. **Ania Owsianka** has done an excellent job in organising these. Despite three outings having to be cancelled at the last minute due to storms and illness of a boat operator, we still had similar number of participants to last year. Ania's report gives more details. Having taken over the role of Outings Organiser in 2023, she has signalled her intention to hand over to someone else, so please get in tough if you'd like to know more about what the role involves.

A highlight for us was to have the one-day **SOC's Annual Conference** in our area. Held in Bearsden in November 2025, our branch part-sponsored the attendance of 10 young people residing in the Clyde area. Many Clyde members attended and we also organised four post-conference outings on the Sunday. Our webmaster, **Kevin McCormick** received a Branch Recognition award for the great service he has given to the Clyde branch.

We continued to promote **Recording and Reporting** birds. Over 180k BirdTrack records were received as well as several thousand eBird records. Our recorder/data team consisting of the recorders (**John Simpson**, **Tony Hall**, **John Sweeney** and **Val Wilson**) as well as **Kevin McCormick** and myself were quite active on this front with Tony adding new sites to the SOC App on Where to Watch Birds in Scotland and adding to Bird Track's 'Popular Places'.

The **Daily Grapevine** (now going in some form or other for over 30 years) and the **WhatsApp** group for instant sightings continued. Both are managed overall by **Val Wilson** with help from **Ian Fulton** and **Kevin McCormick**.

Fieldwork is a very significant activity for many of our members and as usual, a lot was carried out. A list of the active projects known to us in the Clyde in 2022 is available via our branch website. Apologies that this is a little out of date.

Social media: We dropped our Twitter / X account and went over to BlueSky (like many other organisations), and continued to use the Clydebirds Facebook page to promote SOC (thank you to **John Molloy** for allowing us to use it).

Clyde Bird Reports: The last printed Clyde Bird Reports was for 2008. Since then, we have produced the 2009-11 ones which are available as free downloads from our branch website. The 2012 has been started with 11 people volunteering to write some species accounts. The 'new' Recorder (John Simpson) is leading on the more recent reports starting from 2022 and I understand the 2022 report is almost complete.

Branch website: This continues to be a great resource which is well used with an increase of 60% page views (via Google Analytics) from last year. The major spikes in views during the year was the juvenile Peregrine Jack dying, a feature on Landward, the Clyde Marine Cruises and this year's Peregrine eggs. A more detailed report is available on demand. Our Webmaster, **Kevin McCormick** continues to do a fantastic job for us.

John Simpson led the **Glasgow Peregrine Project** on behalf of the SOC and several of us were involved in talking to the public. The Facebook page now has 8.7k followers. John also masterminded the **Clyde Marine Cruises** which not only gave people an opportunity to get to parts of the area seldom visited, see a lot of birds and collect some very useful data.

Branch funds are very healthy. Our Treasurer **Liz Parson's** report gives details. Liz is also our 'tea lady' so double thanks to her.

THE FUTURE

Monthly outings will continue to feature significantly in our programme, although as noted above we will need a new Outings Organiser. Apart from the wildlife we see, they are an excellent resource for some informal mentoring.

Continue with **monthly meetings** in the September to April period.

The **Glasgow Peregrine Project** has faced some challenges with the birds moving to the City Chambers. All partners from last year are still on board and we have a new partner – University of Strathclyde . The public watches will continue. Apart from enjoying the birds, they are great for interacting with the public and promoting our activities.

Continue to have the occasional **joint meeting / outing** with partners.

Those involved with the Clyde Big Birding Days in recent years are all away on this year's date, so we will be taking a break from this in 2026.

Continue to promote the **study, enjoyment and conservation of wild birds** and their habitats across the Clyde area making use of the considerable bird data we hold. Encourage more recording and reporting of birds and other wildlife.

Encourage people to participate in the new **Atlas 2027-2031**. Whilst led by BTO, SOC is also a partner and it will be an opportunity for many new people to get involved.

Make more progress ourselves on making better use of the data we hold as well as encouraging others to use it. It is likely that we will be making more of new technologies such as **Passive Acoustic Monitoring**.

Consider relaunching or disbanding the inactive **Discussion Group**.

Liaise further with other organisations active in Clyde to input into management of sites important for birds as well as improved monitoring.

Consider developing links with Higher Education colleges / Universities.

Acknowledgements

Many people's contributions have already been acknowledged in the relevant section above, but for the branch to operate as successfully as it has, there are so many more people involved. Thank you to all of you who have supported the Clyde Branch in one way or another this year. If you have any feedback or suggestions, please let me or any of the Committee members have them.

Zul Bhatia
Chair, Clyde Branch of the SOC

Appendix 2

Secretary's Report for 2025/2026

Clyde Branch membership now stands at 432 memberships or 499 persons (counting joint memberships as two persons). Each year we grow as a branch which is fantastic, it won't be long until we are above 500!

The distribution list for the daily **Clyde SOC Grapevine** now stands at 288. The Grapevine averages a 70-80% opening rate from users. Many thanks to Val Wilson and the team for all their efforts in maintaining such a high standard of service.

Our branch **Website** (birdsinclyde.scot) continues to be a great success. I would like to provide a shout out to Kevin McCormick (our webmaster) has keeps the website running and offers technical advice into other areas where he can.

Other social media pages are as follows:

- The Facebook page for the **Glasgow Peregrine Project** has 8.7k followers (up from 1128 last year)!

- The WhatsApp group is now called '**Clyde SOC Community'** (with 3 sub-groups) has 195 subscribers and is continuing to be a popular way of getting instant sightings.
- The Facebook '**Clydebirds'** group administered by Clyde SOC member John Molloy now has 1.3k members (up from 1.2k last year).
- The Facebook '**Baron's Haugh Wildlife Sightings'** group administered by Jason Newton now has 3.3k members (up from 2.4k last year).
- Our Bluesky account "**Clyde SOC Grapevine**" has 185 followers.

The talks for the 2025-2026 in-person meetings were as follows:

- **September**: Sophie Smith – Safeguarding Scotland's Seabirds
- **October**: Kevin Sinclair – East Renfrewshire's Tree Sparrows – Back from the brink: a community success story
- **November**: Toby Wilson – Edinburgh Swift City and the Swift conservation in Central Scotland
- **December**: Stephen Inglis – My patch on the Eaglesham Moor: Shieldhill Farm
- **January**: Paul Noyes – Curlew and the Yorkshire Dales
- **February**: Dr Heather Ritchie-Parker – Conservation of the Capercaillie and the Northern Rockhopper Penguin
- **March**: Rachel Reid & Jessica Young - The effects of urbanisation on bird populations
- **April**: Rachel Steenson – Spring with the Midlothian Dippers

The online members events talks 2025-2026 were as follows:

- **September**: John Simpson – Glasgow Peregrine Project: good news in the city & Alasdair Reid – The rediscovery of Marsh Tits as a breeding species in Scotland
- **October**: Stephen Moss – Britain's Favourite Birds
- **November**: Douglas G. D. Russell – Interesting bird Nests & Eggs: writing a popular book on 250 years of avian architecture
- **December**: Laurie Campbell – Photographing birds: more than just the species
- **January**: Adam Nicolson – Birds in the Hebrides and a Sussex wood
- **February**: Liz Myhill – Evocative encounters with the natural world
- **March**: Pat Monaghan – Is it too late to save the Capercaillie?
- **April**: Prof. Claire Spottiswoode – Show me the Honey: Communication between people and wild birds in Africa.

Rebecca Dickson
Secretary, Clyde Branch of the SOC

Appendix 3

Treasurer's Report for 2025/2026

The Treasurer's report was presented at the AGM, but is not presented in these minutes, but sent directly to HQ.

Appendix 4

Local Recorder's Report for 2025/2026

1. Clyde Bird Report for 2022 is almost complete. Thanks to Tony Hall, John Sweeney, Nigel Scriven and Val Wilson for their support. We will go for a PDF version of the report, and limited print run.
2. Clyde Birds Records Panel (CBRP) has been re-established and will hold a meeting in the autumn. A presentation of all the rarities that have appeared in Clyde is in preparation .
3. Iain Livingstone from the Clyde Ringing Group has been invited to join the Local Recorders team.
4. Glasgow Peregrine Project will move to the city chambers now that the birds are nesting in the city centre. Some elements of the project from the Glasgow University location will be lost, but equally others elements will be gained. New partner organisations include University of Strathclyde, Abodus Student Living and AC Hotel Glasgow part of the Marriott Group. Viking Optical will continue their very welcome support of scopes and bins.
    a. Members were asked to consider whether they could help with the Peregrine Watches this summer.
    b. Social Media for the Peregrine Project now reaches over 17,000 users. Thank you to Callum Leonard who runs the Instagram account and Kevin McCormick for all his input on the website.
5. The Black Grouse watchpoint is now well established with 20 people attending the latest watch led by Lottie Birch.
6. Clyde Marine Birding Cruises will commence again soon with a White-tailed Eagle trip later in Aprill.
    a. A £600 grant from SOC endowment fund had been received to support this initiative.
7. SOC HQ have been a fantastic support for all the Local Recorder projects. Even making changes to how the club funds projects. Some members of SOC staff will have CPD opportunities through linking them to project work and creating a template for the Club going forward. The Birding and Science committee, led by Chris Wernham, have been particularly supportive.
8. Ruchill Ravens and Glasgow Women's Birders projects both continue. Thanks in particular to Anna Wood.

9. A Kestrel box has gone up at Glasgow Uni thanks to Paul Baker.
10. An Osprey platform is now in place at Hogganfield Loch. Thank you to Jim Coyle.
11. A proposed Ardmore and Cardross Bay initiative will now be prioritised so this can be launched.

Local Recorder's report closed with a thank you to all who have supported the varying projects this year.

John Simpson,
Local Recorder, Clyde Branch of the SOC

Appendix 5

Outings Organiser's Report for 2025/26

Eight outings took place over the past year, from April 2025 to March 2026:

2025
April 16th & 17th – Northumberland Coast
May 30th – Isle of May
August 9th – Ardmore Point
September 8th – Holy Loch NR
November 8th – Balgray Reservoir

2026
January 18th – Tay Reedbeds & Scone Palace
February 7th – Blackstoun Farm & Newshot Island
March 14th – RSPB Loch Leven

Unfortunately, three planned outings were cancelled. Scott Black was due to lead an outing to Culter Glen in May, and another to the Lothian Coast in October, but both were cancelled due to exceptionally bad weather. We booked a boat to Ailsa Craig in July, but sadly the skipper fell gravely ill and all his trips were cancelled. Several local outings were organised in conjunction with the SOC Conference, which was held in Bearsden at the end of November, and therefore we had no branch outing in December.

Despite the reduced number of outings, the total number of participants was 93, which almost equalled last year's total of 97. The most popular outings were to the Isle of May (23 participants) and to Blackstoun Farm (24 participants).

Typically, we saw about 50 species per outing, but on the two-day trip to the Northumberland Coast, (conceived and led by Donald Wilson) we totalled 100 species. The success of this overnight trip has encouraged Donald to lead a weekend trip to the Aberdeenshire Coast in May.

Planned for the next few months of 2026:

April 12th – Black Grouse watch, MOD Garelochhead
April 15th – Kinneil & Bothkennar Pools, Skinflats
May 8th – 10th – Aberdeenshire Coast
May 23rd – Culter Glen
June – St Abb's Head

We aim to always have the next three outings on the branch website (birdsinclyde.scot).

Leaders
Without leaders, it would be impossible to implement such a varied and interesting programme. A big thanks to everyone who has led or has volunteered to lead an outing this year:

Allan Russell
Donald Wilson
Sandy McNeil
Scott Black
Zul Bhatia
Neil Hammatt
John Dryden
Kevin McCormick
John Sweeney

Bookings
Since September 2025 we have introduced an online booking system for all outings. This was prompted by a recommendation from SOC Head Office that the leader of an outing should have the mobile phone number of each participant, and an emergency contact number. These are obviously sensible suggestions. The booking form also asks people to say whether they need a lift or can offer a lift, and this has made it a lot easier to organising car-sharing. I have not received any feedback – positive or negative – about this innovation.

Special thanks go to

1) **Donald Wilson**, who has contributed lots of good ideas for the programme and has led the most adventurous outings.
2) **Kevin McCormick**, who has designed the excellent online booking form, and who faithfully uploads the outings information and outings reports onto the website. He does more than just upload them – he carefully edits the texts, inserts links to the exact locations, and formats the reports.

End of 3-year term
I took over as Outings Organiser from David Palmar in the autumn of 2023. By the end of 2026 I will have been doing the job for over three years, and it is time for me to hand over to someone else.

If you enjoy the SOC Clyde Branch outings and would like them to continue, please consider taking on the task of organising them.

Ania Owsianka,
Outings Organiser, Local Recorder