



**OPEN REPORT
BIODIVERSITY SUB-COMMITTEE**

Biodiversity Sub-Committee – 24 October 2023

Proposal for a collaborative project between Derbyshire Swift Conservation Project and Derbyshire Dales District Council

Report of Director of Regulatory Services

Report Author and Contact Details

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Wards Affected

District-wide

Report Summary

The report presents a proposal from the Derbyshire Swift Conservation Project for a collaborative project to address the loss of Swift nesting sites across the district.

Recommendations

1. That a delivery plan and costings are prepared for the project and presented to the appropriate committee for consideration.

List of Appendices

Appendix 1 Project proposal

Background Papers

None

Consideration of report by Council or other committee

Yes

Council Approval Required

Yes – for approval of any required resource.

Exempt from Press or Public

No

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1. Background

- 1.1 The Environment Act brought into force in November 2021 introduced a wide range of responsibilities in relation to Biodiversity some of which will fall directly to the County Council to implement but others of which fall to the District Council.
- 1.2 Section 102 of the Act amends the NERC Act 2006 by making it a Biodiversity Duty to 'conserve and enhance' in relation to council functions.
- 1.3 A report to Council on 16 March 2023 advised Members about the Biodiversity Duty, and set out activities which the District Council has, and is currently undertaking that contributes to meeting the new requirement. It recommended that a plan be prepared which sets out further actions the District Council should undertake to meet the requirements of the newly enhanced biodiversity duty.
- 1.4 At a meeting of the Biodiversity Sub-Committee on 19 July 2023 it was agreed that a 'Biodiversity action plan' would be prepared, a specification for which was agreed at the meeting on 13 September 2023. Preparation of the plan will begin in December 2023 subject to approval at Council.
- 1.5 Members were keen that initiatives to enhance biodiversity in the district continued throughout the preparation of the action plan.

2. Key Issues

- 2.1 The proposal seeks to develop a collaborative project between the Council and a local Swift Conservation Project. In common with several other long-distance migratory bird species breeding numbers of the Common Swift have declined by more than 65% across the UK over the past 25 years. The main factor behind the decline of Swifts appears to be the ongoing loss of suitable nest sites as building repair renovation and replacement gradually results in the loss of access holes to their nest sites within the fabric of buildings.
- 2.2 A request was made to the 13 September 2023 Biodiversity Sub-Committee by residents for the provision of integral nest sites for Swifts through hollow chambers fitted into the fabric of a building (Swift bricks) during new development. The issue was discussed by the Sub-Committee and Members expressed their support for this request. It was agreed that this discussion would be taken up through the Local plan Sub-Committee as part of the Local Plan review.
- 2.3 The Council has an approved Climate Change Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). The SPD currently encourages applicants to consider the inclusion of Swift bricks in new development. The Council has previously

agreed that there is a need to bring much of the contents of the into the main body of the Local Plan so that it is policy rather than guidance.

- 2.4 This proposal focuses on creating and replacing nesting sites on our existing housing and buildings. The opportunity presented is clearly at a significant scale and less time constrained than interventions on new built development. The installation of Swift boxes – phase 3 of the proposed project - is a simple and relatively inexpensive process but it is important that these preceding phases are undertaken to ensure the interventions have the most impact.

3. Options Considered and Recommended Proposal

- 3.1 The recommendation is to work with the Derbyshire Swift Conservation Project explore this proposal, including appropriate funding streams.

4. Consultation

- 4.1 Consultation will be considered in project design.

5. Timetable for Implementation (proposed)

- 5.1 The proposal is for a two-year project in the first instance.
- 5.2 Phase One of the project – data collection and surveying would begin in Spring 2024 as the Swifts return to the UK.
- 5.3 Prior to the Phase One beginning the Council would work with the Swift Conservation Project to refine the aims of the project, explore sources of funding and develop funding bids.

6. Policy Implications

- 6.1 There are no policy implications associated with this project proposal.

7. Financial and Resource Implications

- 7.1 There are no current financial implications associated with exploring the proposal.

8. Legal Advice and Implications

- 8.1 Section 102 of the Environment Act 2021 – brought into effect on 1st January 2023 requires that in carrying out its functions that the District Council must consider how it will conserve and enhance biodiversity.

9. Equalities Implications

- 9.1 There are no perceived equalities implications of developing this proposed project.

10. Climate Change and Biodiversity Implications

- 10.1 There are no perceived climate change impacts of the proposed project.
- 10.2 Swift boxes are referred to as 'universal nesting boxes'. They can accommodate house sparrows, starlings, tree sparrows, blue tits, great tits and occasionally house martins therefore offering nesting sites to a variety of native bird species. Stabilising and reversing species loss has a clear benefit to biodiversity – both locally and globally.

11. Risk Management

- 11.1 There are no risks associated with the project proposal.

Report Authorisation

Approvals obtained from Statutory Officers:-

	Named Officer	Date
Chief Executive		
Director of Resources/ S.151 Officer (or Financial Services Manager)		
Monitoring Officer (or Legal Services Manager)		