



Press Cutting

Client: No Use Empty

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Loan scheme helps to rejuvenate old hostel

£175k of council funding helps turn site into nine flats

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fact file

■ Number of homes returned to use under NUE scheme:

Kent - 2,126
Dover - 201

■ Total investment in empty homes since 2005:

Kent - £18 million
Dover - £4.8 million

■ Total investment in empty homes in Dover since 2005:

NUE loans - £1.6 million
Private funding - £3.2 million

A SCHEME to rid Dover of empty homes has helped turn a disused property into nine new flats.

The old youth hostel on London Road - empty since 2006 - has been the subject of a £1.1m renovation, receiving a £175,000 interest-free loan from Kent County Council as part of its "No Use Empty" (NUE) project.

Through the scheme, developer Steven Turner-Dauncey, 53, who lives with his wife, Audrey, and their seven-month-old son, Cooper, in Victoria Park, Dover, purchased it for £140,000 two years ago.

Mr Turner-Dauncey said the council's loan was a great help towards meeting the design requirements of the 100-year-old Grade II listed property.

"We could spend more time on the detail of the building, which is all replicated from the original moulds," he said.

Three of the flats - available at around £550 per month - were leased out within just two weeks

of being on the market.

Mr Turner-Dauncey said he and his business partner, Shella Barclay-White, would like to do more renovations in Dover.

"There are lots of empty buildings in Dover and the surrounding area. I would certainly seek to use this scheme again. It's hard to get loans from banks these days," he added.

The interest-free loan scheme was started in Kent five years ago,

with Dover one of the founding members.

Developers are given an injection of £25,000 to £175,000 to kick-start renovations of empty homes. This must be paid back within three years and is then recycled into the funding of another development by KCC.

Project manager Steve Grimshaw said: "An empty property can drag down the value of other properties. We hope that filling these homes will encourage people to come and invest in the area."

Working in partnership with Dover District Council, the scheme has returned 201 empty homes to use in Dover since 2005, the second highest total in Kent behind Thanet.

Sue Chandler, deputy leader of DDC, said the London Road project will "provide a boost for the entire community."

Mark Dance, KCC portfolio holder for housing, said there was a strong rental demand in Dover and "we would encourage others to capitalise on this and work with us to return empty homes in the area to use."



BACK TO LIFE: Steve Grimshaw, NUE project manager, Steven Turner-Dauncey and Mark Dance, KCC portfolio holder for housing, outside of the newly renovated former YHA building in London Road