

NO USE EMPTY



KENT'S EMPTY PROPERTY INITIATIVE

2010-11 BUMPER EDITION

£10 MILLION INVESTMENT HELPS KENT'S CAMPAIGN TACKLE EMPTY PROPERTIES



RECENTLY COMPLETED PROJECT 'FROM BUSINESS TO RESIDENTIAL ACCOMMODATION', NORFOLK ROAD, CLIFTONVILLE

No Use Empty; the Initiative which is helping to bring empty properties in Kent back into use, has approved a further record breaking 40 interest free loans to home owners across the County in the last year alone, putting the total value of loans distributed to date at £3.3 million.

Combined with owner's contributions, the total investment in empty homes has now reached £ 10 million. The majority of renovation

work is also undertaken by local businesses and trades people. These recently awarded loans will help owners to renovate new family homes across Kent including Dartford, Dover, Sevenoaks, Shepway and Thanet.

Kevin Lynes, Cabinet Member for Regeneration at Kent County Council (KCC) said, "The enormous success of the Loan Scheme highlights just how critical the issue of empty housing is in the County and how the No Use Empty

partnership is needed by residents to tackle the problem. We're so pleased we have been able to assist more people in giving a new lease of life to so many empty homes and that the initiative in Kent is proving a valuable option for those who are finding it hard to raise money for these projects".

Steve Grimshaw, KCC Regeneration Project Manager, said "It has been a phenomenal 18 months. The campaign continues to gain

momentum with three times the volume of loan enquiries being received since the original launch. The beauty of the Loan Fund is that it operates on a recyclable basis, with many of the earlier loans now being repaid, the 'loan pot' is being replenished and can effectively be 'loaned again'".

THE FACTS

Research shows that the cost of renovation works is one of the biggest obstacles to bringing empty homes back into use and the loan scheme is a very tangible solution to unlock the problem, whilst also having wider community benefits. The average No Use Empty Loan is currently £18,500 based on the number of units returned to date.

LOANS

The loan scheme is intended for any owner of an empty property, or someone who is considering buying an empty property (if the property has been empty for 6 months or more). They can apply for a secured interest-free loan of up to £25,000 per unit to a maximum of £175,000, which in the majority of cases is made as an up front payment. Loans will also be considered for applications to convert commercial properties into residential accommodation.

Please see contact file on page 12 for further details.

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NATIONAL RECOGNITION

Kevin Lynes, Cabinet Member for Regeneration at Kent County Council, said "It is very pleasing to see that our Initiative has been fully embraced across the county, our innovative partnership approach has consistently achieved tangible results thanks to the tremendous efforts of all those involved."



KEVIN LYNES WITH STEVE GRIMSHAW

We were recognised by the Audit Commission in their publication "Building Better Lives", which highlighted Kent's campaign for being creative in responding to local needs, making a positive impact and identified Thanet as an example of how a local authority has also used supplementary planning policy to restrict the developments of one bedroom flats in

Cliftonville West, part of a long term effort to reduce density. I am also delighted that we have made a significant contribution to the recent HCA debate on Empty Homes and that No Use Empty was held up as an example of good practice by the Housing Minister in his on-line video *How Do We Maximise Empty Homes?*, which supported the debate."

NO USE EMPTY JOINS FORCES WITH THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF EMPTY PROPERTY PRACTITIONERS

All twelve No Use Empty districts have joined the membership organisation the National Association of Empty Property Practitioners (shortly to become the Empty Homes Network). The organisation supports those involved in delivering empty property strategies with the support of government ministers, the Housing Corporation and the Empty Homes Agency.

An empty property practitioner can be anyone involved in tackling empty property as a part of their job. One reason why partnerships and organisations such as these are so important to tackling the empty homes problem is the unity and understanding that

working together provides. Working together helps ensure good practice across the board, share information, skills and experience with other organisations and individuals with common aims. It also helps to raise the status and profile of Empty Property Practitioners. The organisation is currently promoting its draft Action Plan for a national Empty Homes Initiative, with the hope that the Government will give national leadership on the issue.

No Use Empty is the fourth forum to take collective membership and according to David Gibbens at the NAEPP, we are "certainly the most prestigious".

www.ehnetwork.org

CASE STUDY NO USE EMPTY LOANS HELPS DOVER RENOVATION



CAVES COURT - BEFORE

The Kent district of Dover has had some particular successes in restoring empty properties, including an old derelict warehouse in the town centre which has been transformed into stunning new apartments. The old Victorian warehouse on Worthington Street, in the centre of Dover, had been derelict for over ten years. The current owner, Kent-based property

developer Philip Bigio, was granted an interest-free loan a year ago from No Use Empty to meet the renovation costs required to convert the building into luxury apartments.

Now complete, the new Warehouse Caves Court features six 2-bedroom apartments, two loft apartments and private courtyard with allocated parking, security gates and video entry system. In addition to the loan from No Use Empty, a further grant and support has been provided by Dover District Council.

Cllr Sue Chandler, DDC Cabinet Member for Strategic Housing, Local Authority

Housing, Landlord Policy and Tenant Affairs, said: "We are working hard to bring regeneration to Dover and the district, the No Use Empty initiative can definitely make that happen and is a great example of working in partnership with Kent County Council to achieve real results. This renovation has given a previously redundant building in the centre of Dover an exciting new lease of life."

Owner of the property, Philip Bigio, said: "The No Use Empty Initiative has been a tremendous support in facilitating the re-development of the building. We have been able to move quickly, carry out the renovations in under a year, and the net result is a

cluster of new apartments in a prime location in the centre of town, which I'm sure, will be sought after."



CAVES COURT - COMPLETED

THUMBS UP FOR KENT



David Ireland, Chief Executive of the Empty Homes Agency, says Kent's approach to tackling empty housing is making a big difference:

By my reckoning the No Use Empty movement is creating almost a third as many homes as the whole house building industry in Kent. Scattered across many sites, worked on by many different people, there are no glossy sales brochures, or new buildings to see. To the casual observer it is easy to overlook the enormous contribution to housing supply this makes. Through advice, encouragement, financial assistance and occasional enforcement, Kent councils are resolving the problems that

keep buildings empty and allowing people to turn them back into homes.

There is nothing inferior about the homes this movement is creating. Life has been breathed back into characterful old houses, and local landmarks. Property in this part of the country does not fall empty because nobody wants to live in it. There is enormous demand and need for homes. Indeed there are far more people who need homes than homes available. Recycled old properties provide homes that people

want, out of eyesores and wrecks that nobody wants to live next to. Across England there is often a tension between providing the homes that the community needs and preserving the countryside that makes it special. A common riposte by those opposing new development is why build new homes when existing ones lie empty.

No Use Empty has taken the point at face value and helped the Kent housing market create a source of housing that everybody welcomes.

www.emptyhomes.com

STOP PRESS + STOP PRESS + STOP PRESS +

NEW EMPTY HOMES FIGURES PRODUCE TROUBLING RESULTS

The latest Government statistics show the numbers of empty homes continues to rise. The total for the UK now tops one million, enough to house the entire population of Ireland, and the third successive annual increase. In the South-East alone, there are approximately 84,200 empty homes. In Kent the overall number of empty homes reduced from 19,225 in 2008 to 18,515 in 2009 of which approximately 8,000 have been empty for more than six months, which is where we focus our campaign. Since the No Use Empty Initiative began we have identified that 36% of all empty properties recorded (by the original partners) as being returned to date are a direct result of loan intervention and the availability of the Capital Loan fund provided by Kent County Council.

BUT... NO USE EMPTY IS STILL BREAKING ITS TARGETS

The No Use Empty Initiative has exceeded its delivery targets.

With the campaign fast approaching its 5th anniversary, new figures have revealed that No Use Empty has now delivered over 1,266 units back into the community as new, good quality homes smashing the revised target set to return 850 units by 31st March 2010, having already exceeded its original target by 115 properties two years earlier.

We will be doing all we can to maintain our success rate. No Use Empty has made a commitment for the period covering 1st April 2010 to 31st March 2013 to return a minimum of 600 units back into use, through the range of interventions currently available.

AND... CONTRIBUTES TO HCA ON LINE DEBATE: EMPTY HOMES



Tackling empty homes is one of the Coalition Government's policy priorities. The Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) ran an online debate which had the support of the Housing Minister, the Rt. Hon Grant Shapps, calling for contributions and ideas about how to help bring more private sector homes back into use in the current economic climate.

KCC Regeneration Project Manager, Steve Grimshaw contributed to the debate featuring in a short film highlighting the success of Kent's Initiative. A variety of additional topics within the context of the debate were posted to the website which highlighted the key challenges that local authorities face, from issues of funding and resources, to partnership working and enforcement, as well as showcasing some innovative practice and generating practical solutions.

The debate has been the most popular of the HCA debates so far. 138 individual comments were posted, which attracted 5,372 unique visitors to the site; the majority of participants.

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT EMPTY HOMES BY GOING TO WWW.HOMESANDCOMMUNITIES.CO.UK

KENT UNCOVERED: AN UPDATE FROM DISTRICTS AND BOROUGHES AROUND THE COUNTY

Steve Grimshaw, KCC Regeneration Manager, said "It just goes to show what can be achieved with everyone working towards the same goals"

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING

The Council has made an enforced sale on a property in Cork Street after many years of lying empty. The Council served various improvement notices on the property, requesting the owner to undertake essential works. After failing to comply with the notices the Council undertook the works in default. Utilising the Law and Property Act 1925, the property was put into auction this summer and was sold to a local developer for renovation and conversion into a family home.

SWALE

Swale Borough Council has recently sold three properties, one in Sittingbourne and two in the Isle of Sheppey which were directly purchased from their respective owners and sold either privately through a sealed bid process or at auction. Another property in Sittingbourne was purchased by the Council from the owner and following refurbishment has subsequently been made available for rent. In a previous case, Swale gained access to a property in Emerald View, Warden having secured a warrant for entry through the Magistrates Court. The property was found to be in a filthy and verminous state. Having traced the owner to a council flat in Croydon, Swale entered into lengthy negotiations which resulted in an independent valuation of the property being undertaken and a purchase price was then agreed with the owner. The property has since been restored and now occupied.

MAIDSTONE

Maidstone Borough Council has recently made an enforced sale on a property in Peel Street. After more than ten years lying empty, the Council served notice on the property

and eventually sold it to a local developer, who immediately began work. The new residential development is due to be completed before the end of the year.

GRAVESEND

In Milton Road, two properties have been lying empty from the mid-1990's. Gravesham Council served notices under the "Town and Country Planning Act 1990 Section 215 in 2005, requiring a list of works to be completed within a designated time frame. The owners were taken to court on several occasions over the coming years after failing to carry out the necessary action



EMERALD VIEW, SHEERNESS - BEFORE



EMERALD VIEW, SHEERNESS - AFTER



PEEL STREET, MAIDSTONE



MILTON ROAD, GRAVESEND

and were found guilty of non-compliance. The upper floor flats were finally completed and occupied in 2008 and the ground floor of the properties recently opened as a restaurant. Without the service of a S.215 Notice, these properties would probably have remained in a derelict condition for years to come. Councils around Kent have successfully used this legislation on countless occasions to help bring empty properties back into the community.

SEVENOAKS

The first £25,000 loan has been approved to assist with the complete refurbishment of a detached property in Greenlands. The project has planning permission to include a partial demolition and extension, to create a new 3-bedroom family home.



GREENLANDS, SEVENOAKS - BEFORE



GREENLANDS, SEVENOAKS - AFTER

SHEPWAY

Five individual projects in Folkestone, (including a Victorian property in Bouverie Place and properties in Tontine Street, London Street and Pavilion Road) as well as a more recent project in Hythe were awarded a total of £195,000 during the year from the loan fund. Considerable progress has been made with several projects completed which will all be offered to let as affordable accommodation.



HARVEY STREET, FOLKESTONE

THANET



14-16 ATHELSTAN ROAD, CLIFTONVILLE

£4.2 million, which represents 57% of the total funding invested in Thanet, has been directed to the Cliftonville ward. The former Landmark Hotel in Athelstan Road, which remained derelict for some time, subjected to squatters and vandalism is now nearing completion. The essential redevelopment and refurbishment is in keeping with the building's historic character and style. Total costs for the project are in the region of £400,000, of which the loan of £175,000 from No Use Empty has gone a significant way to covering the cost of converting the property into 14 two bedroom apartments which are already being marketed and available for rental.



HAROLD ROAD, CLIFTONVILLE

A property dating back to the 1800's in Harold Road, Cliftonville has been converted to form 8 self-contained two bedroom apartments following a loan of £135,000. Properties in Norfolk Road and Eastern Esplanade have recently been approved with a combined loan value of £275,000 and we hope to showcase these properties when completed on our soon to be re launched website.

Over in Ramsgate £25,000 has been awarded for the redevelopment of a two-storey middle terraced house with a basement dating back to the 1850s. The new high-speed rail link announced will also bring potential benefits to a new owner.

DOVER

Nine individual loans have been awarded so far this year. These include a loan of £42,000 to assist with the refurbishment of a four storey mid terrace house built circa 1890, situated in the town centre and to the rear of Dover Priory Train Station. The property will provide three self contained units when completed.



GRANVILLE STREET, DOVER - AFTER



WINCHELSEA TERRACE, DOVER - BEFORE



WINCHELSEA TERRACE, DOVER - AFTER

In Deal, several individual loans of £25,000 have been approved to support projects including the refurbishment of

2 x Grade II listed buildings in Middle Street, one of which has remained empty for 11 years and will soon be available for rent.

DARTFORD

In the borough of Dartford, interest-free loans have already reached £211,000 which will



OLD SCHOOL HOUSE, BEAN

see a pair of three-storey former town houses in Greenhithe being refurbished and converted to 6 self-contained flats.

Meanwhile, in the popular village of Bean, a single storey detached school house constructed circa 1895 has now been transformed into a new much needed family home. The development was started in 1995 but remained incomplete. In 2008 an agreement was reached to sell the property onto a new developer who would complete the works undertaken to date. However, there was a major structural problem which required a new flank wall to be constructed in order to remove the subsidence. These works were not budgeted for so No Use Empty stepped in to save the refurbishment with a £25,000 interest free loan.

Residents of Bean have expressed their satisfaction at seeing this major long term empty property being no longer an attraction for anti-social behaviour.

TUNBRIDGE WELLS

A red-brick Edwardian villa, formerly a residential hotel, in a conservation area on Frant Road, Tunbridge Wells has been derelict for 12 years having closed in 1998 and changed ownership several times. The current owner has been encouraged to submit a new planning application to the Council to convert the

property into a multi-unit scheme. An architect has been appointed for the project and pre-application discussions have now been held with the Council. It is hoped that this will soon bring an end to the turbulent past this long term empty property has inflicted on its surroundings.

CANTERBURY

Canterbury has a huge student population, many of whom live in privately-rented accommodation. We have a comparatively small number of empty homes as a result. Many of the houses in Whitstable that look as if they might be empty are in fact second homes. Last year the council adopted a policy of tackling the problematic empty homes only and we have two of these "on the go" at the moment.

ASHFORD

One way in which Ashford Borough Council is addressing empty properties is through their Private Sector Leasing Scheme, where properties are managed on behalf of Landlords, who are offered the opportunity to lease their property to the Council for a fixed period. The incentives for landlords include: guaranteed rent for the period of the lease, monthly rent paid in advance, no commission or fees and at the end of the term a commitment to return the property to the Landlord in a lettable condition.

Ashford Borough Council also encourages owners of empty properties through mailings using Council Tax data. A number of properties have been brought back into use through our intervention and others are currently in the process of renovation.

BPF CALLS FOR EMPTY HOME FOCUS

The British Property Federation has urged the Government to tackle the UK housing crisis by reviving empty homes, which provide a cheaper alternative to building new ones. Bringing a house back into use can take as little as £10,000, a fraction of the £100,000 cost of building a new social home from scratch.

There are currently 762,000 empty homes in England and close to 1m in the UK, according to figures released by the independent charity Empty Homes.

Meanwhile, there are 450,000 fewer social homes than a decade ago and 1.7m families languishing on housing waiting lists, the agency said.

This 'social housing crunch' has been exacerbated by house building rates falling to their lowest rate since the 1920s, a situation that will be made still worse by a £450m cut in the Homes and Communities Agency's budget that has caused it to scrap two of its key house building programmes.

Renovating empty homes provides a viable alternative to tackle the country's social housing crisis.

It would also tackle some of the problems caused by empty homes, which can attract petty crime, squatters, fly tipping, vandalism and occasionally arson - forcing areas with high numbers of empty homes into a spiral of decline.

To solve this, the BPF and Empty Homes are calling for:

- Money to renovate homes. This should be reallocated from the HCA's temporary social housing grants, which are currently only available for new builds.
- Government to extend its proposed council tax incentive scheme to cover empty homes, not just new builds.

Reusing empty homes can also have environmental benefits. Recent research by Empty Homes New Tricks with Old Bricks showed the renovation of an empty house creates about a third of the CO2 emissions of building a new one.



British Property Federation's Chief Executive, Liz Peace, said:

"Renovating empty homes is an opportunity for the government to get people of housing waiting lists and into 'good as new' homes; it will also save them money in the process".

"Awarding renovation grants will remove eyesores from the local community and rectify lost incomes for the owner and surrounding landlords. It is a win-win situation for the owner of empty properties and the campaign to recycle existing housing stock".

"With the upcoming comprehensive spending review we can expect local authority funding to be cut however the need to supply new homes doesn't go away, renovating empty homes is a certain way of providing homes."

WEST KENT EYESORE IS FINALLY RESTORED

In the semi-rural village of Swanley, situated within the Green Belt area of Sevenoaks, there are three bungalows at the end of a terrace of ten properties in Wood Street. Situated near a conservation area they have remained empty for nearly ten years having fallen into a state of disrepair.



As with many long term empties, overgrown gardens, rats and fly-tipping, were having a severe effect on the local area and adjoining property. Numerous complaints about the eyesore properties from local residents resulted in a petition which attracted the attention of local Councillors, gaining local press coverage leaving Sevenoaks District Council to take firm action.

The owner refused to remedy the situation and in 2008 was convicted for setting mantraps at the properties and storing unlicensed ammunition in a garage on the site, leading him to serve a prison sentence.

With continued arson and fire damage on the property, the Council made every attempt to work with the owner while he served his sentence, providing advice and assistance. Eventually the owner agreed to renovate the properties upon his release and a programme of action was agreed as a way forward. Sadly, this

agreement was not kept by the owner, leaving the Council with no other option but enforcement action.

The Council served a Section 79 Notice under the Building Act 1984. This required the owner to either repair or demolish the properties within two months or the Council would do the job for them and recover the costs from him. Fortunately, an interested party came forward and has since purchased the properties. They are now working closely with the Council and No Use Empty with a desire to restore the three properties and bring them back into use. A No Use Empty loan of £25,000 has been conditionally approved on each of the three properties, together with a Council grant of £10,000 on the first property to be renovated.

The new owners are currently in the process of submitting a planning application for the intended works and hope to begin the works later this year.



COMBATING THE ONGOING PROBLEM OF EMPTY HOUSING

No Use Empty, the partnership between Kent County Council (KCC) and the 12 District and Borough Councils has been combating the ongoing problem of empty housing through a variety of interventions. It has provided free help and advice to owners of empty properties, encouraging them to bring their properties back in to use and explaining options available to them.

There has also been an important exercise in educating owners of the problems their properties are causing local communities. In addition, the team has also been working with local developers and

housing associations interested in acquiring empty properties for renovation into new homes.

A number of successful workshops have been run under the No Use Empty Initiative for Empty Property Officers from local authorities across the UK with in excess of 560 attending. The aim is to provide guidance on the latest regulation and legislation in order to equip officers with the expertise and skills to help them achieve their targets for returning empty properties back in to use.

Topics covered with input from keynote speakers from across the UK have included: Enforced Sale Procedures,



Compulsory Purchase Orders, Tracing People, Roles & Responsibilities of Leasehold/Freeholders, Housing Act 2004: Enforcement Course, Housing Health & Safety Rating System Training.

Events such as these also provide officers across Kent the opportunity to meet, share experiences and best practice and learn from each other.

NO USE EMPTY HELPS TO HOUSE THE HOMELESS IN DARTFORD

Partnership working is essential to the success of combating the problem of empty properties, and now No Use Empty's partners in Dartford have also teamed up with Green Pastures, a charity which has been working to marry up empty properties with those that arguably need them most: the homeless. Green Pastures assists homeless people in helping them to enjoy independent living and has recently brought a long term empty building back into use as eight self contained flats in Dartford town centre.

For four years these flats, located within a large historical almshouse had remained empty, with few buyers looking to invest in this type of demanding property. Fortunately, Green Pastures did not retreat from the challenge and, following purchase, proceeded to upgrade the accommodation

before offering the dwellings to vulnerable people nominated by Dartford Borough Council.

Cllr. Pat Coleman, Special Advisor for Housing, Dartford Borough Council, said, "It is wonderful that this ambitious project has now come to fruition and this wonderful old building, in the very centre of town is, once again, fit for purpose. Green Pastures and the Council have every reason to be proud of their working together in partnership to provide such a much needed development for vulnerable members of our community whilst, at the same time, protecting part of our heritage."

Dartford Borough Council will continue to work with Green Pastures to bring other long term empty properties back into use in order to deliver significant benefits to those desperately seeking accommodation.



PROPERTY GUARDIANS

In an age of housing shortages, unaffordable prices and sky-high rents, paying around £50 a week to live in a character home may seem a dream but for hundreds of people around the country it is a reality because they are "property guardians".

Vacant buildings cost money and with more properties being sold or put out of use as businesses sell off assets or downsize, it is not just individual property owners who have fallen on hard times and are less able than ever to take on the costs of security guards. On large premises this can run into several hundreds or thousands of pounds a month,

which is why owners are turning to Property Guardians who charge a fraction of traditional security costs.

There are several UK firms running guardian schemes, looking after empty houses and commercial premises on behalf of owners. The firms recruit individuals such as professional people, key workers or students with jobs wanting a low-cost alternative to renting an apartment that undergo a rigorous selection process including interviews, a Criminal Records Bureau check and provision of suitable references. Successful "guardians" are reliable people who will move into the premises, providing virtually a 24-hour presence,

reducing the threat of squatters and criminal damage, which in return are provided with affordable housing.

A typical property may be unfurnished but must be habitable - firms operating these initiatives ensure basic temporary shower and kitchen facilities are in place if they do not already exist. There is no real security of tenure as in conventional private or social rented tenancies, thus allowing the property to be vacated at very short notice, sometimes only 14 days.

Kent County Council and many district Councils have used Property Guardians in recent months. Typically a local authority or someone

with a large commercial property would pay six figures annually for security guards, CCTV, gates and other physical security. With a property guardian in place it could just be a few thousand pounds instead.

David Ireland, Chief Executive at Empty Homes said, "When a building is empty, even just for a few weeks, it deteriorates quickly so this arrangement prevents that happening. For the guardian, this provides a low cost place to live, usually between more permanent accommodations. This is one of those rare cases where the idea is common sense and everyone benefits."

Agencies seeking to place "property guardian" tenants include:

Ad Hoc - www.adhoc.eu, Safe Estates - www.safeestates.com, Ambika - www.ambikaproperty.com, Camelot, - www.camelotproperty.com, Guardian Asset Protection - www.guardianassetprotection.co.uk.



MAKING HEADLINES

The campaign is receiving the support the media, who are recognising the importance of the empty housing issue. The role of No Use Empty has received coverage across the national and regional media, as has also been featured on the radio. A great way to get the message out!



MEET THE TEAM

John Day Empty Property Officer, Dover District Council



Each newsletter we feature a member of the No Use Empty team..... John Day is Empty Property Officer at Dover District Council.

Located in East Kent, Dover is a major English Channel port. The population of the town is 28,156, while the population of the whole district is 39,078. The District is a mixture of urban and rural areas, with a higher percentage of long-term empty properties in the Dover district compared to the National average.

I work with an experienced team in the Private Sector Housing Department.

One of the most interesting aspects of my job is that every day is different. It begins with answering any mail, emails and returning phone calls. I then travel around the area checking on the progress of existing cases which I am currently dealing with and assessing the new ones that I have been notified about.

Dover has a proactive policy on empty properties bringing

the problem to the attention of the public via media coverage.

There is a need to return empty properties in the area back into use to provide homes for local people; otherwise they often deteriorate to the point of having a negative effect on neighbourhoods, towns, and the district as a whole.

Thankfully the public response is very positive as they regularly bring to my attention empty properties causing concerns. The number of empty homes has increased during the last few years which are reflected in my increased workload. With over 1,000 long term empty homes I have to prioritise those properties requiring immediate action to prevent the problem from worsening.

My primary role is to locate and work with the owners of the empty properties. This is not always easy, as the owners move away and records become out of date very quickly, particularly if the

property has been left unoccupied for a long time.

However, once the owners are located discussions and negotiations can commence where I provide guidance on the different ways the Council can help. I also try to persuade them to bring the property up to a decent standard and to bring them back into use. The owners are then in a position to either rent out the property, live in it themselves or sell the property through auction or private treaty. Auction is a very useful method of disposing of unwanted properties where they are in poor condition and the owner cannot raise the necessary funds to address the situation.

Sadly, negotiations are not always productive and in some instances where the owner will not engage with the Council then formal action will be pursued. This can involve the serving of formal notices requiring the owner to undertake and complete

works to the property within a reasonable time period. As a measure of last resort the Council will consider Compulsory Purchase Orders or Empty Dwelling Management Orders.

Generally, the Council is able to make the case to the owners to turn a wasted resource into a financial asset. Instead of the property deteriorating and costing the owner money, with a little know how, they can make the property work for them and turn a profit or provide an additional income stream.

I work very closely with Kent County Council's No Use Empty Scheme and in conjunction with their officers, we have over the last two years successfully assisted a significant number of owners in bringing their properties back into use. With all this going on the day in the life of an Empty Property Officer is challenging.... but never dull!

THAT WAS THEN, THIS IS NOW



EXTERIOR - COMPLETED

In the 2008 Spring Issue of our newsletter we featured a property in Turner Street, Margate, which had fallen into a derelict state following the passing away of the previous owner. Government's Treasury Solicitors were contacted to assist in trying to trace any family members.



INTERIOR - BEFORE

Due to the problems the property was causing to the neighbouring property, Thanet District Council secured a warrant for entry through the Magistrates Court, following which an Improvement Notice was obtained. This would require the new owner of the derelict property to carry out



KITCHEN - COMPLETED

the works identified in a given period of time and comply with the decent homes standard.

We are pleased to report that the property has now been brought back into use and to share with you a selection of "before" and "after" pictures.



BATHROOM - COMPLETED

Please visit our new website to see more case studies covering a variety of interventions used and further details of how No Use Empty continues to make an impact across Kent.

www.no-useempty.org

AFFORDABLE HOMES IN ASHFORD AND CANTERBURY

An affordable homes scheme which will provide 50 people on Canterbury Council's housing need register, currently standing at 4,000 with new homes has recently been completed.

The government's Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) contributed a grant of £4m towards the overall scheme costing £11m at Kingsbrook Park near Kingsmead Road, Canterbury to provide 80 affordable

homes and 32 homes which are offered under a shared ownership scheme, creating an opportunity for local people to take advantage of a property with reduced rent or to step onto the housing ladder.

In Ashford several housing projects including Park Farm and Repton Park will benefit from recently released HCA funding. An investment of £2.5m will contribute to the construction of 150 new and affordable homes.

NO USE EMPTY FEEDBACK FROM LOAN RECIPIENTS



22-24 ATHELSTAN ROAD, CLIFTONVILLE (WORKS IN PROGRESS)

MARTIN NEAME, said "The No Use Empty Initiative has been invaluable to me as without it I would not have been able to carry out the refurbishment required. When it became clear that commercial finance would not be available due to the downturn, KCC stepped in like a business angel and enabled this project to proceed."

MIKE THOMPSON, Empty Property Officer (Thanet District Council) said, "We are particularly pleased to be assisting with this project as this is the second long-term



empty property in Athelstan Road to be supported by the Loan Scheme. A third property in the road is also under

consideration and collectively their refurbishment will make a significant improvement to the area'

MARGARET DRAYCOTT of D&G Properties Limited, a family business with experience in property development said, "We think the No Use Empty Initiative is a great idea.



ST PETER'S STREET, DEAL - EXTERIOR AND INTERIOR

Advice and guidance was available to support us with the application process. The fact that the loan is paid-up front has enabled the project to move forward without impacting on our day to day cash flow, which for a small business such as ours is vital in these turbulent times".

STEVE GRIMSHAW, KCC Regeneration Manager said, "This project was turned around in a relatively short space of time with several local trades' persons being involved. We are extremely pleased with the finished

product which will provide a much needed spacious family home offering 4/5 bedrooms, separate bath/shower rooms and parking to the rear". The property is currently being marketed for sale or rent.

BARBARA HEWETT-SILK said: "It has been tremendously helpful to have access to funds to



help bring this house back up to a decent housing standard. It had been empty for over four years and suffered a lot of water damage, so the help provided by KCC & Thanet District Council staff in obtaining the loan has meant we have been able to carry out the repairs quickly and get the house ready for sale in a short space of time."

The property in Ramsgate has since been sold and the loan returned to replenish the Loan Fund.

BREAKING NEWS + BREAKING NEWS + BREAKING NEWS +

THANET TACKLE KEY SITES AHEAD OF TURNER CONTEMPORARY OPENING

The Fort Road Hotel, Arcadian and Arlington Square are amongst key sites already targeted as Margate prepares for the opening of Turner Contemporary.

Thanet District Council are currently working with the owners of the sites to try and bring forward rebuilding plans, but has already instigated Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) proceedings as a fall back position. No Use Empty has been on hand to provide assistance with other key sites identified as priority projects to be tackled over the next few months.

Cllr Martin Wise, Cabinet Member for Environmental Services said, "Anyone looking at Margate at the moment knows there is still

work to do. With the opening of Turner Contemporary in just a few months' time, we're determined to tackle the key problem areas. In particular, we're focusing on seafront properties lying vacant and derelict. When visitors arrive in the town for the new gallery, we want them to get the best possible impression of Margate. After all we want people to spread the words about what a great place Margate is to visit. As well as tackling those eyesores, we also want to build pride over the next few months in the town, It's easy to knock Margate, but that's not what the town needs right now. It needs everyone to come together and support it, as we approach the opening of Turner Contemporary".



NATIONAL WEEK OF ACTION

A variety of Events and Action will be taking place around the country during 22nd - 26th November.

PROSECUTION VICTORY FOR LOCAL COUNCIL

Dover District Council (DDC) and No Use Empty, continues to work hard to address the number of empty homes across the area. The Council has recently approved a new empty homes strategy for the period 2010-2015.

As part of the initiative's commitment to target the worst properties, an owner of an empty property in Dover has recently been prosecuted by DDC at Folkestone Magistrates Court for failing to comply with Improvement Notices requiring him to renovate the property. Following a successful prosecution, the owner was fined £8,000 plus £2,000 costs.

Local authorities have the powers to require owners of

empty properties to renovate them in order to ensure they are safe. They also employ a range of methods to help owners bring properties back into use to prevent wasted housing resources. Since 2007, No Use Empty has approved loans to the value of £1.2 million in Dover which, when added to the private sector leverage from the owners results in a total investment of £3.6 million.

Empty Homes established in 1992 as "The Empty Homes Agency" is once again calling for a concerted national action programme to turn Britain's empty property into homes for people. The independent charity has been a campaigning voice for those who need home and for those dismayed at the thousands of homes left empty and abandoned across the country.

Kent's Empty Property Initiative will celebrate its 5th Anniversary in November. No Use Empty will re-launch its website, now refreshed with a wealth of information regarding empty properties as well as introducing a new case study section, which will feature examples of how our innovative partnership have applied a range of interventions to tackle the empty homes issue as well as focusing on some "live projects".



Colleagues across Kent will be participating in more localised events specific to their geographic areas. No Use Empty are currently finalising discussions with several districts who have expressed an interest in joining the Loan Fund and it is hoped that further news will be available as we approach the National Week of Action.

For the latest event information please visit www.emptyhomes.com .

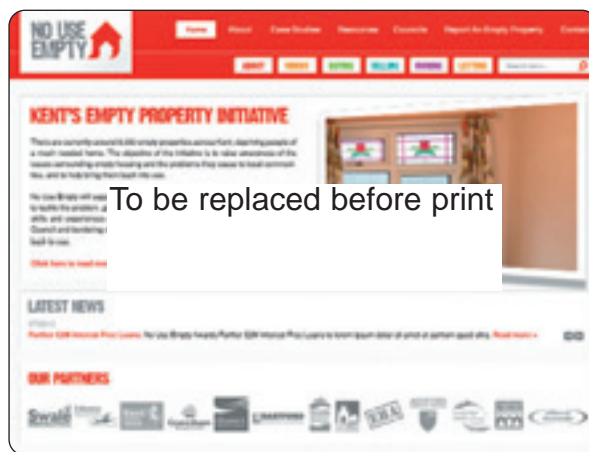
For our new website visit www.no-use-empty.org

WEBSITE RE-LAUNCH

The No Use Empty Website is currently being refreshed and is due to be re-launched in October 2010, just prior to our 5th Anniversary. The updated website will be featuring more news, performance data and a revamped case study section covering loans and enforcement action, as well as a wealth of information relating to Empty Properties.

If you are interested in applying for a No Use Empty Loan you will be able to find more information on the process and if your local council has signed up our Loan Fund.

In addition to this there will be links to all of our local partners websites. So whether you are buying, selling, letting or own an empty property make sure you pay us a visit.



WWW.NO-USE-EMPTY.ORG

CONTACT FILE

If you want some practical advice on dealing with your empty property, then contact your local Empty Property Officer who will provide you with free impartial advice. What are you waiting for?

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KENT EMPTY PROPERTY INITIATIVE: KENT COUNTY COUNCIL IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



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