

Has Labour given up on government and governing?

Published: January 13, 2026, 1:20 am

As [The Guardian](#) has reported:

Providing every new home with at least one “swift brick” to help endangered cavity-nesting birds has been rejected by Labour at the committee stage of its increasingly controversial planning bill.

The amendment to the bill to ask every developer to provide a £35 hollow brick for swifts, house martins, sparrows and starlings, which was tabled by Labour MP Barry Gardiner, has been rejected by the Labour-dominated committee.

This is surprising because Labour supported a similar measure when it was tabled on Conservative government legislation in 2023, but now, apparently, Labour housing minister Matthew Pennycook has said:

“We are not convinced that legislating to mandate the use of specific wildlife features is the right approach, whether that is done through building regulations or a freestanding legal requirement.”

Three thoughts. First, more than a hundred thousands people have supported this move, which means it is likely to have considerable popular support. Second, this is a small move at low cost, but it keeps a lot of people happy, and Labour needs every happy supporter it can find right now. Instead, they appear intent on alienating them. Third, the message from Matthew Pennycook is clear. It is that Labour thinks it can do nothing to improve the quality of life in the UK. What else does his statement mean? Apparently he thinks that within the powers available to government there is nothing he can do to help wildlife. And since he must know that market outcomes are making life a lot worse for it, what does he think the message is, as a result? Is it that we all give up now? Should we just despair? Or should we abandon belief in government itself, as Labour is obviously doing? It's hard to be sure what he meant, but one thing is certain, and that is someone so confused, small-minded and out of touch with what is required by voters has no role in any government, let alone one that calls itself Labour, even if in name only.