

NO USE EMPTY AIDS CONVERSION OF FORMER SPY BASE INTO NEW HOMES

No Use Empty (NUE), the empty homes scheme run by Kent County Council (KCC), has started development on a long-term empty building in Folkestone that was once the home to Army Intelligence during the First World War, responsible for saving hundreds if not thousands of lives.

The locations, 8 and 9 Marine Parade, in Shepway District Council, were transformed into the centre of army intelligence under the command of Major Cecil Alymer Cameron, code name 'Evelyn' but eventually fell into disrepair. However, the NUE scheme, which provides funding to bring long-term empty homes back into use, is working with Lt. Col. Martin Neame to convert the two buildings into 12 flats.

The buildings at 8 and 9 Marine Parade housed a spy school that trained celebrated spies such as Léon Trullin and Louise de Bettignies, code name 'Alice Dubois', who were both instrumental in passing intelligence to the British Army. In order to bring this historic building back into use NUE has issued an initial loan of £149,999, for the conversion of 8 Marine Parade. After completion, which will create six flats, the loan will be repaid to NUE and then reissued in order to deliver a further six flats to 9 Marine Parade.

Lt.Col Neame, who has successfully worked with NUE on a previous project, said: "I'm excited to be working with NUE again on the Marine Parade project, which will be a complete



refurbishment of the two dilapidated buildings. Having seen them standing empty for so long, it seemed appropriate to bring them back into use and make them serviceable again. I had no prior knowledge of the rich British Military history of the site, but its story has added to the importance of bringing it back into use."

No Use Empty was launched by KCC in 2005, initially in partnership with four local authorities (Shepway, Dover, Thanet and Swale).

Today all twelve authorities in Kent participate in the scheme, and in 2011 it was extended beyond the county with Bristol City Council and the West of England partnership launching their

own empty homes initiative under the 'No Use Empty' banner.

NUE was the first scheme to offer interest free loans to owners of empty homes to fund the necessary repairs and refurbishments to bring the properties back into use. Owners can apply for up to £25,000 per unit (repayable in 3 years), with KCC issuing a total of £10.7 million in loans since 2005. The loans granted by KCC have leveraged an additional £14.3 million in private funding, meaning that the total investment in empty homes in Kent under NUE stands at £25 million. The scheme has created 3,320 new homes to date.