

Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS
Y Dirprwy Brif Weinidog ac Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros
Newid Hinsawdd a Materion Gwledig
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate
Change and Rural Affairs



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1489
Ein cyf/Our ref HIDCC/10772/24, HIDCC/00010/25

Carolyn Thomas MS
Chair - Petitions committee

19 February 2025

Dear Carolyn,

Thank you for your letter of 6 December concerning the petition calling on the Welsh Government to legislate to ensure swift bricks are installed in all new buildings in Wales. As Cabinet Secretary with lead responsibility for biodiversity I am writing to set out my views on the issues and opportunities this raises.

I am aware of this petition and the support it has gathered. I recognise that like many of our species in Wales, swifts have been declining at an alarming rate. As a government we are committed to tackling the nature emergency, and know that we, along with the rest of the UK and the world, need to do more to reverse the decline in biodiversity. I am committed to ensuring that we work collaboratively to take positive actions to address both the nature and climate emergencies.

I understand that studies show that swift bricks work, and they also provide opportunities for other species too. They are affordable, don't require maintenance and it does make sense to incorporate them into new buildings as part of their structure when they are designed and built.

The main levers to promote or mandate the use of swift bricks in new buildings lie outside of my portfolio, for example through planning and building regulations, but also in the building work we fund or procure in other parts of government. Action to secure the incorporation of swift bricks into new building across Wales therefore will require a cross-cabinet approach which I support and am keen to explore with my cabinet colleagues.

Swift bricks could help boost swift numbers, but broader action is also needed in a variety of areas to combat the drivers of swift decline. This includes factors such as the 'insect apocalypse' (driven by habitat loss, agricultural pesticides and climatic factors), to the wider consequences of climate change, both here and in their wintering grounds in Africa which have impacted on the health and breeding success of this species. Evidence suggests that

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
0300 0604400

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Gohebiaeth.Huw.Irranca-Davies@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Huw.Irranca-Davies@gov.wales

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

increasingly colder and wetter summers are playing a key role, as breeding success is positively associated with warmer temperatures in June and July.

A key part of our broader action to support swifts and other species is the Environmental Governance, Principles and Biodiversity targets Bill. The Bill will include a power and duty for Welsh Ministers to set statutory domestic biodiversity targets. While the details of the targets are to be developed, the proposed priority areas of safeguarding and recovering species, and ecosystem resilience offer the potential for further action to support swift populations. Actions that we are taking through the Bill, the Nature Networks Programme and the forthcoming Sustainable Farming Scheme will also be vital in increasing swift populations by tackling the wider drivers of species decline.

In addition to these work programmes my officials have also been working with planning officials to develop additional guidance on the Net Benefit for Biodiversity (NBB) approach set out in Planning Policy Wales which requires bespoke, place-based solutions for biodiversity, including measures such as swift bricks where appropriate. Importantly, finding the right solutions requires professional ecological advice which will differ depending on context. The guidance should be completed by spring 2025.

I thank you once again for your letter and I hope my response has been helpful. As part of my wider work, I shall be happy to promote the use of swift bricks within my portfolio and encourage others to do so across government. Like many issues relating to the nature and climate change emergencies the solutions require an integrated and cross Government approach.

Yours sincerely,



Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS

Y Dirprwy Brif Weinidog ac Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Newid Hinsawdd
a Materion Gwledig

Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs