



Limerick City European Green Leaf Swift Nest Box Project

Climate Action Biodiversity and Environment Strategic Policy Committee
Tuesday 8th June 2021 at 4pm
on Microsoft Teams.

Sinead Mc Donnell
Environment Awareness Officer
Limerick City & County Council



Comhairle Cathrach
& Contae **Luimnigh**

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Swifts

- Small migratory bird
- Weigh as little as a Cadbury's Cream Egg
- Built to spend most of their lives in constant flight
- Only ever landing to nest.
- Numbers have declined by approx. 40% across Ireland in the last 10 years
- Swifts are now on to the **RED** List, (highest level of conservation concern), in the recently released Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland 2020-2026

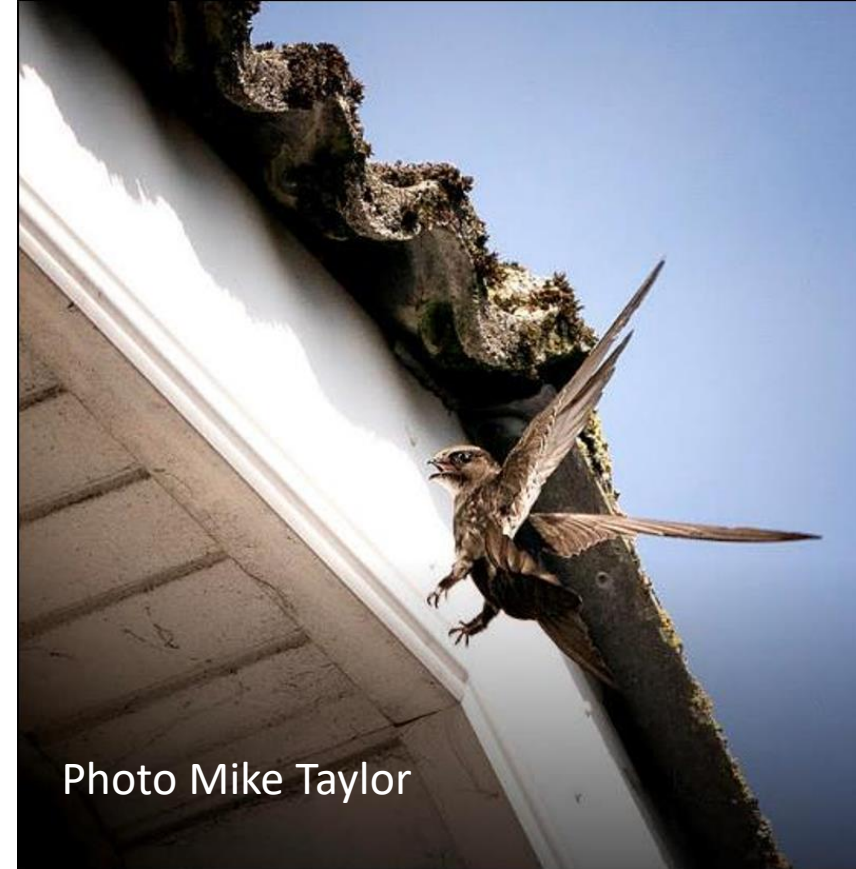


Photo Mike Taylor



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Swifts

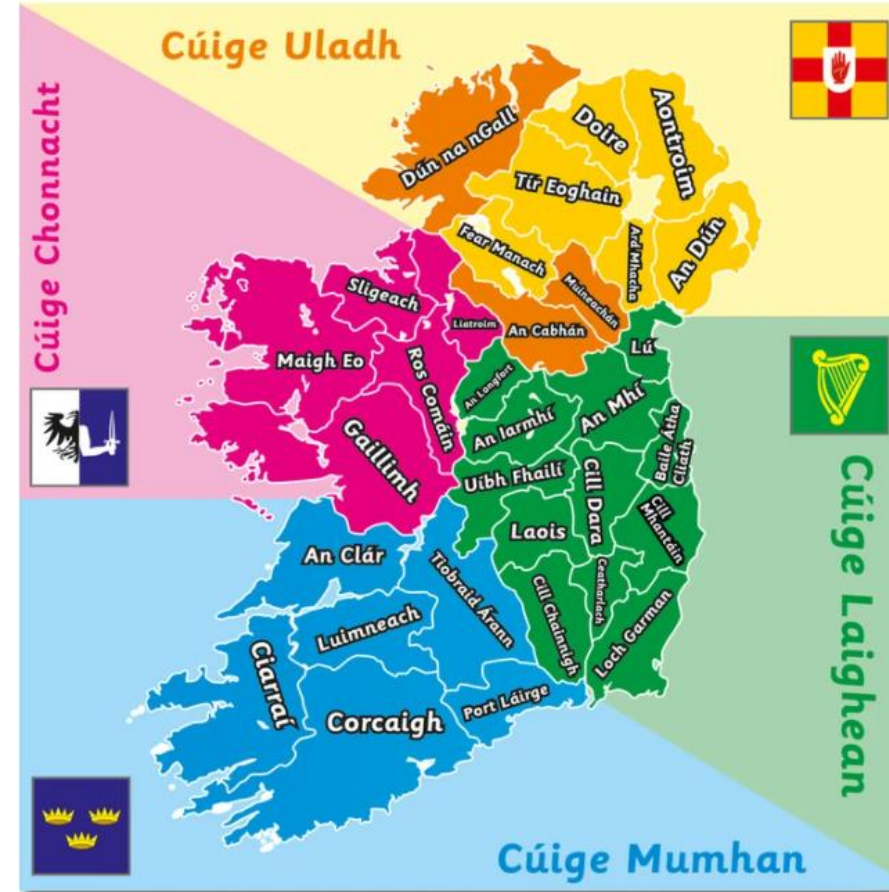
- Winter in Sub-Saharan African countries
- Summer in Europe including Ireland (May – end August)
- Drink, feed, sleep & mate on the wing.
- Fly up to 22,000 Km a year.
- Feed on flying insects



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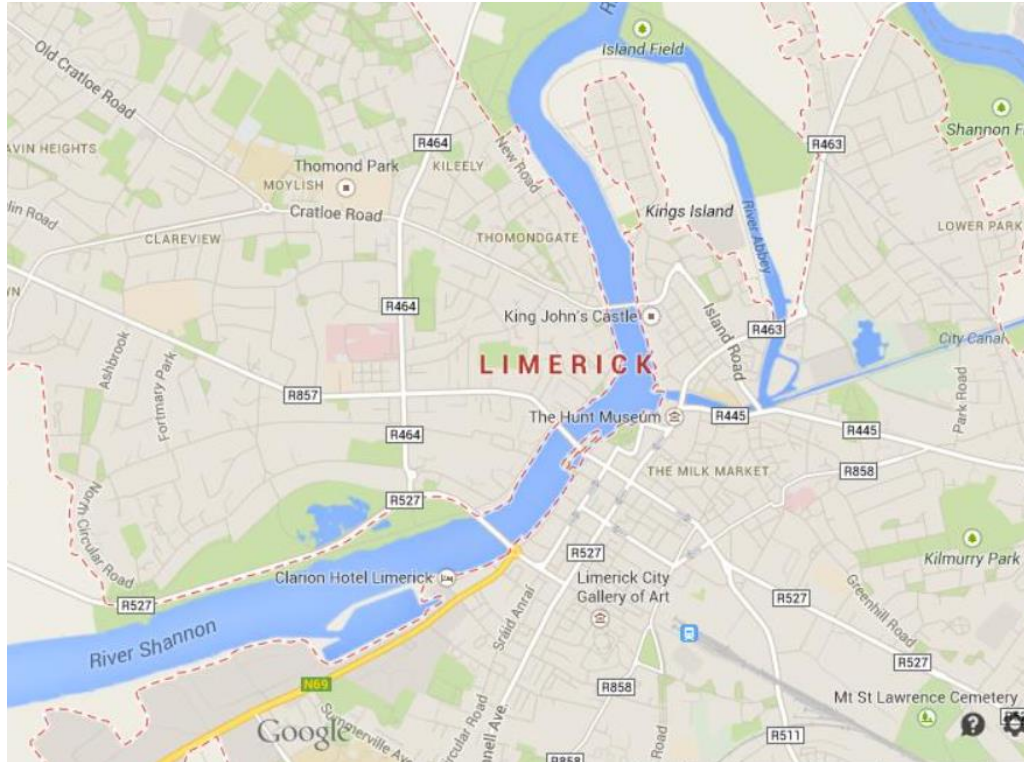
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Limerick City Nest Box Swifts



- Young Swifts (teenagers) prospect for nest sites all summer
- They may not begin to roost till late July onwards.
- These young swifts are the birds we are trying to attract to the new sites with the site “call” lures.
- The lure increases the chances of attracting ‘first time’ nesters to the sites. The volume is on a timer and set to normal birdsong levels.



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Swifts / Sand Martins



 Local Authority of Waters Programme

 BirdWatchIreland

 protecting birds and biodiversity

Swifts, Swallows and Martins - an ID Guide

Which species?

These four summer visitors to Ireland are often mistaken for each other. This poster will help you identify each species and their nests correctly.

Nest sites

The nest shape, structure and type is also characteristic of each species.



Swift

- Look fully black
- Sickle shaped wings
- Short forked tail



Swallow

- White underparts with inky blue "hood" and red chin
- Long forked tail, much longer than other three species



House Martin

- White underparts, inky blue above with a distinctive white rump
- Short wings and short forked tail



Sand Martin

- White underparts with distinctive brown chest bar
- Short wings and short forked tail



- Swift nests are always tucked away within buildings, including on roof plates, under roof tiles, in small gaps in masonry and other cavities.



- Swallows build a half cup nest with mud pellets. Nests are built under shelter, including in sheds, porches and lean-tos.



- House Martins build an almost fully enclosed cup nest with mud pellets. Nests are built under the eaves of houses and long terraces of nests can form.



- Sand Martin nests are found at the end of small burrowed chambers. These burrows are usually excavated in sandy banks along rivers and within quarries.

- Limerick has Sand Martins colonies nesting in the walls of the quays along the Shannon and Abbey Rivers.
- These are sometimes confused with Swifts. However Swifts are:
 - Bigger
 - Have characteristic sickle-shaped wings
 - Look completely black (Sand Martins are white below)



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Limerick City Centre Tidy Towns Report 2019

37 /50 marks



Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality / An Dúlra agus an Bhithéagsúlacht i do cheantar:

With Westfields, the Peoples Park, other green areas, the mature trees and hedges and the River Shannon you have a great variety of habitats for wildlife. We must also remember that birds use crevices in buildings as nesting sites. We noted the bee hive in the grounds of the Hunt Museum with bees entering and leaving as we watched. Bug hotels are fascinating for children and so we were delighted that St. Mary's Men's Shed have made some for you. You have had many talks and field trips arranged with BirdWatch Ireland which are offered free of charge to the public – we hope they are well attended. Have you any swifts? The population has declined dramatically in recent years so keep your eyes open for nesting sites and report them. You can buy (or make) swift nesting boxes to encourage new nesting sites. Ask your BirdWatch Ireland member for details of where /how to install them.

Have you any Swifts? The Population has declined dramatically in recent years. You can buy (or make) swift nesting boxes to encourage new nesting sites.



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Collaboration begins



- Dean of Limerick City Parish offered to engage St Mary's Men's Shed to construct swift nest boxes for St Mary's Cathedral as a contribution to Tidy Towns.
- Limerick City was awarded the European Green Leaf City in 2019 and wanted to embark on a swift nest box project.



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Multi Stake Holder – Coordinated by LCCC



**KING JOHN'S
CASTLE**

Bringing our history to life



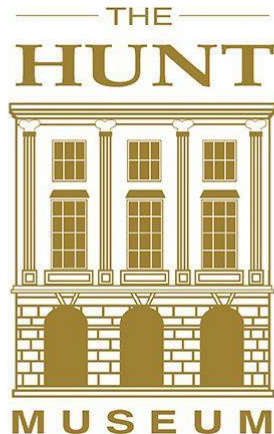
BirdWatchIreland
birdwatchireland.ie
protecting birds and biodiversity

National NGO & local Limerick Branch

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- Heritage Officer
- Conservation Architect
- Environment Awareness Officer
- Facilities Management
- Urban and Rural Development Tea
- Physical Strategy
- ECLA Team (cross department)



St Mary's Cathedral and ST Michaels Church



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Swift Nest Box Site Survey



A site survey took place in Limerick City in Dec 2020.

BirdWatch Ireland (BWI)

- Ricky Whelan, Urban Bird Conservation Officer
- Tom Tarpey, Limerick Branch Volunteer
- Maura Turner, Limerick Branch Volunteer

Limerick City and County Council (LCCC)

- Tom Cassidy, Conservation Architect –
- Sinead Mc Donnell, Environment Awareness Officer

Limerick City Centre TT Volunteers

- Helen O Donnell, Chair

ST Mary's Cathedral

- Representative from

King John's Castle

- Daira Heffernan



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Swift Nest Box Sites selected



1. The Hunt Museum,
2. St. Mary's Cathedral
3. Limerick City and County Council, Merchant's Quay,
4. King John's Castle Exhibition Centre and
5. The Louvres of St. Michael's Church on Barrington Street,

This is a total of 39 possible individual nests for the newly arrived birds to use



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Procurement



- Four contractors were contacted by email and asked to quote for this project.
- MP Joyce Contracting, Patrickswell were the successful contractors.
- In terms of the electrical works required although straight forward each building requested their 'regular' electrical contractor was used.
- Working at heights important element as Swifts nest at 5m plus from ground (includes flat roofs)
- Once the work was planned all boxes were installed within a two day period.



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Types of Swift Nest Boxes Used



BirdWatch Ireland's Urban Bird Conservation Officer advised in relation to the types of boxes to be used.



St Mary's Men Shed boxes were used in St Mary's Cathedral along with a triple entry Swift Nest box

Custom built boxes were required for the louvres of St Michaels Bell Tower.



Triple Entry Anti-Predator Swift Nest-Box



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The Call lure

- Licenced until Sept 2025 by:
 - National Parks and Wildlife Service



An Roinn Tithíochta,
Rialtais Áitiúil agus Oidhreacht
Department of Housing,
Local Government and Heritage

Licence No. 21/2021

NATIONAL PARKS & WILDLIFE SERVICE

Wildlife Acts 1976 to 2018 - Section 35

The Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, in exercise of the powers conferred on the Minister by Section 35 of the Wildlife Acts 1976 to 2018 authorises:

Applicant: Ricky Whelan

Ricky Whelan

in Column 2 for the purpose of attracting the birds to
mn 3 during the period beginning on the
01 September 2025

nditions listed overleaf

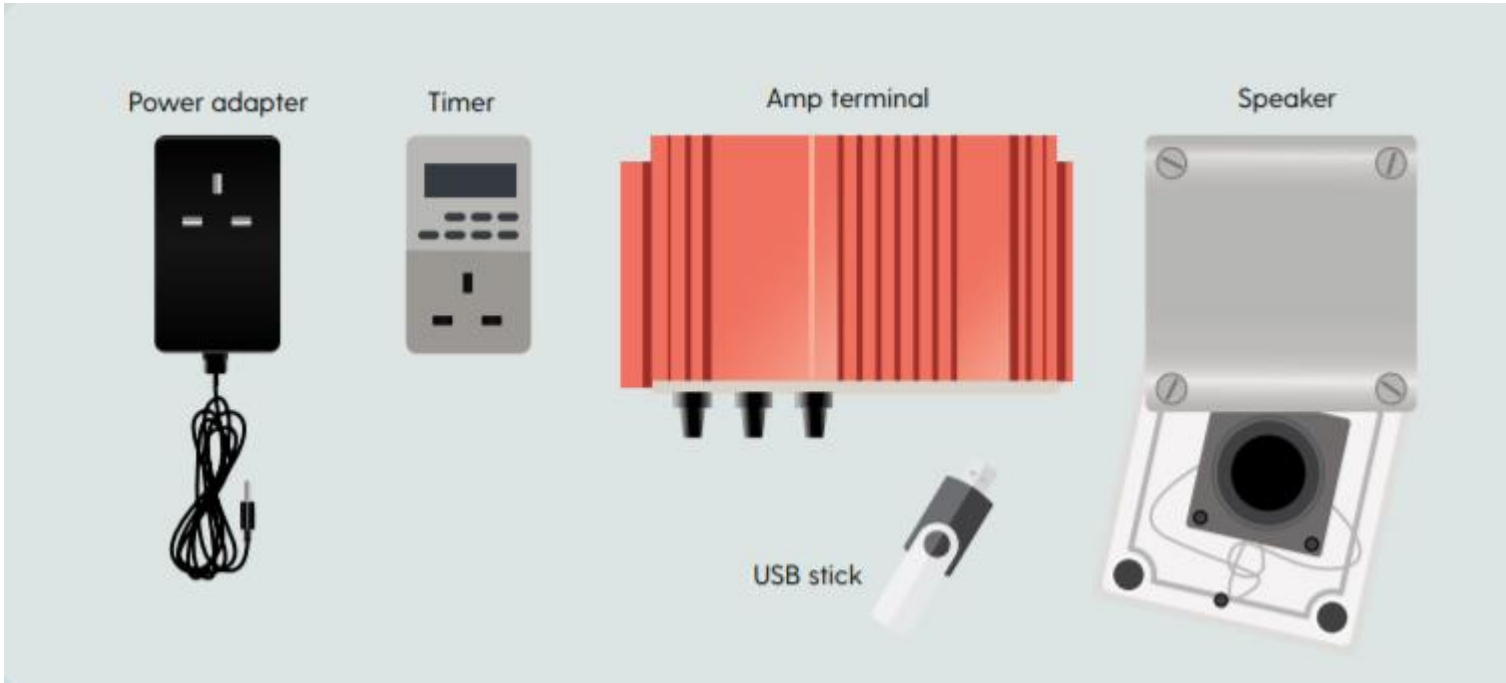
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3	AREA
	St. Mary's Cathedral - Limerick Co. Council Office - The Hunt Museum - King Johns Castel - St. Michaels Church, Barrington Street, Limerick City.

Conditions

1. This licence shall be produced for inspection on a request being made on that behalf by a member of An Garda Síochána or any person appointed by the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, under Section 72 of the Wildlife Acts 1976 to 2018, to be an authorised person for the purpose of the Acts.
2. This licence may be revoked at any time by the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
3. The applicant must ensure that landowner permission is received to enter onto private land(s) before this licence can be exercised.
4. Licence Duration - Date of issue to 01 September 2025.
5. Licence valid only for area stated overleaf.
6. Licence valid only for licensee stated overleaf.
7. Licence valid only for species stated overleaf.
8. **Note:** Buildings with opposed glass windows should be avoided, either as places for swift boxes or very close by. There is a danger of swifts colliding with such windows, even relatively small windows giving swifts the illusion that they can fly through the building.

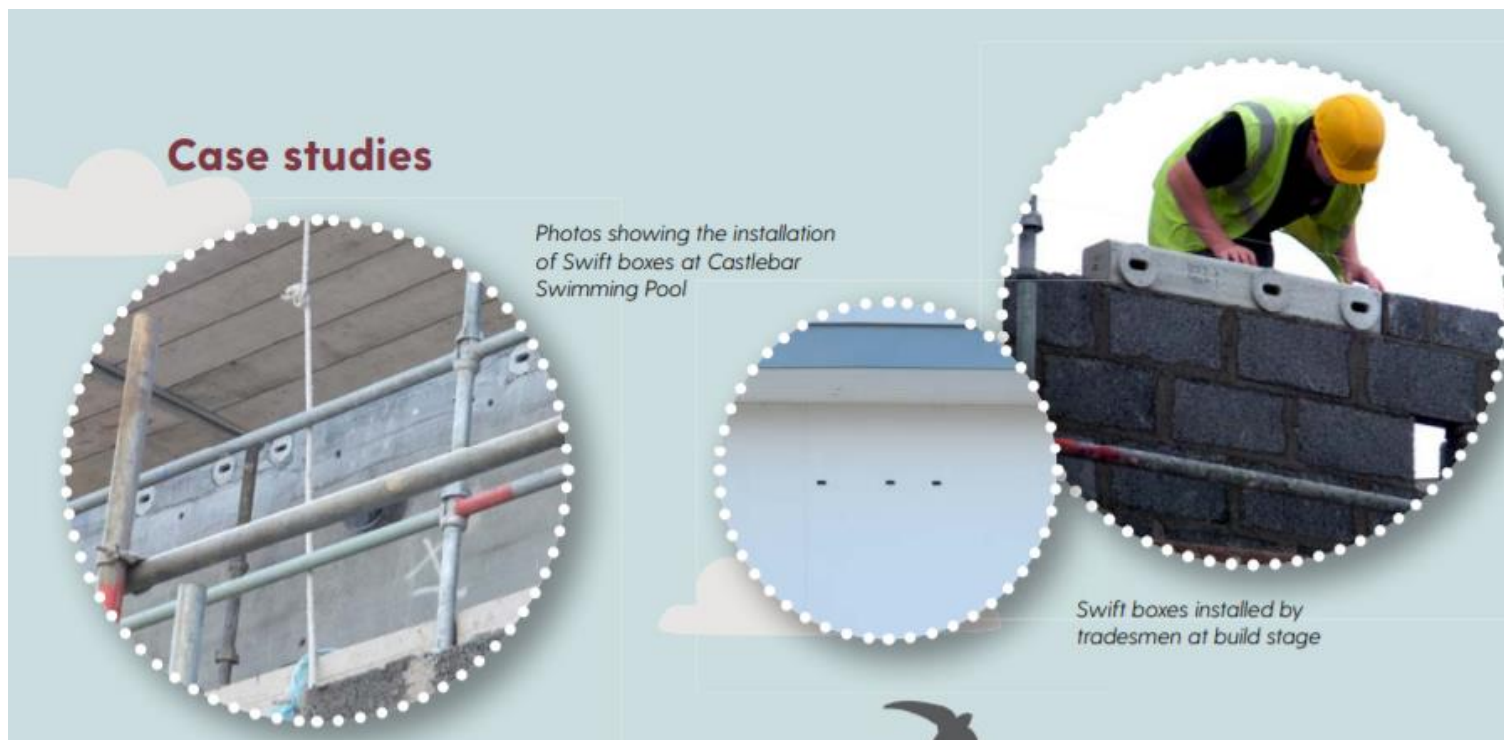
The licensee must adhere to the measures and restrictions relating to public health on Covid-19



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Swift nest boxes for new builds



During the Swift site survey the team met with Limerick 2030 representatives with a view to Swift nest boxes being incorporated into the buildings being redeveloped as part of Limerick 2030 and beyond.

Also often recommended as part of planning conditions.



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Swift nest boxes pre installation



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Swift Nest Box Installation



Merchants Quay overhead Pollen Patch



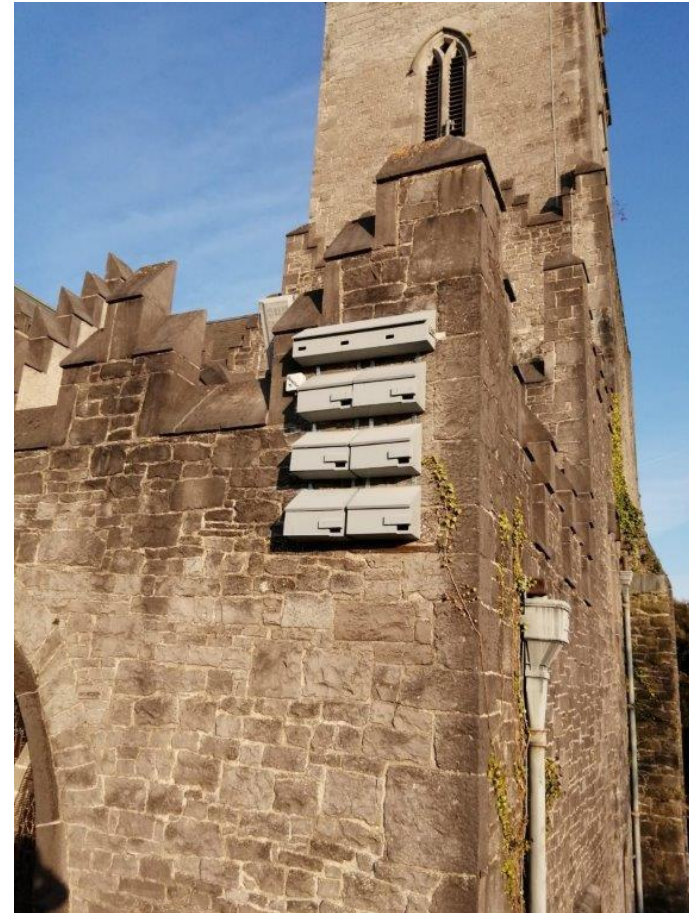
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Swift Nest boxes installed



King John's Castle Exhibition Centre



St Mary's Cathedral



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Swift nest box installed



Hunt Museum – close up



Hunt Museum



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St Michael's Church, Barrington Street



Wire mesh prevents access of 'unwanted' birds

There are three cavity nest boxes in each of this timber structure – the Swifts access via the lures and entrance points in the nest boxes



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If you build it



- Ricky Whelan, Urban Bird Conservation Officer with BirdWatch Ireland:



“ We cannot be sure that the nest boxes will be occupied in this year but fingers crossed they will occupy them in years to come. With wildlife projects you always need a little luck.”



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Monitoring Limerick City Swift Nest Boxes



- Swift activity around the next boxes will be monitored by
 - Local BirdWatch Ireland Volunteers
 - LCCC Staff
 - City Centre Tidy Towns volunteers
 - Members of the public



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Swifts in RTE's 'Back from the Brink' with Derek Mooney



- In the Netherlands, conservation measures to provide safe city-centre nesting sites for the Common Swift have been helping these amazing migratory birds to live up to their name and once again become common.
- Masters of flight, they spend more time on the wing than any other creature, only landing each summer to lay their eggs and rear their chicks, then flying non-stop for nine months. **They don't just tolerate urban development, they can thrive in it.**



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www.birdwatchireland.ie



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Savings Swift Guide can be downloaded from www.birdwatchireland.ie



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