

P-06-1489 Legislate to ensure swift bricks are installed in all new buildings in Wales - Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Committee, 10 October 2025

Dear Petition Committee Members

SWIFT BRICK PETITION

Thank you for giving me a further opportunity to respond on this issue – this time to the Senedd debate.

Whilst it was heartening to see the support for swifts from a number of Members of Senedd (including representatives of all 3 main parties), I am concerned that there does not seem to be a Welsh Government strategy to halt the decline in swift nest sites.

The current approach to biodiversity within the planning system relies largely on ‘avoid, minimise, mitigate, compensate’ (Planning Policy Wales 12, but also a feature of earlier iterations of PPW). This has not resulted in the routine use of swift bricks within new builds.

This example might illustrate the problem -

A developer applies to build a housing estate on a greenfield site. There will not be any swifts nesting here because swifts in Wales nest almost exclusively in buildings - not in trees, hedges or on the ground. So, there will be nothing to mitigate or compensate for as far as swifts are concerned and swift bricks are unlikely to be routinely included. At the same time, existing buildings are being refurbished, re-roofed, etc, resulting in the loss of existing nest sites. The effect is a net loss of swift nest sites and hence a decline in the number of swifts.

Some developers do include a small number of swift bricks in new developments, but for swifts, finding these is like looking for a needle in a haystack. Were they to be included routinely in all new builds, the chances of swifts finding them would be higher.

Installing a swift brick (which benefits multiple species) in a building is exactly the same as installing a normal brick. There is no reason why something this simple, measurable and effective could not be mandated quite separately and in addition to the more holistic and qualitative Net Benefit for Biodiversity (NBB) requirements, which will vary from site to site. As a completely separate requirement, this would therefore not cut across NBB, which is an important part of addressing the nature emergency.

If Welsh Government acknowledges the need for urgent action on (red listed) swifts, but is not minded to mandate swift bricks, I feel they need to demonstrate how they otherwise plan to reverse the loss of swift nests and hence the decline in swifts, given the failure of existing processes to deliver swift provision routinely.

Without nest sites, swifts will become extinct as a breeding bird in Wales.

Yours faithfully,

Julia Barrell (Petitioner)