



Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1489  
Ein cyf/Our ref RE/00769/25

Carolyn Thomas MS

Chair - Petitions committee

5 August 2025

Dear Carolyn,

Thank you for your letter forwarding the further questions and concerns of the Petitioner (Petition P-06-1489 Legislate to ensure swift bricks are installed in all new buildings in Wales) to the Committee. Your letter has been transferred to me for answer as the concerns and questions primarily relate to planning policy.

The Petitioner is unclear what concerns are being raised by the Deputy First Minister in his response to the Committee, dated 01 May. In particular, the Petitioner requests clarification on what the 'adverse and unintended consequences' of legislating for swift bricks might be.

From a planning perspective I can address the adverse and unintended consequences question raised by the Petitioner. When establishing a policy position, it is the normal course of action to establish whether the possibility exists for negative effects to occur which are not planned or expected or which could undermine the intentions of existing policy.

Whilst I agree with the Petitioner that a swift brick is an effective solution to help nature in some circumstances, potential adverse and unintended consequences could occur when efforts are always focused too narrowly on one solution. Too narrow a focus may undermine the broader intentions of existing legislation and policy to maintain and enhance biodiversity and is likely to result in efforts being limited only to the mandated solution.

Planning policy is in place to ensure that new developments provide a net benefit for biodiversity, that is, they should leave nature in a better state than before and this should reflect places and their context. The concern is that developers will focus on the installation of swift bricks as their only contribution to securing a net benefit for biodiversity and this is likely to act as a short cut to avoid doing wider and potentially more meaningful work, such as pollinator friendly planting, pond creation, hedgerow planting, or restoring degraded habitats. This would lead to less effective outcomes for nature overall, even though the intention of installing a swift brick was well meant in terms of its role as a positive conservation action.

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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.

Nature recovery is complex. Different places need different solutions depending on the local wildlife and environment. Swift bricks could be provided now in the right circumstances but a one-size-fits-all rule requiring swift bricks may not be the right fit everywhere. Negotiating planning applications is a complex and site-specific process and it is reasonable to suggest that the pursuit of a single conservation measure for schemes is easier than taking potentially more bespoke and desirable actions that would secure wider biodiversity benefits. Therefore, whilst swift bricks would in ideal circumstances be complementary to wider efforts the unintended outcome may be that they become the only outcome.

Instead of focusing on one measure, the goal of planning policy is to maintain and enhance biodiversity and secure ecosystem resilience. Taking a net benefit approach ensures that local authorities think strategically about their sites and developers understand the local environmental context of their sites and consequently design schemes that deliver lasting benefits for biodiversity.

I trust that the above helps in addressing the Petitioner's question to the Committee.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rebecca Evans." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Rebecca Evans AS/MS**

Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning  
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Economi, Ynni a Chynllunio