

Helping swifts and building reputations



Jan Stannard

Maidenhead, Marlow and Cookham Swift Group

Swifts in Maidenhead

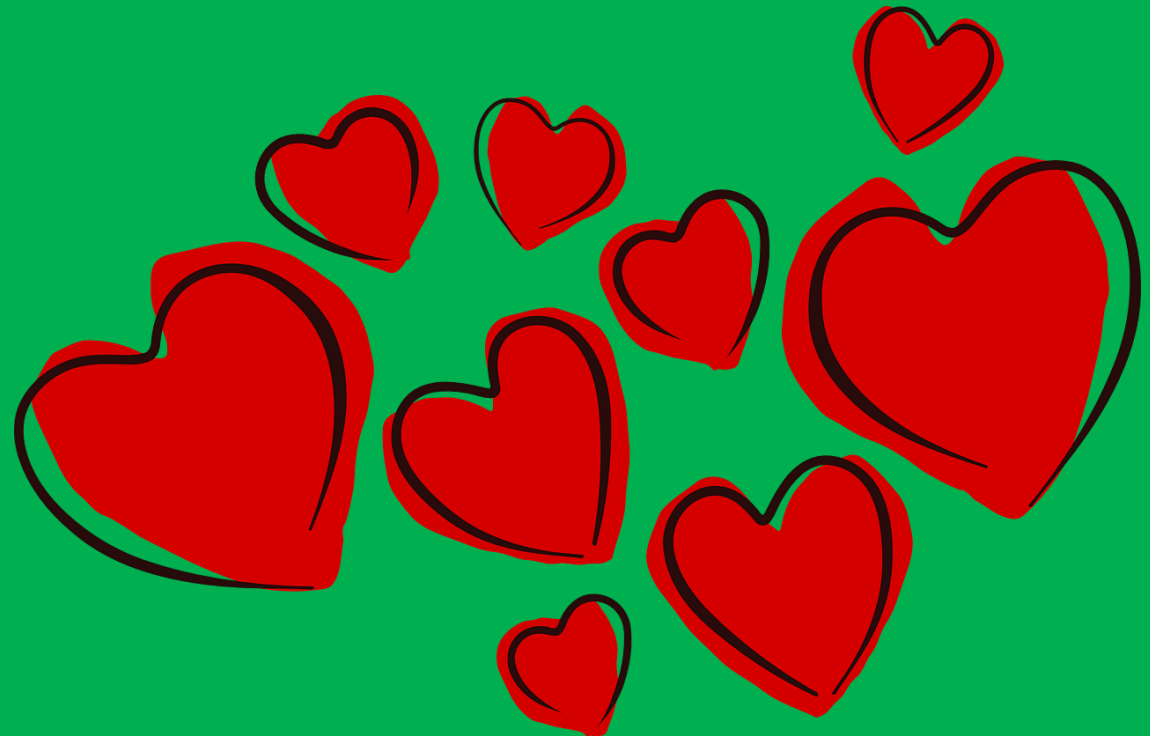
- 50% decline in 20 years
- Local swift group formed in July 2015
- Aims to work with local council/developers/
major organisations and local residents to
provide new nesting places for swifts in
Maidenhead, Marlow and Cookham
- Always preference for internal boxes, if not
possible, then external, minimum 2



Swifts and reputations

- Organisations spend a great deal of money in building and protecting their reputations
- Caring for swifts is easy and inexpensive, and popular with the public
- Showing that the organisation cares about other creatures enhances reputation because it shows the organisation has a heart
- Winning the emotional engagement of consumers or customers is a difficult job, and helping swifts can help achieve it
- The message: **don't overlook the power of swifts to enhance corporate reputation**

Reputation





McCarthy & Stone

The UK's leading retirement housebuilder

- Was in the process of demolishing old house in Maidenhead with large existing swift colony (June 2015)
- Ecologist had been sent in November (swifts absent) so McCarthy & Stone unaware
- Company responded very positively to situation, stopped demolition, sent ecologist to survey and monitor birds and fledging
- Good result in terms of mitigation: 28 internal boxes to be fitted and new building to be called 'Swift House'!





McCarthy & Stone

The UK's leading retirement housebuilder

“I'm sure you will be pleased to hear that in tribute to the swifts who made the site their home, we have named the new development Swift House”

28 internal swift
boxes to be
installed





- Swift group became aware that Premier Inn was very 'swift friendly' through newsletter post
- Discovered part-constructed hotel in Maidenhead was to be a Premier Inn
- Contact Whitbread's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) team – no swift boxes but...
- Very quick and positive response – specified 20 internal boxes in new build

Good Practice: Mill Street Premier Inn, Perth

Positive change has been happening for some time now within the Whitbread Company. Their subsidiary, the Premier Inn hotel chain, prepares Biodiversity Enhancement Plans for each of its newbuilds and highlights specific sections within these reports on what bird nesting and bat roosting opportunities can be included. Their first swift-friendly hotel, in Exeter, had 21 swift nest boxes installed into the fabric of the hotel, creating the natural space the birds need to reproduce.

Now, as one of their press releases, says “travellers human and avian can enjoy a well-earned rest after a hard journey – another example of how we are leading the hospitality industry to be more environmentally friendly”. Similar bird box schemes are being introduced by the company elsewhere in other Devon Premier Inns, plus in Portsmouth and Cambridge.



Whitbread's good practice has been applied more locally too – in Perth. Many years ago the Tayside Biodiversity Co-ordinator enjoyed a birds-eye view from her office of swifts nesting in the old Mill Street buildings. Subsequent plans for renovating and converting the property into a Premier Inn sparked concern for the swifts but true to their word Whitbread installed external swift nestboxes adjacent to the old nest site. We hope the swifts use them and continue to fly over the centre of Perth for a long time to come.

Premier Inn Maidenhead

- Our swift group very proactive as time very short (scaffold was due to come down, after which swift box installation would have been impossible)
- Worked at high speed with construction firm McAleer & Rushe, architects White Ink (*who deserve special mention as they worked extremely rapidly to find suitable locations in the structure for the boxes*) and our local box-making team who produced the 20 boxes over a weekend

Premier Inn Maidenhead

- Regular Swift Group visits to site kept the issue of the boxes and the urgency of the work in mind
- Dick Newell (Action for Swifts) provided a sound system which was also installed
- We hope that Theresa May will come and open the UK's newest 'swift hotel' in May 2016

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WHITBREAD

CSR team

 **McAleer
& Rushe**

White Ink

ARCHITECTS



A photograph of a multi-story building under construction, completely covered in scaffolding. A tall blue crane stands behind the building. In the foreground, a blue forklift is parked on a paved area. To the right is a completed brick building with red horizontal bands. A wooden fence is on the left. A purple text box is overlaid on the bottom right.

20 internal swift
boxes installed

Swift group set up

- In response to the McCarthy & Stone situation, where the plight of local swifts became apparent, swift group set up
- As of December 2015, nearly 50 families plan to put up boxes; group currently surveying properties for suitability and giving advice
- Twin boxes (based on Mark Glanville's design) being made by local volunteer group and sold on materials-only basis (so very inexpensive)

Swift group set up

- Now liaising with council (ecologist), local organisations, churches and schools regarding swift box installations, internal wherever possible
- Very positive response from all involved
- Jan Stannard (07710 171704) happy to pass on her experience of setting up a swift group to anyone interested in doing so, with particular knowledge of how to succeed with member recruitment using social media

New group to help swifts



SWIFT ACTION: Members of the new group. Ref:123152-3

MAIDENHEAD: Birdwatchers have set up a new group to help East Berkshire's swift population.

The Maidenhead, Marlow and Cookham Swift Group was formed by swift enthusiasts after they became concerned that the bird's nests were being destroyed.

Last month, they successfully campaigned to halt the demolition of the Walton Cottage Hotel after a colony of nesting swifts were spotted in the rafters.

Jan Stannard, one of the creators of the group, said: "We want to create a corridor of nesting sites between Maiden-

head and Marlow and are hoping lots of people will get involved and put up boxes."

The group is holding a Swifts and Drinks event tonight (Thursday) in Norfolk Road, where the birdwatchers will be on hand to give information about the birds.

Swifts are a protected species that visit the UK during the summer months to breed. In winter, they fly to Africa and often find on their return to the UK the following summer that their nests have been destroyed.

Call Jan on 07710171704 or email jstannard@siteset.co.uk for details.

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Maidenhead, Marlow and Cookham Swift Group

www.helpourswifts.org.uk | 07710 171704