

NO USE EMPTY



THE KENT EMPTY PROPERTY INITIATIVE

ANNIVERSARY BUMPER EDITION

CELEBRATING 10 YEARS



Bedford Place, Maidstone

No Use Empty (NUE), Kent County Council's (KCC) countywide initiative, which specialises in the restoration of abandoned properties, has seen a significant reduction of empty homes across Kent as we celebrate our 10th anniversary.

Since the launch of NUE in 2005, the initiative has brought back into use over 4,100 properties, representing a 40% reduction of empty homes in the county.

Nationally the average for all vacant dwellings is 2.61% of dwelling stock. The Kent County Council area is below the national average with 2.45%.

Mark Dance, Kent County Council's Cabinet Member for Economic Development, said:

"The issue of empty homes is as important as ever. The recent national poll, undertaken by Empty Homes - the national campaigning charity, shows that

38% of the public think that empty homes are a blight on their local area and 78% think the Government should place a higher priority on tackling empty homes.

Whilst we celebrate 10 years of No Use Empty and are proud of our achievements, we aim to reduce the number of long term empty homes even further. We will continue to focus on the coastal areas of Kent where 80% of our loan fund has already been directed, complementing larger scale economic development within those areas and raising the aspirations for those who live and work within the coastal communities."

Steve Grimshaw, KCC's Programme Manager for No Use Empty said:

"It has been a tremendously successful 10 years for No Use Empty. Our unique countywide approach continues to reap benefits. Whilst we are seeing a

steady decline in empty homes, we are always on the look-out for new projects. Shared knowledge, developing best practice and pooling resources is paying dividends.

The ability to offer short term secured loan products, alongside advice and guidance has been instrumental in progressing projects which would have otherwise stalled without our intervention."

IN THIS ISSUE

We invite you to step inside our latest edition and celebrate our 10th anniversary



- CONGRATULATIONS!
- LANDMARK BUILDING
- BEDFORD PLACE
- AROUND THE COUNTY
- AFFORDABLE HOMES
- GREEN EFFICIENCIES
- QUALITY STREETS
- CUSTOMER FEEDBACK

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

No Use Empty is an initiative which sits within KCC's Economic Development Division, responsible for working with public, private and voluntary sectors to support Kent's economic growth.

KCC's Empty Homes Recyclable Loan Fund has ensured that local businesses and contractors have benefited with monies being spent on materials as well as job creation or safeguarding jobs.

£35 MILLION INVESTMENT • 4,100 HOMES BACK IN USE

CONGRATULATIONS!

Mark Dance, Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Kent County Council.

When KCC launched the No Use Empty Initiative (NUE) in 2005 no one could have envisaged that a pilot project, initially targeting East Kent where the problem of long term empty housing is particularly acute, would be adopted countywide and be celebrating its 10th anniversary, making it the longest running and most successful projects of its kind, winning several national awards recognising good practice along the way.

The recent report by Empty Homes - the national campaigning charity shows that over 200,000 homes are long-term empty, with the greatest number of these located in the north of England.

The charity has called upon the Government for grant funding to combat the challenge of returning the long-term properties to use.

The report highlights that not enough is being done to reverse the blight of empty homes, and that there is no cohesive method in place to combat the detrimental effects.

In Kent, we can look back and be immensely proud of what we have all achieved over the last ten years. The facts and figures speak volumes

and we will continue to focus our attention on coastal areas.

The NUE team continues to work incredibly hard in providing advice and guidance to owners of empty properties, encouraging them to bring their properties back into use and explaining the range of options available to them.

Paying for expensive but essential renovation remains one of the biggest obstacles to bringing empty properties back into use. NUE has developed a variety of loan products to provide the financial assistance required to help owners pay for the renovations.

This funding has been an important factor especially given the continued reluctance from banks

to lend against such projects and it's not just the traditional empty residential homes that NUE is tackling.

We have broadened our remit over the last few years to include larger empty buildings, including unused hotels, empty spaces above shops, offices, school halls, churches, pubs and even redundant industrial units, which have been converted to provide new homes.

We have also delivered 42 Affordable Units with funding from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA).

Long-term empty buildings are not just an eyesore as they can decrease the value of neighbouring homes by up to 18%, and have a



Mark Dance.

wider socio-economic impact on the entire area. By addressing the issue, housing, jobs and longer term investment can be created, having a far-reaching economic impact.

We are fortunate in Kent to have a dedicated partnership consisting of individuals who continue to be innovative as well as patient and persistent in their approach.

NUE fully supports Empty Homes - the national campaigning charity and our model could be used as a template for other authorities that are starting to join the conversation of the problem of long-term empty properties.

NUE: TEAM HERE TO HELP

NUE has been combating the ongoing problem of empty homes for 10 years with great success, all thanks to the team lead by KCC Programme Manager, NUE Project Officer, Private Sector Housing Specialist and the district Empty Property Officers.

Additional resources are provided by KCC's Legal Services and our communication strategy is supported by FTI Consulting engaged specifically for the Initiative.

This team operates as a 'virtual team' as they are not employed by one body, working with partners across the County to provide much needed quality accommodation which meets the decent homes standard by using a variety of interventions.

The vast majority of empty homes are brought back into use through advice, guidance or financial assistance 86%, with less than 14% requiring a more formal response.

LOANS

Our loan fund operates on a recyclable basis. When the work is completed and the loan is repaid to the fund new loans can be offered.

If you own or are considering buying a property that has been empty for more than six months you can apply for a short term secured interest free loan of up to £25,000 per unit to a maximum of £175,000.

In the majority of cases funds are provided as an up front payment providing the working capital to get the job done.

Larger loans are administered on an agreed staged drawdown basis. Loans are released within 14 days of KCC securing a registered charge for the loan.

We have also listened to small developers who struggle with acquiring finance to take forward projects, such as redundant commercial sites with approved planning permission for housing, and have recently introduced an interest bearing loan product.



From left to right, Steve Grimshaw, Jackie Gibb & Andrew Lavender.

AWARD WINNING

NUE has won two awards for Partnership Working

- Regeneration & Renewal (2011)
- UK Placemaking Awards (2013)

NUE was 'Highly Acclaimed' in two housing categories at the LGC Awards 2015.

As we went to press, NUE has once again been shortlisted by the UK Planning Awards 2015 in the category Planning for Housing Growth.



From left to right, Steve Grimshaw, Mark Dance & Colleen Tickle, AmicusHorizon.

DEFINING EMPTY PROPERTIES

AN EMPTY PROPERTY IS ONE THAT HAS BEEN INACTIVE IN THE HOUSING MARKET AND HAS REMAINED EMPTY FOR MORE THAN SIX MONTHS.

WHY PROPERTIES BECOME EMPTY

Our initial research, working with our partners and engaging with property owners has allowed us to understand some of the common reasons why properties become empty for long periods of time:

- Someone has inherited a property and is unsure what to do for the best: whether to sell, rent, or move into it.
- A landlord previously rented out a property and works are required to bring it back to a decent standard before it can be let again but is unable to find the funds to get the works done.
- People have bought properties for refurbishment and are taking a long time to complete the works, due to pressure of other commitments or financial constraints.
- Owners are holding a property empty anticipating a rise in its market value before trying to sell and have unrealistic expectations of the price their property could fetch in the local market.



BENEFITS OF BRINGING EMPTY PROPERTIES BACK INTO USE



Owners

Rental or Capital income.
Security against vandalism or squatters.
NUE financial assistance and advice.
Long term investment potential.
Opportunities to have your property managed by a Registered Social Landlord.



Neighbours

Increased property value.
Improvement in their local environment.
Reduction in vandalism and squatters.
Making the area a more attractive place to live.
Reduction in disrepair of empty property affecting their home.
General sense of well-being.



People In Housing Need

Greater availability and choice.
A landlord accredited by the local authority.
Opportunity to upgrade to a more spacious property.
Improved standard of housing.
More affordable housing.
Reduced reliance on temporary accommodation or bed and breakfast.



Local Economy

Encourages economic viability – through the multiplier effect within the local economy.
NUE Loan is spent on local trades and supplies.
Creates employment and training opportunities.



Wider Community

Increased Council Tax receipts means more money can be invested.
Reduced demand on public services to deal with problems means resources can be used more effectively elsewhere.
Preserving the environment for current and future generations by reducing the demand for building on greenfield sites.

EMPTY HOMES CHARITY SPEAKS

National Empty Homes Week, held annually is all about spreading the word and making the case for more action to create new homes from empty properties, given the number of people in search of decent housing at a price they can afford across England.

Over 9,000 homes were created by councils and housing charities across England over the last five years by acquiring and leasing empty properties and converting or refurbishing them for people on local housing waiting lists, with the support of funding from the Government's empty homes programmes. Those dedicated programmes may have ended, but

there is still much that needs and can be done to make the most of our existing properties.

Councils can seek to attract funding to their area through the National Affordable Homes Programme to create new homes from empty properties, alongside building more affordable housing.

Both are needed if we are going to address the scale of housing need in England. In addition, housing providers and councils need to carry on thinking of creative ways in which to tackle empty properties.

Two things stand out for me about No Use Empty. The partnership

between the County Council and its twelve districts is busy working with owners encouraging them to address the waste and blight of their properties that sit empty in the face of such need, returning over 4000 empty properties back into use.

Secondly, the scheme has been prepared to support owners to refurbish a variety of properties ranging from former disused commercial buildings, individual houses and underused spaces above high street shops.

No Use Empty makes loans available to property owners and has so far generated over 600 new homes from properties that stood idle from its loan fund.

A proven model, this has made such a difference not only to the

individuals and families who have moved into those new homes, but the neighbours who were keen to see disused buildings brought back to life and improvements to the look of their local area.

Certainly a scheme worth celebrating and building on. Let's keep asking what more can be done to make the most of the properties we have to create the homes we need.



Helen Williams, Chief Executive
Empty Homes-the national campaigning charity

LANDMARK BUILDING RESTORED

PRINCE OF WALES - DOVER

One of Dover's landmark buildings located in Durham Hill which dates back to 1800, originally known as Prospect House, has been transformed thanks to No Use Empty.



No Use Empty has provided a £175,000 interest-free loan to enable local developer, Mr Monty August, to bring forward this project.

The works have been completed at a total cost of £650,000, and the transformation includes new roof, sash windows, staircases, floors, walls and modern electric, gas and water services. The units, which boast high quality kitchens and bathrooms, are being marketed for rent by Touchstone Residential.

The completed project contains 18 x 1 bedroom apartments, and 2 x 2 bedroom apartments, some with extensive views across Dover towards Dover Castle.

Monty August said: "Despite a recovery in the housing market it is difficult for independent developers like myself to access capital. Without the No Use Empty loan this project would not have been viable and I would like to thank the teams at Kent County Council and Dover District Council for all of their guidance and support. I am very pleased with the standard of the units and we anticipate strong demand for them."

Cllr Pauline Beresford, Dover District Council Cabinet Member for Housing said:

"We are very pleased to continue to work with our No Use Empty partners and to support this key project. This is another important development as a range of major projects continues to come together for the regeneration of Dover and this provides much needed new homes and high quality rented accommodation for the area."



Steve Grimshaw, Programme Manager for No Use Empty, said: "This is one of the largest projects we have ever undertaken and certainly the largest in the Dover area. For the past three years we have turned our attention to larger empty commercial premises which can deliver a greater number of units and can have a greater regenerative impact on the surrounding area. This is one of Dover's landmark buildings in a prominent location and bringing it back into use will have a positive impact on the whole town as well as delivering much-needed new homes."



HISTORY

The building was sold to The British Sailors' Society in 1946 and re-opened as the new Residential Club for Seaman, serving as a refuge for shipwrecked crews, before becoming the Prince of Wales Sea training School in 1953. I provided training for 5,000 boys aged between 15 and 17 as deck ratings, many of whom went on to attain high maritime positions.

Following the closure of the school in 1975 the building was used as a dormitory by Dover College until 1994 and subsequently acquired by the YMCA. However, the building fell into disrepair and was sold at auction to a local company Bourne Developments.

Funds are being raised by former servicemen, affectionately known as the "old boys" and their families, to purchase a commemorative plaque in recognition of those who occupied the building after the Second World War.

Further history of the building can be found at www.pwsts.org.uk



Images courtesy of Prince of Wales Sea Training School

MAIDSTONE'S FIRST SUCCESS BEDFORD PLACE

BACKGROUND

Situated in a residential area and close to all amenities, this original three storey Grade II listed building dates back to 1633. It is of timber frame with later extensions comprising of solid masonry construction.

The property was arranged as offices then remained empty for five years. Planning permission was approved by Maidstone Borough Council for conversion to form seven residential apartments.

The applicants included a project manager/architect, a builder and a financial backer. Drawing on their skills and experience they have created 6 x 2 bedroom units all with en-suite to master bedroom and 1 x 1 bedroomed unit.

In addition to this 2 x 3 bedroom houses were built to the rear (not funded by NUE).

NUE SUPPORT

Having approached NUE to help finance the refurbishment costing £505,000, the maximum loan of £175,000 was awarded

with an agreed repayment date of March 2017. KCC secured a 1st Charge on the property which was independently valued at £400,000 in its original condition giving a Loan to Value of 43%.

JOB DONE

The original intention was to privately rent the apartments to assist with the repayment of the loan. However, nine months after project completion, Hyde Housing approached the owners to acquire the whole site in order to fulfil their obligation to provide high quality units of accommodation.

With the sale completed the NUE loan was repaid earlier than expected enabling NUE to quickly recycle to another project, but, more importantly nine families have found themselves living in their dream new homes. Now that's what NUE call's a real team effort!

Mr Tim Vince project manager said: "The loan scheme has been fantastic and I will consider applying again for any future developments".



Additional homes built to the rear



Interior Images

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Kevin Gilbert.

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only give you maximum publicity but can give you piece of mind that you have achieved the best possible market price on the day, safe in the knowledge that at the fall of the Auctioneer's gavel the contract is

actually exchanged with completion scheduled in 20 days time. The market at the moment is electric and our auction rooms are buzzing with activity and excitement for the lots we have on offer. We seem to have many more bidders than property so you could say there has never been a better time to sell.

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on various portals as well as our own cliveemson.co.uk. In addition the catalogues are available for local distribution in over 700 estate agency offices throughout the region or any of the Clive Emson offices in Maidstone, Brighton, Fareham, Exeter or Chelmsford.

Our catalogues often include a variety of vacant residential properties, vacant commercial premises, lots sold subject to tenants, garages, land with planning, woodland and land with potential. Our website is full of useful information about selling or buying at auction, but if you prefer to speak to us, we look forward to your call.

www.cliveemson.co.uk

AROUND THE COUNTY: KENT UNCOVERED

ASHFORD

One way in which Ashford Borough Council is tackling long term empty properties is through their ABC Lettings Scheme where properties are managed on behalf of landlords.

The main benefit to landlords is that the rent is guaranteed and tenants have access to a 24 hour helpline and the properties are regularly inspected. This ensures quality homes for families.

POPPY FIELDS, CHARING

Thanks to current Government borrowing, Ashford Borough Council has acquired 21 of the 41 new homes being developed in Poppy Fields, Charing. Of these, 13 will be made available for affordable rent with the

remaining eight offered as shared ownership properties.

The design of the development will show traditional house fronts with spacious and light-filled contemporary interiors. Farmland and woodland surround the site. As well as NHBC building warranties, buyers will benefit from an additional five-year fixtures and fittings warranty.

The eco-friendly homes will be built to recognised Code Three standards of energy efficiency to save both money and the environment.

This is the first time that the Council has offered shared ownership homes.

CANTERBURY

This property situated in Herne Bay on the north Kent Coast with views over the sea was a former Public House (Bun Penny) which blighted the seafront since it was devastated by fire in September 2011.

Planning permission was granted for the development of 14 new modern flats with a commercial unit to the ground floor.

Work is now well underway. The computer generated images show how the property will look in the not too distant future.



DARTFORD

Since 2011 Dartford Borough Council (DBC) has successfully reduced the number of long-term empty properties from 336 to 169. This has been achieved by engaging with owners of these properties to understand why their properties have been vacant for so long.

DBC then offer advice and guidance to assist owners in bringing their valuable assets back into beneficial use.

NUE interest free loans and private sector leverage totalling £1.3 million account for 20% of the total reduction since 2011.

Empty properties arise for many reasons and once these have been identified the Council offer tailored action plans to the owners. A large percentage of them either have financial difficulties or a resistance to being landlords maybe due to previous bad experiences.

To resolve this the Council introduced interest free loans and a hassle free leasing scheme. NUE found such owners eagerly grasped the opportunity for returning their properties into beneficial occupation and gaining an income from them once again.

Empty property work is far from over and, for the next five years, DBC is planning to tackle all properties that have been empty for more than two years. Some

of these are in a very run-down condition or are wasting away on planned development sites waiting for improved economic opportunities.

These particular properties will present the greatest challenge so far but all of the 'empty property' tools available will be deployed to bring them back in to use thereby assisting with meeting the rising demand for housing in our borough.



DOVER

Dover District Council is celebrating the news that the number of long term empty homes has fallen by a whopping 48% in the district since 2009 (down from 952 to 436).

This is great news for the district as the number of empty properties continues to drop. A number of major projects are now underway which will contribute to the overall regeneration of the area including the St James's development in Dover town centre.

The total investment via NUE in the Dover district has now reached £9.2 million, of which £4 million has been provided to owners of empty properties via short term secured interest free loans and has helped to create 197 units of high quality accommodation.

MIDDLE STREET, DEAL (Sea Sprite)

A three bedroom terraced house built around 1800, situated in a conservation area close to Deal seafront was in need of complete refurbishment and re-wiring.

Empty for eight months it has been lovingly restored to retain much of the Victorian features, including replacement sash windows.

DOVER CONTINUED

CASTLE STREET

Castle Street is a picturesque road with street views of Dover Castle.

A Grade II mid-terraced listed building, unused for three to five years, was granted planning consent for change of use to residential by Dover District Council.

Built in the 19th Century as a dwelling set over five storeys it was converted into offices many years ago.

With the assistance of an NUE loan it has been converted into four self-contained flats, three of which were sold within days of being marketed.



HIGH STREET WINGHAM

A period house, empty for two years, situated in the heart of the village of Wingham will offer two character homes to the new occupiers when completed. NUE has provided a loan of £50,000 towards the renovation work.

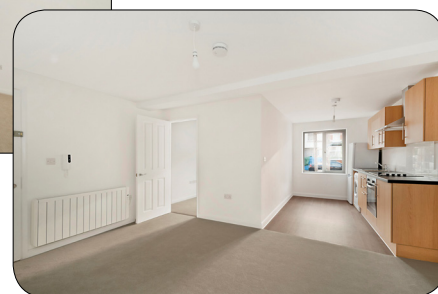
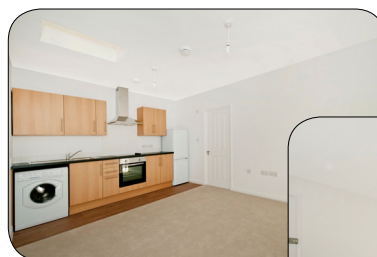


MAIDSTONE

HEDLEY STREET

Built in the mid 1980's and empty for more than two years, this former three storey office block in Hedley Street has been converted to provide nine one bedroom flats with allocated parking, following planning approval for change of use from commercial to residential.

The maximum loan from NUE was provided to the owner to help complete the project which cost £325,000. This project has helped push the value of investment into empty properties in the Maidstone area via NUE intervention to over £1.2 million.



GRAVESHAM

Gravesham Borough Council adopts a proactive approach to reducing the number of empty homes. Its strategy is driven by the Empty Property Corporate Working Group and the Council's Corporate Plan. The aim is to deliver a more sustainable and cleaner built environment together with the supply of good quality affordable homes.

This policy continues to deliver tangible results cementing Gravesham's position as the best performing authority in Kent with the lowest number of long-term vacant properties as a proportion of the borough's dwelling stock.

Employing a variety of techniques officers aim to deliver a balanced approach combining a range of incentives with legislative action.

This approach is best demonstrated by the collaborative and partnership working adopted with Kent's No Use Empty Initiative providing the council with access to financial support reduced auction fees and general advice and information.

Activity extends to enforcement action and with the, advice and support of the team's housing specialist. The Council served its first Empty Dwelling Management Order (EDMO) in 2013, on a property that had been empty for more than eight years.

This action allowed the council to take a compulsory lease on the property. It was refurbished throughout and then marketed for rent. The Council achieved its primary objective of seeing the property returned to use, whilst the owner benefited from a guaranteed monthly income.

SEVENOAKS

£329,000 has been invested in the Sevenoaks District over the last six years through No Use Empty loans, bringing back to use 13 units of accommodation.

Most of these loans have now been repaid which means the money can be recycled back into the loan scheme and used to bring more empty properties back into use.

HIGHFIELD COTTAGE, HEXTABLE

This two bedroom mid-terrace property was brought back into use with the intention of renovating and renting it out.

It required a lot of work to bring it up to a habitable standard including a new kitchen and bathroom, re-wiring, damp-proofing and replastering. The owners contacted Sevenoaks District Council and made enquiries about any grants

available and were put in touch with the Empty Homes Officer who advised that the No Use Empty interest free loan scheme would suit their circumstances and explained how the scheme works.

The owners applied for a loan of £25,000 which was approved.

A private tenant was found to rent the property. Bringing the house back into use has helped to provide a much needed, good quality home.



AROUND THE COUNTY: KENT UNCOVERED CONTINUED

SHEPWAY

The total investment has doubled in the last two years. The current total stands at £4.8 million which has helped to create 115 units of accommodation, 30 of which were under the NUE Affordable Homes Project - the most in any one District.

CHERITON ROAD



This property was formerly arranged as a shop with a maisonette above and lay empty for over 10 months. Planning permission was granted for change of use and conversion from retail to create 3 x 2 bedroom flats. The project included removing the front dormer window and other external alterations, new electrical installations, plumbing and central heating, kitchens, bathrooms and a fire alarm system.



All units have been sold following completion. The NUE loan has been repaid allowing the local developer to invest in a new project with the remaining capital.

FORMER NURSING HOME

Works are underway to convert this freehold property situated in a predominantly residential area fronting Cheriton Road at the junction with Julian Road which has been empty for six years.

The front of the building was built as a house around 1900. It was subsequently extended and converted into a nursing home around 1987.

The proposed development will convert the existing building into nine self-contained flats.

The total cost of the refurbishment is in the region of £260,000 with a loan of £175,000 from NUE and is expected to be completed within 12 months.



SWALE

In the last 10 years, 409 empty homes have been brought back into use across the Borough through a variety of interventions, but there are still more than around 600 properties that have been unoccupied for more than six months.



WEST STREET



The Council does have a range of powers to take action against empty home owners. Homes which have been empty for more than two years are also subject to a higher council tax charge.

Cllr John Wright, Cabinet Member for Housing at Swale Borough Council said "Bringing empty

homes back into use not only helps meet local demand for housing, but can reduce pressure for developing on green spaces and help deter antisocial behaviour and vandalism that empty homes can attract."

Thanks to No Use Empty a number of properties have been brought back into use across Swale with a total investment of £2.1 million and loan assistance for 37 new homes.

These include the conversion of the former Victoria Working Men's Club in Sheerness, two properties in West Street Sittingbourne and The Red Shed site in Teynham which is featured in this issue.

THANET

A further £5 million has been invested in returning long term empty properties back into use in Thanet since our last edition, raising the total to £12.7 million.

65% of funds have been concentrated in the Cliftonville and Margate Central Wards and have helped reduce the total number of empty properties in Thanet by 53% over the last five years.



TELHAM PLACE

Left empty for seven years, the owner was contacted by the empty property officer to find out what their plans were to bring this property back into use.

The owner sold the property to a local developer. In addition to the owner's funding, financial support was provided by NUE to fully refurbish the property into a habitable condition including a new kitchen, bathroom and windows.

On completion many of the original features were kept enhancing the character of the house and providing a new home for a local family.



ZION PLACE

This five storey property situated in Cliftonville had been in construction since planning was approved in 2009 by Thanet District Council.

The owners did not have the funds to complete the project and applied for a NUE loan to help complete the works.

The property, which had been empty for 12 years, now offers two units with sea views from the front elevation.



The ground floor maisonette consists of an entrance hall, two bedrooms, bathroom, with lounge and kitchen at first floor level.

The upper maisonette consists of an entrance hall, lounge, kitchen, diner, bathroom, landing to a roof terrace garden with a further two bedrooms to the third floor.



THANET CONTINUED

BELLEVUE ROAD – HOUSE WITH A VIEW

Set within the Ramsgate Conservation Area, this Grade II listed terraced house has been refurbished to a high standard.

With the assistance of a 'Loan to Sell' loan from NUE and owner's own funds this project was able to move forward and be brought back in to use as a larger family home.



The property was in poor condition prior to the full refurbishment offering accommodation over three floors, basement and cellar and includes many original features including the vaulted ceiling, exposed beams, velux windows and original fireplaces which provides a character home to the new occupants.

The balcony on the first floor front elevation looks straight down the middle of Augusta Road directly out to the sea.



NO USE EMPTY BREAKING TARGETS

NUE continues to exceed its delivery targets averaging 500 empty properties back into use per year. NUE has delivered 4,100 properties back into the community as good quality homes, which is contributing to the overall reduction in long term empty properties in Kent.



Overall reduction in long-term empty properties in Kent since 2005

OLD TO NEW IN BELLEVUE!

This five storey, middle terrace building was originally built as a single family home around 120 years ago.

Planning was approved to provide three self-contained units and two storey maisonettes at lower-ground/ground and second/top floors, and a first floor flat.



NUE Provided an interest free loan of £75,000 to assist with the renovation. The works have been completed to a high standard with quality finishes and decor. The properties are now rented providing good quality homes to the residents.

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING

The Council provides funding under its Home Improvement Assistance scheme of up to £10,000 to help empty home owners with renovation costs where they intend to move in.

It recently assisted owners in Borough Green and Tonbridge areas to bring two empty homes back into use, providing accommodation for up to seven people.

The Council is currently helping a first time home owner to fully renovate and modernise an empty home including replacement roof, full re-wiring and heating to bring a family home back into use.

HIGH STREET, SNODLAND

After being empty for 11 years planning permission has been granted to convert this property into eight residential units and work is underway to revitalise a former derelict pub. A maximum NUE loan of £175k has been approved to assist with the conversion.

This property, once completed, will offer new homes to families in a central location close to most amenities and good transport links.



FORMERLY THE RED LION

TUNBRIDGE WELLS

£660,000 has been invested in Tunbridge Wells to date, bringing 12 empty homes back into use thanks to NUE.

ST JOHNS ROAD

A flat above a local shop remained empty for 12 years and could not be let due to access being through the shop. Originally the shop owners had lived there. The NUE loan enabled the owners to totally refurbish the flat and create a separate entrance via an external staircase. In addition to this, works were carried out to the ground floor including part new build and part conversion of the store room adjacent to the shop to create a second flat.

The Council operates its own empty property assistance scheme. Subject to availability of funds, interest free financial assistance can be provided to renovate, improve or convert long term empty properties (including flats above commercial properties) and return them to use.

This is on condition of the Council having tenant nomination rights for a five year period. The rent is set at below market rent, 10% below Local Housing Allowance.

The Council can provide up to 75% of the costs of the works to a maximum of:

- 1 bed – up to £10,000
- 2 bed – up to £15,000
- 3 bed – up to £20,000

NUE AFFORDABLE HOMES

NUE launched a new loan product in response to the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) Affordable Homes Programme 2012-15. KCC provided an additional £1 million over and above the main NUE loan fund to complement the £742,000 secured from the HCA. This has produced 42 units of affordable accommodation in Dover, Folkestone, Hythe and Sittingbourne.

Interest free loans five year terms were provided to owners of larger sized properties who agreed to let the homes at 80% of their market rental value. The homes are managed by AmicusHorizon who guarantee a rental income for a minimum five year period. At the end of the term, the owners have to continue to rent the property by renewing their current contract, privately renting or sell the property.

In the last Bumper Edition we featured Sandgate Road Folkestone, the very first project to be funded under the NUE Affordable Homes Project, a former town-centre office block in Sandgate Road, empty since 2008, which has now been converted into seven new homes.



BELOW IS A SELECTION OF OUR AFFORDABLE HOMES PROJECTS

DOVER ROAD, FOLKESTONE

Built in the late 1800's this detached four storey building has been brought back into use to provide seven self-contained flats all thanks to C.A.N. (Kent) Developments Limited. Taking up the challenge they have extensively modernised and refurbished the property which lay empty and abandoned for 25 years. It is possibly the best example of the worst property you would ever come across!

The developer has also been involved in two more projects, the former Wheelwright Arms, Dover and Park Road, Sittingbourne under the Affordable Homes project which in total have brought a further 12 units back into use.

Dover Road and Park Road properties were featured on BBC's Homes under the Hammer series. Video clips can be viewed via the Case Studies page on the No Use Empty website.



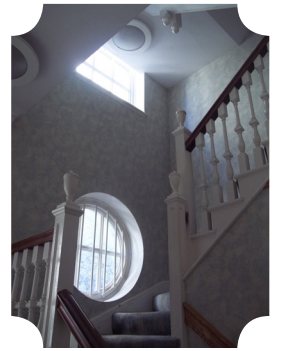
Former Wheelwright Arms



Park Road Interior

HOMES IN THE BANK! HIGH STREET, HYTHE

This Grade II listed building dating from 1909 now provides four self-contained flats (3 x 2 bed and 1 x 1 bed) on the 1st and 2nd floors following listed building consent and planning permission approval. The ground floor operates as the National Westminster Bank.



FOORD ROAD SOUTH, FOLKESTONE

Local Property Developer Mr Paul Berado has already refurbished two terraced houses on Foord Road South under the 2012-15 Programme.

In addition to this further works will soon commence, with additional loan support from NUE, to the property on the corner of Dover Road, which he specifically acquired with the intention of creating more affordable units.

The property remained empty since 2012 and was formerly used as a funeral directors. It currently comprises a mix of buildings on varying levels over three storeys and three separate frontages.



CALL OUT FOR NEW AHP PROJECTS

KCC has provided a further £1 Million to extend the NUE affordable homes project beyond 2015 to create even more homes from long term empty properties. If you are interested in working with NUE then please speak with a member of the team.

CHATHAM PLACE RAMSGATE

FIT FOR A DUKE

This three storey grand end of terrace Georgian building plus basement, thought to have been built in the 1780's, is part of a row of five matching buildings all Grade II listed.

Viscount Arthur Wellesley KG KP GCH PC FRS (1769-1852), 1st Duke of Wellington and Prime Minister 1834, stayed here during the Napoleonic Wars 1803-1815.

BACKGROUND

The building was unoccupied for over 30 years. When new owner Mr Fouladgar was granted planning permission in 2013, for conversion for nine self contained flats, works commenced. He has kept many of the original features wherever possible including deep skirting boards and moulded architraves. Doors and panelling have been recycled throughout the building without compromising on the quality of finish.

NUE SUPPORT

Approximately 60% of the works were completed before the owner approached NUE for an interest free loan of £100,000 having exhausted his own funds. The loan was approved and the property is once more 'Fit for a Duke'.

Mr Fouladgar said "I had taken this project on knowing all the costs but sometimes costs can go up. This is where NUE enabled me to cover



the unforeseen expenses, which was a huge relief to me.

There is nothing better than seeing an old neglected dilapidated building brought back to life creating a stylish unique living space for the young professionals and families to live. NUE made this possible."



A DECADE OF ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE FROM KENT LEGAL SERVICES



DISTRICT COUNCILS - HOUSING RESPONSIBILITIES

District councils, as local housing authorities, also have wide powers to adopt policies to provide assistance to improve living conditions in their area.

KENT LEGAL SERVICES

For the last 10 years Kent Legal Services (Kent County Council's in-house legal team) helped drive forward the council's No Use Empty initiative, by supporting the NUE team in its quest to revitalise unused properties and regenerating run-down areas of Kent.

With extensive experience in contract and property law and specialist knowledge of local government, Kent Legal Services is the perfect match complementing the expertise within the NUE team.

Below standard or empty housing has a serious impact on the quality of life in those areas. We are proud that our combined efforts have helped transform places and people's lives across many communities.

Over 180 borrowers' applications and associated legal documents worth in excess of £14 million, have been produced resulting in a total inward investment of £35 million.

To date, conversions of empty properties have included hotels, office blocks, former pubs, a religious retreat, an industrial site, as well as more traditional residential properties.

HOMES and COMMUNITIES AGENCY (HCA) FUNDING

In 2012, Kent County Council (KCC) received one of the first allocations of funds from the HCA Affordable Homes Programme to convert unused properties into residential accommodation at affordable rents. Kent Legal Services produced the essential legal documents, which are being used to transform KCC's and HCA's aspirations into reality.

Kent Legal Services have advised district councils on relevant legislation and appropriate powers as well as providing a range of customised documents to help them deliver their own schemes and we can do the same for you.

COMPULSORY PURCHASE ORDER (CPO)

The Local Government Association has declared that empty homes are being left to rot due to the overly complex and expensive compulsory purchase order (CPO) process.

With councils under pressure to meet housing targets and the number of empty properties increasing, Kent Legal Services has designed a scheme which streamlines the CPO process by offering fixed fee packages or bespoke advice to councils to help them navigate this process quickly and affordably.

FURTHER SUPPORT

We also offer support to council's in relation to empty residential dwellings with complex probate issues to resolve and enforced sales procedures

ACT NOW

If you are a district, county council or unitary authority within England and Wales which needs some advice with legal issues or are considering similar schemes to KCC's No Use Empty initiative, please contact us now for tailored assistance to help restore your empty homes back into use and regenerate your area.

CONTACTS

Geoff Wild
Director of Governance and Law
Kent Legal Services
03000 416840

Steve Grimshaw
Programme Manager
Economic Development
03000 417084.

GREEN EFFICIENCIES



LORNE ROAD DOVER

The new owners acquired a commercial unit in Lorne Road and the site opposite, known as St. Martin's Yard, which had previously been used for second hand car sales, in 2010. Empty since 2002 it was in a very dilapidated state, had fallen victim to vandals, drug users and scrap collectors stripping anything of value from the fabric of the building.

The commercial unit is now water tight and has been divided into small workspace units. Planning permission was finally granted in 2012 for five houses and seven flats on the St Martin's Yard site. However, the development loan which had been approved to take forward the site was time limited and due to the delay in planning it expired.

PHASE I - Houses

NUE stepped in to help to unlock Phase I with a loan for £125,000 as the developers had limited funds available. Without our support it is unlikely the five houses would have been completed for a considerable amount of time. Two of the homes are occupied and the remaining three already have tenants queuing up.



PHASE II - Flats

With the success of Phase I, the owners intended to re-finance in order to commence work on Phase II, but nowhere near completion. This would have demoted KCC's security to second charge on the site, compromising our control and potentially being of greater risk if the site was not finished.

KCC approved an interest bearing loan provided in phases. This will ensure Phase II completes in a shorter time scale, creating a further seven much needed quality homes for Dover as well as providing more robust security for the new loan approved over a five year term.

ENERGY EFFICIENT

The owners have a strong commitment to the environment and have strong 'green credentials'. The existing properties and those currently under construction will benefit from the bio-mass heating system, which is located in the commercial site.

Solar panels are also located here, feeding electricity into the new homes, which contributes to reducing heating costs and carbons emissions.



TONBRIDGE ROAD MAIDSTONE

Accommodation - Y.E.S. is a family run business, part of the O'Shea Partnership based in Maidstone, which operate a number of homes offering both long-term residential facilities and short term placements providing inspirational and positive support towards independent living to adults with mild learning difficulties.

Having obtained planning permission from Maidstone Borough Council for change of use and conversion of an office, to create nine residential units including the addition of single and two storey rear extensions, Lorna O'Shea approached NUE to discuss the possibility of obtaining an interest free loan to help with the conversion costs.

Empty for more than two years, the semi-detached three storey Victorian building situated in a residential area and is close to all amenities and facilities is now in the final stages of completion.

Always on the look out for innovative projects NUE said "yes" having assessed the overall project application.

The total cost of the refurbishment is £250,000 with NUE providing an interest free loan of £175,000.

Keeping it in the family, Lorna's daughter Iza O'Shea is the project manager overseeing all contracts and works on a daily basis along with her colleague Vicky Pearce. There is already a buzz amongst those prospective tenants who have already visited the project to see the new homes.



Individuals will also benefit from low cost heating and energy bills now and well into the future. A brand new ground source heat pump costing £54,000 has been installed. Solar panels, a fire alarm system and specialist entrance system with CCTV security have also been included in the design to make this property a safe and secure environment for all.



Together we hope that we have made a difference for those who will reside at Tonbridge Road.

Kent Learning Disability Partnership Awards 2015

Winner of the Supported Housing Award



Lorna O'Shea with Paul Carter, Leader, Kent County Council.

MARINE PARADE, FOLKESTONE

FORMER HOME TO ARMY INTELLIGENCE WW1



No Use Empty has supported development on a long-term empty building in Folkestone that was once the home to Army Intelligence during the First World War.

HISTORY



The locations, 8 and 9 Marine Parade, a pair of late Victorian semi-detached six storey houses in a sea front location in Shepway Borough Council, were transformed into the centre of army intelligence under the command of Major Cecil Alymer Cameron, code name 'Evelyn'.

The buildings housed a spy school that trained celebrated spies such as Léon Trulin and Louise de Bettignies, code name 'Alice Dubois', who were both instrumental in passing intelligence to the British Army responsible for saving hundreds if not thousands of lives.

In order to bring this historic building back into use NUE issued an initial loan of £149,999, for the conversion of 8 Marine Parade. After completion, the loan will be repaid to NUE and then reissued. This will allow the owner to develop a further six units 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."



graffton
empty homes

Grafton Empty Property Solutions provides a free Research, Tracing and Genealogy service for councils.

The aim of work is to help owners bring unused houses back into use or, as we like to say, 'Make Houses Homes Again.' Over the years our work in this field has gone from a

part of what we do to all of what we do.

Working with councils and the many Empty Homes Officer's has been inspiring and we have seen at first hand the sterling work and commitment of many during a very testing time for local authorities.

We have evolved our service to include an Enforced Sales Service and have been able to access £5 million (with our partners at Luminous Housing Association) which can be used for bringing

empty properties back into use under a Lease & Repair arrangement, as well as a purchase and repair scheme.

The aim of this initiative is to provide additional social housing. We also provide the owners with a guide on how to bring empty properties back into use, which includes information about insurance, tax, enforcement action, leasing properties and finding builders etc.

The issue of empty homes has

gathered huge momentum over the years and seen many changes even in times of cuts. It goes without saying it is an issue that will not be going any time soon and indeed grows in importance.



Mark Byrne

www.grafftonemptyhomes.com

SHED LOADS OF HOMES!

The Red Shed Site was the first of its kind for NUE creating residential accommodation from an industrial site area of 12,486.14ft.

The area developed by Tim Holt of F.T. Holt & Sons (Development) Limited, was once a British Rail site and had been used for car repairs and manufacture. The building was damaged by fire and stood empty for three years.

The site, situated in a semi-rural location in Teynham Swale is close to the Faversham to London railway line and was awarded £175,000 interest free loan to let by NUE.



Works have been completed at a total cost £903,000 transforming this once neglected site to offer nine units, comprising of 2 x 3 bedroom, 1 x 2 bedroom and 6 x 2 bedroom semi-detached houses with allocated car parking spaces.

Tim Holt said "Having decided to restore the Red Shed Site we approached No Use Empty for a loan to help us bring it back into use. The loan has definitely made life easier for us and enabled us to comfortably complete the works. It is great to see the old site being returned to something useable as

it has sat empty for too long. It has taken us over two years to achieve where we are today and we are very pleased with end result."

Steve Grimshaw, Programme Manager for No Use Empty at Kent County Council, said "This is another first for No Use Empty, converting industrial units back into use as homes.

Unlocking these areas to provide new housing is a great achievement for the initiative and a market that we hope to tap into further

in the future. Bringing long-term empty homes back into use has a profound regenerative effect on a community and provides high quality homes."



LATEST FROM NUE WEST

Bath & North East Somerset, Bristol City, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire Councils joined forces with Kent County Council in 2011 to establish No Use Empty West, encouraging owners to bring their empty properties back into use by adopting the well-recognised NUE brand.

NUE West has introduced a number of initiatives. Each of the West of England authorities offers a loan product for renovation of properties for sale, rent or occupation.

More recently NUE West has placed more emphasis on taking forward Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs) on some of the longer term empty properties.

LOW COST LOAN IN BATH

One example of a loan awarded by Bath & North East Somerset Council this has helped transform a derelict cottage located on the outskirts of Bath into an attractive three bedroomed home. The property had been damaged by fire and left empty since 2007.

Contact was made with the elderly owner who decided to sell the property to a family member more capable of taking on the task of the major renovation needed.

After discussions with planners and architects a scheme was developed. The financial support from the council included a small grant to help pay for plans, and a low cost loan, which helped to fund the necessary external repairs needed at the property.

The empty property officer was able to offer advice on VAT relief on the works as the property had been empty more than two years.

NETWORKING

Linking in to landlord networks, NUE West has striven to encourage owners to become landlords either privately or through social housing providers. Working closely with tenant

finding schemes, we encourage owners to consider letting their properties to those in housing need. Each authority has schemes offering a range of benefits to help provide a smooth and successful tenancy

NUE West has brought 3,448 properties back into use since it started in 2011.



Derelict cottage



3 Bedroom Home

QUALITY STREETS

NUE UNLOCKING THE POTENTIAL OF VACANT SPACE ABOVE SHOPS

Converting the empty space above your commercial unit into residential accommodation makes sound economic sense now that planning rules have been relaxed, so maximise your asset and generate a rental income!

NUE has already played a major role by providing financial assistance to several projects which support the re-use of wasted space above shops to increase the County's housing stock and provide much needed homes.

The introduction of new residential spaces, together with the renovation of existing units is proven to contribute positively to the creation of high quality, vibrant town centres where people want to live and shop.

This is all part of our commitment to delivering wider regeneration aspirations for our local communities especially in those coastal areas of Kent.

ADVANTAGEOUS PLANNING RULES

Provisions exist to allow (in some circumstances) the conversion of upper floors of commercial space, falling within planning use classes of Shops (A1) and Financial and Professional Services (A2), for up to two flats to be converted over the commercial space, known as permitted development rights. In such cases the submission of a planning application may not be required. Visit the Planning Portal website for more information.

QUEEN STREET, RAMSGATE

This mid terraced commercial property in Ramsgate, owned by Townsend Property Investments Limited, was granted planning consent for alterations to the shop front and change of use to residential by Thanet District Council.

The maximum loan of £175,000 was awarded to create 5 x 2 bedroom and 2 x 1 bedroom self-contained flats which are already fully occupied (rented). The commercial space was too large for one single business and was sub divided to create two new shops, which attracted immediate interest from local businesses looking for new premises. New tenancy agreements were soon in place and both units are operational.



CANNON STREET, DOVER

A five storey property, dating back to 1890, situated in the town centre was granted planning permission by Dover District Council to create four flats (3 x 1 bed and 1 x 2 bed) in the space above the occupied shop, which had been empty for more than 10 years.

Following the conversion at a total cost of £120,000, owner Mr Cam Dearsly marketed three of the flats for sale which were quickly snapped up. This meant that the NUE loan was repaid sooner than expected. Having benefitted from the NUE experience and delivering a project to a very high standard a further application was submitted for loan assistance towards a new project in Castle Street, Dover.

REDUCED RATE VAT

You may be eligible for a reduced rate of VAT on building materials and services when you convert a previously non-residential property into a dwelling.

Visit the NUE website to see what advice, guidance and financial assistance may be available to you.

GRACE HILL, FOLKESTONE

This commercial property situated north of the main town centre was empty for seven years before the new owners acquired the site in the Autumn of 2013. Shepway District Council granted planning approval for change of use of office space above the shop into five self-contained dwellings. The project completed at a cost of £240,000 supported with a NUE loan of £125,000. Finished to a high standard, the new homes were marketed for sale and the NUE loan was repaid in full following the sale of the second unit. The developers have since invested in another empty property in Shepway to undertake a further project following their initial success.



FORMER GYM WORKS OUT TO PRODUCE TWO NEW HOMES

Now transformed to an exceptionally high standard, this property once housed a gym over an end of terrace two-storey Edwardian building above a parade of shops situated at the northern end of the High Street.

The conversion into 2 x 2 bed self-contained flats is now complete and marketed for sale, all thanks to No Use Empty.



Hythe has just been announced as being in the Top 10 of places most likely to be a 'property hotspot' over the next few years.



LIVING ON THE SQUARE

The former Grade II listed building in Hawley Road, Margate overlooking the square, is in a terrace of similar aged buildings situated in the town centre conservation area. All local facilities are within easy walking distance.

The property was a shell (only the front and rear walls remained) extending to four storeys in height and was the subject of two arson attacks in 2008 and 2011 which caused the majority of damage.

Thanet District Council issued a Compulsory Purchase Order in 2010 to safeguard the future of the building.

It was sold at auction in 2013 to the new owner, who approached NUE for a loan. Planning permission was granted for change of use to eight self-contained flats and four storey rear extension.

English Heritage agreed to delist the building (Nov 2014), on the grounds that whilst the facades

remained relatively intact, there was no justification in retaining this building or the neighbouring one which was also affected by the fire, on the list when so much of the rest of the historic fabric had been lost.

In order to make the structure safe eight steel beams to the centre spine of the building were put in place at a cost around £100,000

Further works commenced, but it was soon apparent that the project was going to require additional funds if it was to succeed.

That is when NUE stepped in to provide an additional allocation, giving a loan of £223,000, to ensure the project completed.

NUE and the owner are pleased with the overall high quality finish to the units meeting our

expectations of providing homes to a decent standard. Overall project costs were just over £450,000.

All units are now occupied having been snapped up the minute they were ready for occupation following building control sign off.



THAT WAS THEN THIS IS NOW

DUMPTON HOUSE, BROADSTAIRS

This large detached Georgian style freehold property, divided into three main blocks, had been empty for two years when it came to No Use Empty for financial assistance to bring it back into use.

The building was originally converted into 21 flats in 2006 but subjected to vandalism and theft since being vacated by previous tenants, causing concern for local residents.

The new owner has completed the external repairs to the building including the roof and external rendering. Each flat has been refurbished to a high standard and was fully occupied within weeks of completion.



THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX - PROPERTY GUARDIANS



Possession they say is nine tenths of the law. That may be stretching the truth but property law has changed over the past few years and property owners and landlords need to be aware of the potential threat of illegal occupation and the considerable cost of remedial action.

Since September 2012, it has been a criminal offence to trespass in residential properties with the intention of living there. To this day squatting remains 'legal' for non-residential buildings, to remove any individual the owners must raise this as a civil matter with the courts, which can be a lengthy and costly process.

Protecting a property from illegal occupation before any damage is done is the most effective method, the initial solution is to deploy traditional security methods.

The option of installing security guards, while effective in the majority of cases, can incur large costs; for example, boarding up and hiring security guards for a 10,000 square foot property for six months would cost around £242,000.

This includes the cost of boarding up, changes to insurance and the bill for security personnel. The use of Property Guardians can not only negate some or all of these costs but in some cases can also produce a revenue stream.

As budget pressures and demands for efficiency continue to gain momentum, providing a cost-effective solution to property security is consistently high on the agenda for councils and property owners.

Property Guardians - salaried individuals installed in disused buildings across the UK to act as 'live in security' - are given the opportunity to live in unusual and spacious buildings for a minimal cost.

In exchange they are tasked with protecting property from the threat of squatters, thieves, asset strippers, criminal damage and reporting maintenance issues before lasting damage occurs.

The financial benefits of implementing a Guardian solution are highly favoured among councils, especially when those savings can be put to better use. Councils across the UK are being forced to make savings each year, so the opportunity to reinvest funds into the community would be welcomed with open arms.

In thinking outside the box, councils can make significant savings by exploring alternative security solutions. In preventing sites from becoming vacant and falling into disrepair the value of the building is maintained, local communities rest easy and financial savings can be redirected into more worthy causes.

With the positive spin-off where folk get a home at a fraction of the price pegged by the commercial market, Property Guardianship has to be a welcome strategic tool for property owners and councils alike.

For information contact:
Andrew Eckert
Business Development Manager
Ad Hoc Property Management Ltd.

Phone: 0207 354 5458
www.adhoc.eu

NUE LESSONS LEARNT

Steve Grimshaw, KCC Programme Manager



NUE would like to share with you the main lessons learnt from developing this type of initiative.

- An awareness of the time, although not overly complex, bringing together the resources, information and personnel required took much longer than originally anticipated.

- There was a delay between the original launch and the availability of the main financial funding. Good customer care was essential to keep clients informed of progress (or lack at times) in order to keep them on board.

The lack of resources at district level to undertake empty property work – both in terms of personnel and financial was a limiting factor.

The provision of the capital funding by KCC has, in the main, overcome the issue of financial resources, but manpower remains an issue.

Dedicated Empty Property Officers remain rare and to some extent the number of empty properties returned to use by districts reflects this situation. For the other districts, empty property work is just one of a number of tasks undertaken by people allocated with this role.

Initially, there was a lack of a corporate approach to the problem of empty properties, which resulted in councils dealing with the problem in a piecemeal fashion.

There was also a lack of understanding of the overall picture and the methods available to deal with empty properties. Creating a change in culture has facilitated a more positive approach to the problem.

The importance of training people directly involved in empty property work and for other services that can contribute to this area of work e.g. legal, building control, environmental health and planning cannot be stressed enough.

For services that contribute a 'supporting role', an increased

awareness and knowledge has brought about a greater level of support for empty property work, which is helping to tackle particularly difficult cases.

Shared learning means an improving level of skills and knowledge, which are being effectively utilised in empty property work. Low cost training has been provided to over 1,000 individuals over a ten year period through the NUE initiative.

One aspect that has proved invaluable has been the services of the Private Sector Housing Specialist, who has provided support and practical training on the use of the wide ranging legislation.

This has resulted in owners becoming more open to constructive dialogue with the councils, knowing that they are prepared to apply legislative measures.

Communication and strong PR support throughout the initiative has helped NUE achieve wide coverage both nationally and locally, including television, radio, national and local press.

This has not only achieved a strong brand name in the partner districts, but has also created a ripple effect within the county and beyond through publishing our successes.

Mark Dance, KCC Cabinet Member for Economic Development, welcomed Helen Williams, Chief Executive of Empty Homes - the national campaigning charity to Kent.

The NUE team were pleased to take them to visit a variety of coastal based projects which are currently being supported with interest free capital loans.



STOP PRESS • STOP PRESS • STOP PRESS • STOP PRESS

SHEPWAY ANNOUNCE LOAN TOP UPS

Building on existing partnership arrangements, Shepway District Council announce the launch of Shepway No Use Empty Plus, a scheme which will be administered by KCC's NUE team.

An initial allocation of £400,000 has been identified to provide Loan Top Ups, for those projects which require an additional level of support over and above the current limits NUE operate.

NUE reviewed the loan applications received relevant to properties in Shepway over the last two years. Evidence suggested that the initiative would be even more effective in bringing empty

homes back into use if the size of the loan available was higher in Shepway, due to the nature of the housing stock in the district.

Shepway will provide an additional £15,000 loan top up over and above the £25,000 available from the KCC fund, allowing NUE to offer a maximum loan of £40,000 per unit in Shepway.

Several projects have been identified with the potential to return an additional 20 units back into use, subject to full application and final approval.

For further information contact the NUE team.

NUE - THE FACTS

Research shows that the cost of renovation works is one of the biggest obstacles to bringing empty properties back into use. The average cost in Kent to return one unit (often the very worst properties) is £53,500 with an average NUE investment of £21,000, based on the number of units returned to date.

- **£35 Million Investment**
- **£14 Million NUE Loans issued**
- **£21 Million Private and Public Sector Leverage**
- **£6.8 Million Loans repaid to date**
- **£8.7 Million New Homes Bonus**

For each £1 spent on interest and administration, this translates to £20 being spent in local economy (labour & materials). The actual cost to KCC is £1,900 per unit (administration and loss of interest).

- **1,564 Homes for people**
- **683 Jobs safeguarded**

The KCC Loan Fund is a very tangible solution to unlocking the problem, whilst also having wider economic and community benefits.

EMPTY HOMES NETWORK SAYS 'NUE WORKS: COPY IT!'



David Gibbens

The 10th anniversary of Kent's No Use Empty initiative is a cause for celebration not just in Kent but across the country.

So often empty homes initiatives come and go, reflecting short-term interest of a particular council member or an enthusiastic senior officer. Not so in Kent.

No Use Empty shows us what it means to have a long-term strategy and commitment to tackling empty homes. It means planning, it means dedicated resources, it means monitoring outcomes, it means adjusting models to reflect experience...and all of that requires continuity.

The outcomes achieved, spelled out elsewhere in this Newsletter, are compelling. The fact that Wales has based its principality-wide Houses to Homes initiative on Kent's loan scheme is testimony to the effectiveness of the models that Kent has pioneered.

The Empty Homes Network is all about practitioners supporting one another by sharing experience. When I speak at conferences I often give a very simple message: 'No Use Empty works: copy it.'

Kent can feel proud of what has been achieved; and we all need to promote the lessons learned.



CUSTOMER FEEDBACK

Bijan Fouladgar, owner of Chatham Place, Ramsgate.



"The No Use Empty Loan enabled me to finish a job where my finances were being stretched to the limit.

I would like to give a personal thank you to the team at NUE for their support and kindness and understanding to see the vision I had for this project, and to believe in me to bring the project to fruition.

My plan now is to find another property that needs the same love care and attention and do it all again."

Monty August, owner, Prince of Wales, Dover.

"As most people know trying to find Funds for a project of this type is difficult. Having a NUE loan available to me allowed us to finance this project on an economic basis.

If I consider any future projects it will be a conversion on a smaller scale and may take advantage of the NUE funding."



Angela Townsend, Queen Street property, Ramsgate.

"Working with NUE was very easy, lovely to deal with and the process was not difficult."

Victor Evans and Robin May, joint owners of St Martin's Yard, Lorne Road, Dover.



"NUE threw us a lifeline for this site as the bank development loan was only available for 12 months and planning permission took 14 months. The bank crisis came into place and we had a site we could not develop on.

Initially a loan of £125,000 to complete Phase I which five houses were built, two are already occupied.

Further funds have been made available from NUE to complete Phase II a further seven flats on the site." Thanks to the NUE Loan fund and NUE team without it the site would have been derelict."

Tim Holt, owner of The Red Shed Site, Teynham.

"I heard about No Use Empty at a National Landlord Association meeting in Swale and decided to find out more about it. As a family we had been with our bank for nearly forty years and it was reluctant to help with this site.

I approached a new bank and successfully secured funding and with the additional funds from NUE Loan this helped to top up the finances to complete the works. I am very proud of this project offering quality homes from a derelict problematic site."

Tim Vince, Property Developer.

"The NUE process is very simple; it consists of an application form, red book valuation and face to face meeting with the KCC's NUE team. This is then submitted for approval, once the loan is approved funds can be drawn down – it really is this simple – great facility!"



The support from the NUE team was excellent; they listened to our proposals and fully understood the various site constraints. Instead of putting obstacles in the way they worked with us to ensure the funding process was simple and straight forward. This is exactly what you need when carrying out complex construction projects.

This is the second time I have been involved in the NUE facility and both times have been a complete success. I would recommend it to anyone carrying out projects that fit their requirements.

Thanks to KCC support for providing a great loan facility to developers in and around Kent."

Lorna O'Shea, owner of Tonbridge Road, Maidstone.

"We had an empty building, planning was approved for nine flats, we had the project and our clients feedback was really good but, we didn't have all the finances in place.

The banks did not look favourably on us due to the poor state of repair of the building. Approached the NUE team and the maximum loan of £175,000 was approved to match fund the project."



Iza O'Shea, Accommodation - Y.E.S., Housing Manager, Tonbridge Road project.

"I found No Use Empty Initiative on the web and applying for the loan was quite straight forward and with the guidance from the team the process was easy.

We would consider using NUE for any future projects. It's been great!"



Martin Neame, Marine Parade, Folkestone.

"This was a challenge to fund this refurbishment for 12 units as the bank was reluctant to lend. I approached KCC NUE for support and together with my own funds I have been able to progress this project.

NUE loan fund is a good enabler to allow a small developer like me to take on a project of this scale."



Mr Islam and Dr Hossain, joint owners of Sandgate Road, Folkestone.

"We knew the building had tremendous potential, but there is considerable risk involved in a project of the scale. Without the support of Shepway District Council, the access to capital provided by No Use Empty and the partnership with AmicusHorizon, it would not have been viable."



Paul Berado, Dover Road, Folkestone.

"I was unable to carry on with further works and without the assistance of NUE funds I would have not gone ahead with this project. I have successfully completed two projects with NUE support. I have passed on details and recommended No Use Empty Initiative to others."



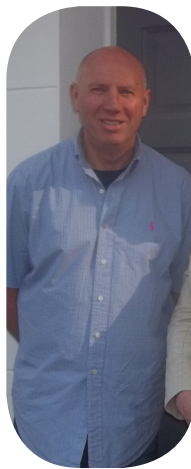
Chris Boorman, Property Developer.

"No Use Empty has enabled us to refurbish properties which otherwise we would not have tackled, for example Dover Road in Folkestone which was in a horrendous state when we purchased it.

Always up for a challenge and thanks to the support from the team at Kent we have been able bring a total of 19 units back into use which are now occupied with families spending money within their local community. I can honestly say that there are no negativities to this initiative where all participating parties gain."



John Boakes, Property Developer.



"No Use Empty has been a lifeline for me as a small developer. During the downturn in the housing market, I was unable to access funds required to complete a project in Bellevue Road, Ramsgate, when the banks reigned in their lending despite having sufficient equity.

Without the support and patience from the guys at Kent and Thanet I would not have been able to progress other projects in the area. Now that these are completed, I look forward to hopefully working with them on a new project in the New Year."

Cam Dearsly, Property Developer.

"The concept of the KCC advancing loans under the No Use Empty scheme has undoubtedly made a difference to the number of properties currently being lived in that would otherwise still be uninhabitable.

The scheme has enabled me to develop nine apartments in the Dover area all of which are now lived in either by owner occupiers or rented out to local people. I could not have done this without the scheme as in this current financial climate equivalent funding was not available.

The NUE team performs with the highest level of professionalism and conduct regular visits to discuss progress and confirm interval payments are justified.

I can't believe this system has not been more widely adopted, because it is self-perpetuating it has the potential to add thousands of unused properties to the current national housing shortage.

I hope the KCC not only maintains this valuable development tool but also recognises the good work done by the Team."



Royston Olner, owner of Bellevue Road, Ramsgate.

"Due to the extensive work required on this property I could not get a mortgage. I approached NUE and discussed the options available. As I was converting the property into three self-contained flats I could apply for £75,000. The application process was easier than applying to a bank and I would apply to use again for future funds for development."

WHAT PRICE EMPTY?

What is the cost of leaving your property empty?

Owning an empty property is an expensive responsibility. The estimated cost of leaving the property unoccupied for a year (based on an 'average' 2/3 bed terrace property) is estimated below.

The value of empty properties depreciates rapidly. There is a huge demand for housing and letting out a flat or house can provide a significant income stream, whilst enabling you to afford necessary repairs and maintenance to stop your property from deteriorating further.

Loss of rental income at £450-600 per month	£5,400 - £7,200
Maintenance	£500
Security	£290
Insurance (Where obtainable)	£280
Council Tax (typical local Band D)	£2,168
Council tax plus 50% premium *	£8,638 to £10,438
Total Cost	



YOU

DECIDE



CONTACT FILE

For further information please contact the relevant person, according to where the empty property is located from the list below and they will be happy to advise you.

Ashford Borough Council

Tannery Lane, Ashford, Kent TN23 1PL
Julian Watts
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01233 330 339

Canterbury City Council

Military Road, Canterbury, Kent, CT1 1YW
Caroline Hicks
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Dartford Borough Council

Civic Centre, Home Gardens, Dartford, Kent, DA1 1DR
Andrew Chambers
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Dover District Council

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Stuart White
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Gravesham Borough Council

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Simon Doherty
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Kent County Council

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Jackie Gibb
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03000 417 072



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Shepway District Council

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Thanet District Council

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Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council

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West Malling, Kent, ME19 4LZ
Lucy Hicks
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01732 876 130

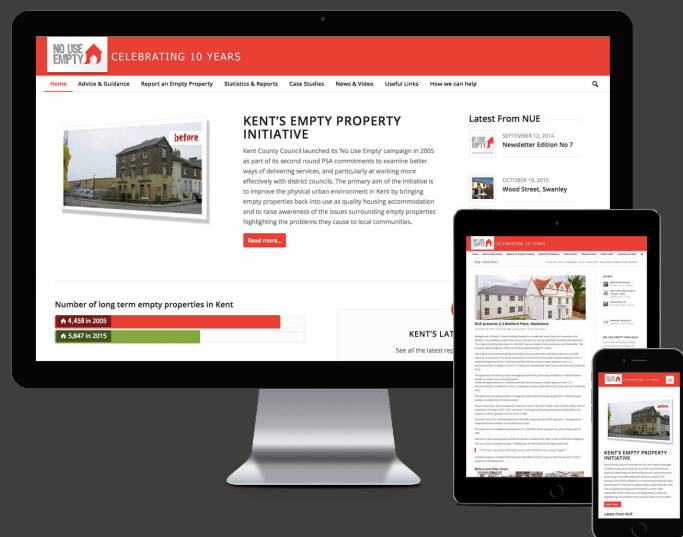
Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

Town Hall, Royal Tunbridge Wells, Kent, TN1 1RS
Claire Pickering
claire.pickering@tunbridgewells.gov.uk
01892 554 049

TO READ OUR PREVIOUS
EDITIONS VISIT OUR WEBSITE



NUE WEBSITE HAS BEEN REFRESHED!



NO USE EMPTY HOTLINE 03000 41 41 41 OR VISIT WWW.NUE.ORG.UK