



## Church installation Guide



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### Common swift population decline

Swifts numbers have decreased by 60% over the past 20 years. Loss of nest sites due to our construction methods is one of the main causes. We use efficient methods to seal our buildings, restricting access for swifts.



### Why are churches ideal?



Church towers offer a great opportunity to provide a secure location for swift boxes, replicating their natural nest sites. The cabinets are created with individual nest chambers inside. The swifts access the chamber through a small aperture at the front.

### The design of the swift boxes

The design of the cabinets are all based on a similar style. Each louvre gap can provide access to an individual chamber.

The image (right) shows the cabinet, with the back removed for display. The cabinets are fitted on the inside of the louvres. Each chamber is installed with its own nest cup, which is lined with feathers. This provides a nesting pair of swifts, a ready made nest.



### The installation process

- 1.. A viability survey is undertaken to determine suitability of the church for swifts and vice versa. Measurements are taken and a discussion can be had with interested parties who may wish to raise concerns at this preliminary stage.
- 2.. A full written proposal will be prepared to be issued to the PCC. This will include:
  - A detailed description of the installation process within a Method Statement.
  - A Conflict Statement, addressing any points raised during the viability survey.
  - Drawings of the proposed design.
  - Credentials of the installers, including insurance details and Health and Safety documentation.
- 3.. Upon approval from the PCC, consent will be sought from the Archdeacon (List B1-19, fee-free).
- 4.. After the proposal has been granted consent from the Archdeacon, a date can be arranged for the installation.



Exeter Cathedral installation 2024

## Q & A's

*Q..Do nestboxes interfere with bell ringing activities?*

A..The design and location of the installed cabinets ensures there is no conflict with bell-ringing. There are gaps left above and below the cabinets to provide airflow and resonance. Many bellringers are now involved with swift nestbox installations.

*Q..Does the installation permit access into the tower, to other species?*

A..The cabinets are sealed on all sides with only the front aperture (28mm x 65mm) allowing access. After the cabinets are installed, we install galvanised mesh to seal any voids created during the installation process. This must be undertaken to restrict swifts from entering the bell tower. They are a specialised aerial species, however, they can become trapped in a confined space. The process of sealing the tower from swift access benefits the tower from restricting access to squirrels and other avian species.

*Q..Is there any mess to clean away ?*

A..Swifts are a particularly clean species, the adults defecate away from the nest and they consume the faeces of their young as the juvenile's gut isn't developed fully and nutrients are retained in the faecal sac. This is beneficial to the adults who work tirelessly to feed their young and need all the help they can get, nutritionally. Swifts gather feathers and grasses on the wing, to line their nest cups. These degrade over winter, leaving a clean nest for their occupation, the following year.



*Q..Does the installation cause damage to architectural stonework?*

A..At no point will any fixings be installed directly into stonework. All fixings will be installed into the mortar joints between the stonework. Section 32 of the 'Historic England Advice Note 16 which lists 'Works for which listed building consent is not required', states that "...bird boxes are unlikely to affect special interest... if discreetly located and if fixed carefully to minimise damage to the substrate." Boxes can be removed for maintenance if required.

*Q..How many nestboxes will be installed?*

A..There is no fixed number, as each installation is different. However, we try to install on 2 separate elevations with up to 4 individual cabinets.

*Q..Will any maintenance of the boxes be required?*

A..The boxes are constructed from marine grade plywood secured stainless steel fixings, adhesives, and sealed with 3 coats of sealant. As the units are only indirectly exposed to the elements, they should last for 25+ years. During the yearly colonisation checks (post establishment) by a member of the Devon Swift Project, the boxes will be assessed, and any maintenance work will be undertaken, if required.

*Q..How soon will the cabinets become occupied?*

A..Swifts can take many years to repopulate an area. Likelihood of colonisation is increased if swifts are nesting nearby and young birds are actively prospecting. To increase colonisation likelihood, we install an acoustic lure which is activated with a supplied timer. A tiny speaker is placed inside a cabinet and attracts swifts to the new nesting possibilities. The unit is volume controlled to ensure the sound blends in with ambient birdsong. It runs for a few hours per day, during May-August.

*Q..Does the acoustic lure require any special permissions before installation?*

A..List A (A5-4K) makes provisions for 'portable audio equipment'. As the acoustic lure is immediately removable, it would not require a faculty, or special permissions.

*Q..Will the installation cost the church?*

A..The project is fully funded by Devon Birds and the Devon Environment Foundation.

To enquire about a viability survey or to find out more information, please contact Jerry at:

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or visit the website at:

<https://devonswiftproject.co.uk/>



*Thanks for your interest in helping these amazing birds!*

