

Summary Recommendations for change – from Will McMahon, Action on Empty Homes

Central Government should:

1. Adopt a national investment programme targeted at areas with high levels of long-term empty homes.
2. Re-establish dedicated funding programmes to support local authorities and housing providers to create affordable housing from long-term empty homes in all parts of England.
3. Ensure that funding programmes to tackle empty homes are also open to community-led organisations who are not registered providers, and invest in capacity building in this sector.
4. Provide support for ‘empty home prevention’ schemes, by supporting investment in existing homes. This should include a so-called ‘new Green Deal’ to offer financial support to owners for sustainability measures and home improvements designed to increase the longevity, affordability and environmental efficiency of existing homes, including insulation measures.
5. Conduct a review of how the legal powers available to local authorities to tackle empty homes and poor standards of management in the private rented sector could be improved.

Local authorities should:

1. Adopt a strategic approach to empty homes and ensure that approaches in neighbourhoods with high levels of empty homes fit within a local authority-wide empty homes strategy.
2. Support community-based regeneration approaches. This should include working with communities to develop neighbourhood improvement plans to tackle empty homes and the wider linked issues that they face.
3. Adopt an ‘invest to save’ approach - recognising how supporting local schemes and services can bring wider benefits to local people, such as jobs and improved community safety, improved health and well-being; and increasing the supply of secure affordable housing.
4. Seek funding and allocate resources to buy and refurbish empty properties for people in housing need.
5. Help community-based organisations wishing to build their know-how and skills to bring empty homes back into use by providing capacity-building support.

Second homes and lettings

1. Discussions with officers around the country lead Action on Empty Homes to the conclusion that the definition of 'second homes' requires tightening.
 2. There needs to be an examination of the impact, regulation and taxation of the short-term or holiday lettings market as a part of this review.
 3. A national register of home beneficial home ownership and usage should be introduced
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