

Briefing for the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee on petition PE2134: Introduce legislation to make it a requirement for swift bricks to be installed in all new developments in Scotland, and include swifts in building surveys, lodged by Cally Smith on behalf of Huntly Swift Group-NES Swifts

Brief overview of issues raised by the petition

Swifts: Swifts are mid-sized, migratory visitors to the UK usually resident between April and September across England, Wales, Northern Ireland, southern and central Scotland, plus coastal areas of northern Scotland. The current UK population size is estimated as 59,000 breeding pairs. Swifts spend winters in Africa.

Swifts typically nest in houses, churches, and other buildings, squeezing through gaps in the building fabric to build nests inside roof spaces. However, building renovations are reducing the number of available nesting sites, while new buildings do not normally provide opportunities for Swift nesting. [The fall in nesting sites is likely one of the key drivers behind declining UK Swift populations \(falling by 66% between 1995 and 2021\) and their resultant addition to the 'red list' of birds of conservation concern in 2021.](#) Other possible causes of falling numbers include poor summer weather and a decline in insect numbers, their main food source, affecting juvenile survival rates.

Swift bricks: Swift bricks are effectively hollow house bricks, with a small hole in their front face, that provide a nesting space for Swifts, and other birds that nest in similar locations, in new build properties and conversions.

Planning and building regulations: There are currently no Scottish building standards or planning requirements for Swift bricks to be used in Scottish building projects.

Building surveys: It is an offence to take, damage, destroy or interfere with the nest of any bird while it is in use or being built. It is also an offence to obstruct or prevent any bird from using its nest. Swifts are not designated as a protected species, which would offer additional protection to nesting sites, under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended.

Surveyors and developers should identify where Swift nests are occupied and act accordingly. However, there is no protection offered to Swift nests during the period that they are unoccupied – typically September to April.

NatureScot provides advice to planning authorities, developers and building industry professionals on the protection of wild birds and their nests in its [Standing Advice for Planning Consultations - Birds](#).

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28 February 2025

The purpose of this briefing is to provide a brief overview of issues raised by the petition. SPICe research specialists are not able to discuss the content of petition briefings with petitioners or other members of the public. However, if you have any comments on any petition briefing you can email us at spice@parliament.scot

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