

**P-06-1489 Legislate to ensure swift bricks are installed in all new buildings in Wales
Correspondence from the Petitioner, 27th February 2025**

Dear Petitions Committee members

SWIFT BRICK PETITION

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to respond to the Deputy First Minister's letter. The following are my comments -

Swifts are Wales' fastest declining birds and need help now.

In about 2 months, they will arrive back in Wales. Many will find their longstanding nest sites blocked off – and they will struggle to find others. This is because of refurbishments to existing buildings and the lack of provision in new builds.

Whilst climate change and biodiversity loss are very likely playing a part in swifts' decline, the loss of nest sites is a critical and growing issue. It can be observed in areas where, for example, streets have been fitted with plastic soffits, causing whole colonies of swifts to be made homeless. Without swift bricks, the decline in swift numbers will continue, irrespective of climate change and biodiversity improvements.

It seems that there is no opposition to swift brick provision – the RSPB point to the fact that more than 20 large house-builders in England and Wales already support them. As do Wildlife Trusts Wales and RSPB Cymru. There is also growing public support - the swift network in Wales comprises members of the public taking positive action for swifts, such as awareness raising and installing swift bricks and nest boxes.

Swift bricks are cheap, easily and quickly installed and need no maintenance. There is already British Standards Institution guidance on the selection and siting of swift bricks in new builds – '*BS42021: 2022 Integral nest boxes. Selection and installation for new developments – Specification*', so additional ecological expertise re. their installation is not required.

The installation of swift bricks is currently patchy and relies on voluntary action by local authorities or developers. Provision of swift bricks must be mandated. Without this, it is highly unlikely that swift brick provision will be undertaken at the scale that is required to halt swift numbers decreasing further – let alone reversing this decline.

I welcome the Deputy First Minister's commitment to this issue. However, without a clear timetable for action, my concern is that this issue will not be addressed quickly, if at all, and will not be mandated. Swifts are disappearing from our cities, towns and villages now.

I would welcome the views of the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning on the issue of mandating swift bricks in new builds. I would also welcome understanding how and when Welsh Government will adopt a cross-Cabinet approach to resolve this issue, including setting a deadline for making a decision.

Yours faithfully

Julia Barrell (Petitioner)