



The Problem

We are inadvertently blocking swifts out of their homes by filling up their small nesting holes in our walls. When swifts return in Spring, they try endlessly to get back in, often fatally breaking their wings. If they survive, they can only breed if they manage to find another nesting site, so unsuccessful pairs are unable to contribute to their plummeting population. Swift bricks have been installed by the King when his majesty was the Duchy of Cornwall, with useful survey results. Leading scientists, ecological advisors to the government, and sustainable building assessors, have created and approved the petition. Notable politicians including Caroline Lucas MP are actively supporting the petition. This is a simple solution that directly seeks to counter biodiversity loss in the UK, by positively effecting 4 red listed species of British birds, our very closest urban neighbours.



Petition deadline: 30th April.
Target: 100,000 signatures for parliamentary debate.
Task: if everyone who signs gets 3 people to sign, we can do it!

A solution (petition)

<https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/626737>

Make swift bricks compulsory in new housing to help red-listed birds

Swifts have declined by over 50% in the UK. Adult swifts, known for site-fidelity, return to the same nests. We want swift bricks to be required in all new housing, to provide homes for these birds. Surveys show these are used by red-listed swifts, house martins, starlings and house sparrows.

Swifts spend more time airborne than any other bird, sometimes only landing when returning to their nests in our walls, from Africa. They're tidy and quiet neighbours but modern building methods block swifts out.

The metric for calculating biodiversity net gain doesn't include existing nest sites in buildings, or swift bricks, but these bricks can be designed into buildings without conflicting with insulation, and should be made a requirement for new housing.

Iconic and irreplaceable, swifts define our summers. Please help them. The RSPB supports this petition.



Mike Priaulx, sustainable buildings consultant and BREEAM assessor:

‘The benefits of swift bricks are highlighted by National Planning Policy Guidance (Natural Environment 2019 Paragraph 023), and some local authorities have taken this on board and have included strong requirements for swift bricks in their planning policies, but others have overlooked this item of the guidance, or the cycle of their planning policies development means it will be many years before they will update them. Therefore, a requirement for swift bricks to accompany the requirement for Biodiversity Net Gain is essential if we are to quickly and consistently create habitats suitable for our endangered urban birds.’



RSPB Exec Director, Emma Marsh:

'Swifts are one of many species desperately in need of our help. More than half have disappeared from UK skies in just 20 years, partly because of a lack of suitable nesting sites. Community groups, and forward-thinking developers and local planning authorities, have already created thousands of new homes for swifts but governments also need to play their part. As Hannah Bourne-Taylor's amazing campaign highlights, swift bricks should be compulsory in all new housing developments. I would urge everyone to sign this petition to help ensure swifts and other species that have traditionally nested in the cavities of our buildings have a safe home to return to every year.'



Swift expert, Anders Hedenström, Ecologist, Lund University:

‘It would be a really good idea to make it compulsory to install swift nests when constructing new buildings because swifts are highly philopatric. It is thanks to their site fidelity we can study swifts using various types of data loggers, which we must retrieve after one year to get the data about migrations and flight behavior. Swifts will, in most cases, return to breed year after year, and some may be up to 20 years.’

King Charles II:

‘I admire them and I love them; for me, the world would come to an end if the swallows, swifts and house martins didn’t come back.’

