

Scottish Empty Homes Partnership

ADVICE AND INFORMATION FOR EMPTY HOME OWNERS – COUNCIL TEMPLATE

This information sheet is intended to provide a potential template for Scottish councils to provide advice and information to empty home owners as part of the Scheme of Assistance. The template is designed to be able to be used as a base text for council websites and/or leaflets and to be added to at a local level to suit local needs and circumstances.

N.B. Text inside these brackets [] is a note rather than part of the template text.

Template Text

Information for Empty Home Owners

Vacant homes in X council qualify for a council tax discount of X percent for the first 6 months and X percent thereafter. This discount was reduced from 50% in XXXX [year] as it was felt that the level of discount should not provide an incentive for keeping homes empty.

Empty homes can be a magnet for anti-social behaviour, crime, vandalism, arson and fly-tipping. Houses left unoccupied can fall into disrepair quite quickly, becoming a blight on the neighbourhood and having an adverse effect on the value and saleability of surrounding properties.

An empty home costs money to the owner and to the community. It is estimated that an empty property can cost the owner on average £7,000 a year in lost rent and council tax. For the community the costs can be much higher depending on the state of the property and can include:

- The cost of fire and police attendance to an incident at the property
- The cost of refuse services to remove fly-tipped materials
- Cost of removal of graffiti and other vandalism
- Cost of attendance by anti-social behaviour officers/community wardens/environmental health officers
- Lost spend in the local community
- Lowering of adjacent property values by up to 18%

Below are some links that should be helpful if you own an empty property and would like to learn about your options for bringing it back into use.

Thinking about Renting?

Do you want to access a rental income from your property but you are unsure about becoming a landlord?

[For councils with a Private Sector Leasing scheme in operation]

The council's Private Sector Leasing scheme is run by X and offers X term of management at X fee, with a guarantee of no voids for X period. Please click on the following link for more information about the scheme including the standard your property needs to meet to be considered for the scheme: [insert web link to PSL info]

There are also a number of property management companies in operation in the area who will manage the letting of your property for a fee. [Insert links to local property management firms].

Landlord training is available from X. For more information contact X or click on the following link: [insert link to any available landlord training courses in your area]

Private Landlords in Scotland are now required to register with the council to ensure that they are meeting the necessary standards. For more information on how to register see: <https://www.landlordregistrationscotland.gov.uk/Pages/Process.aspx?Command=ShowHomePage>

For information on the voluntary Landlord Accreditation Scheme and associated standards and training opportunities see: <http://www.landlordaccreditationscotland.com/>

The Private Rented Sector Housing Panel provides information on your rights and responsibilities as a landlord, details of regulations that will affect you as well as useful downloads and FAQs. See: <http://www.prhpscotland.gov.uk/prhp/135.26.30.html>

[If your council has a landlord information pack or runs a deposit guarantee scheme you could also include information on these in this section]

Need work done to your property so it can be occupied?

There are a number of contacts that may be able to assist:

- [Include link to Trusted Trader scheme if your council has one or consider including links to organisations such as Trustmark, Construction Licensing Executive, Gas Safe Register, Consumer Direct Scotland.]
- [Include links to different council services that might be able to help, building standards, planning, etc]
- [Include links to external partners offering advice/assistance, including Energy Savings Trust, the councils' Care and Repair Scheme, the councils' Disabled Person's housing service, etc.]
- [You might also consider adding links to agencies like Money Made Clear who can advise on accessing private finance or a local credit union.]

Thinking about Selling?

If you are thinking about selling your property there are several options open to you.

The following local estate agents are happy to list empty properties for sale:

- [insert list of local estate agents who have confirmed that they will list empty properties for sale]

The following links will connect you to local auction houses that deal with property lots. Selling at auction can provide a quick way of selling your home but there will be auctioneer fees to pay.

- [insert links to local auction houses or listings of upcoming auctions]

[If you would like to add to this section you could consider setting up a website similar to the one below to link up empty home owners wanting to sell to those wanting to buy empty homes:

http://www.south-derbys.gov.uk/housing/empty_unoccupied_properties/buying_an_empty_property/default.asp

Not sure where to start?

- [Insert contact details for your council's Housing Advice & Information service or other designated member of staff/department]

Examples of Other Council's Websites

- o Kent –
<http://www.no-use-empty.org/index.php>
- o Surrey and Hampshire –
<http://www.everyhomecounts.info/>
- o Brighton and Hove –
<http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/index.cfm?request=c1164988>
- o Mole Valley –
<http://www.molevalley.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=9490>
- o Central Bedfordshire –
<http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/housing/private-sector-housing/Emptyproperties.aspx>
- o Teignbridge –
<http://www.teignbridge.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=11913>
- o Eastbourne -
<http://www.eastbourne.gov.uk/EasySiteWeb/getresource.axd?AssetID=6317&type=full&servicetype=Inline>
- o Newcastle Borough Council –
http://www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/housing_content.asp?id=SXDAC6-A780CFB7&cat=1487
- o Oldham –
http://www.oldham.gov.uk/housing/empty_properties_into_use.htm
- o North East Derbyshire –
<http://www.ne-derbyshire.gov.uk/housing/private-sector-housing/empty-properties>
- o South Derbyshire –
http://www.south-derbys.gov.uk/housing/empty_unoccupied_properties/default.asp
- o Birmingham –
<http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/emptyproperties>
- o Arun –
<http://www.arun.gov.uk/cgi-bin/buildpage.pl?mysql=242>