

Empty Homes Newsletter

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Welcome from the Empty Homes Team

Welcome to the third edition of the Empty Homes Newsletter which is released during National Empty Homes Week 2015.

This issue starts with the good news that the team has met, and is well on its way to exceeding, the Empty Homes targets for the current financial year, 2015—2016 (See page 2 for details).

The Newsletter also includes updates on the progress with Empty Homes Action Zones and other work being undertaken by the team, including grants.

The Task and Finish Group, which was looking at ways to further ensure the success of the Empty Homes Strategy came to an end in March and the Report following that was presented to Cabinet at the end of Ju-



ly, giving the recommendations of the Group. Our Empty Homes Action Zones have continued to be successful with the full budget for Whitchurch being allocated and the first Empty Property Incentive Grants completing. (Full details on page 3.) We have had some good progress on a number of our

long running problematic cases with owners starting works to return their property occupation.

We hope you find this issue useful and interesting, and that it provides an insight into the development of our Empty Homes work across Shropshire over the last six months.

New Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm Regulations

For those owners who are looking to return their property to use by letting to tenants, it is important to note the new Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (England) Regulations 2015.

These regulations came into force on 1 October 2015 and outline the requirements in relation to the installation of smoke and carbon monoxide alarms in rented properties as follows:

- at least one smoke alarm to be installed on every storey of the property
- a carbon monoxide alarm is installed in any room containing a solid fuel burning appliance
- landlords are required to ensure that such alarms are in proper working order at the beginning of each new tenancy

The regulations do not stipulate the type of alarms (hard wired or battery powered) to be installed. Landlords should make an informed decision and choose the best alarms for their property and tenants.



These regulations will be enforced by the Local Authority who, where there are reasonable grounds to believe a landlord is in breach of the requirements, will serve a Remedial Notice.

Landlords have 28 days from the date the Remedial Notice is served to comply with the Notice.

If, on the balance of probabilities, the Local Authority is satisfied that a landlord has breached the duty to comply with the Remedial Notice within 28 days, the Authority must take remedial action to ensure tenants are protected by working alarms.

Remedial action may involve installing a required alarm, repairing an installed alarm or checking an installed alarm is in proper working order.

The enforcing authority can impose a civil penalty, up to a maximum of £5,000 on landlords who do not comply with the remedial notice.

Further information for Landlords is available at [Q&A booklet for the private rented sector - landlords and tenants](#)

New Homes Bonus Success Following 2014/15 Work

The last New Homes Bonus award allocation to Shropshire Council, following the work in the financial year 2014/15, was a total of £7.3m. £1.6m of that was from that years work alone.

that a good further percentage is indirectly attributed to that work due to the nature of our proactive work. (We have also contributed to the New Units and Affordable

Units elements of New Homes Bonus in addition to the Return To Use element)

We are proud to highlight that out of the 354 Local Authorities across England, Shropshire Council had the 24th highest number of empty properties returned to use in respect of New Homes Bonus awarded for 2014/15.

The New Homes Bonus figures included 180 empty properties returned to use. Of these 180 properties, approximately 50% were as a result of direct involvement from the Empty Homes Officers and it can be reasonably assumed



Targets Update

The Return to use and creation of new homes targets for the period April 2015 – March 2016 are:

Empty Homes returned to use - 85

Homes created from empty property - 12

Good progress is being made in reaching these targets, as shown in the table below. More information on current and future targets can be found in the Empty Homes Strategy 2014-2017.

	2015/16 Q1 (Apr/May/Jun)	2015/16 Q2 (Jul/Aug/Sept)
Empty Homes Returned to Use	46	45
Homes Created	0	0

“Great progress on this years Empty Homes targets”

Empty Homes — A Big Issue!

Across the Country there have recently been some high profile schemes and inspirational stories in relation to dealing with empty homes.

In October a generous gesture was made by ex-premiership footballers, Gary Neville and Ryan Giggs, to a group of 30 homeless individuals. A large empty building owned by the duo, which they plan to turn in to a hotel was offered to the men to use as shelter over the winter months until work starts in late January.

The DIY SOS team recently transformed a derelict street in Manchester into homes for ex-service per-

sonnel, along with some help from Princes William and Harry.

The Big Issue launched an empty buildings campaign, “Fill ‘Em UP”, in a bid to urge local authorities to address what they call Britain’s chronic housing problem.

They are calling for action in a bid to increase housing supply by utilising empty property as they state that in parts of Britain, there are ten homes lying empty for every homeless family.

In Blackpool The Jobs, Friends & Houses team renovate derelict properties in Blackpool, showing how homeless people can rescue empty properties and gain a fresh start.

39 homeless people, ex-offenders and addicts in recovery have been welcomed onto the team. They have renovated derelict houses while working towards trade apprenticeships.

The finished properties are then offered for rent to people in recovery.

The Leicester “Action on Empty Homes” scheme has created good quality affordable housing from 14 empty properties for people leaving homeless hostels.

Big Issue Invest has supported PHASES, a project which gives ex-service personnel a route into the building trades through renovating empty homes in London.

Empty Homes Action Zones Update

Action Zones are created to focus Empty Homes and regeneration work in Shropshire, targeting Empty Homes Incentive Grant funding in areas it is most needed.

Our third Action Zone in Whitchurch has been a great success so far.

The majority of the available funds has been allocated to Empty Property Incentive Grants within the Action Zone.

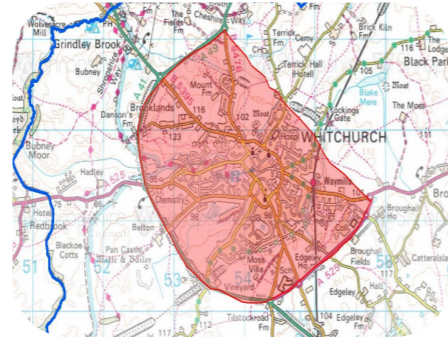
The first of the Incentive Grants have just been completed with two properties returned

to use as good quality family homes.

It is expected that further properties will be returned to use on the completion of the remaining grants plus the creation of approximately 10 new units.

A small amount of Whitchurch funding is still available for new applications received by the Empty Homes Team.

Preparatory work is now underway to make a decision on the location of the next Action Zone which will be launched in April 2016.



Empty Property Incentive Grants have integrated with existing regeneration and revitalisation programmes administered by the Town Councils and local communities, and have incentivised a great deal of work to return empty properties to use which is on-going with good progress.

“Great Success in the Whitchurch Empty Homes Action Zone”

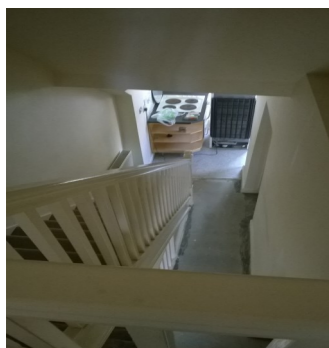
Case Studies

So far two long term empty properties have been brought back into use through the Empty Property Grants in Whitchurch

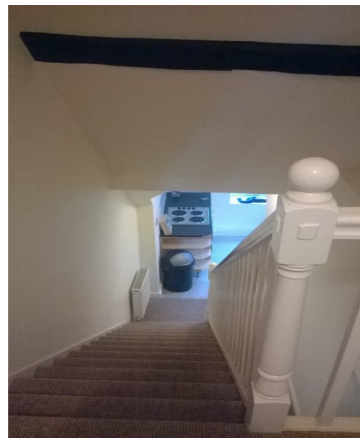
Both properties needed a lot of work, but they're both now looking great, with one of them already occupied and the other on the market looking for a tenant.

This flat in the town centre had been empty for two years and needed everything from a new boiler to new carpets. It's gone from being a run down flat to a bright and airy home.

BEFORE 1

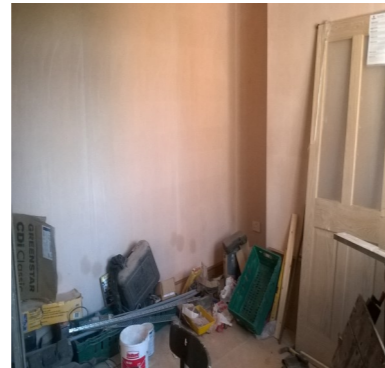


AFTER 1



This house just outside the town centre needed a full renovation. Its now occupied as a family home after being empty for 15 years.

BEFORE 2



AFTER 2



Several other properties are also on their way to being completed and able to offer more good quality homes for people in the Whitchurch area.



Empty Homes

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www.shropshire.gov.uk/
housing-services

Do You Own an Empty Property?

If you own an empty property in Shropshire and want to explore the options to return it to use, our Officers are available to offer support, advice and guidance. Whatever the reason your property is empty, we can provide up to date information to help you consider all the options open to you.

If you would be interested in selling your empty property, the Team are often

contacted by people looking to purchase properties in the area, and may be able to put owners in contact with prospective purchasers. Many of these individuals are looking to take on properties in need of varying degrees of work to ultimately live in as their home.

So don't put it off! There are lots of options for empty properties and we're here to help you decide

how to make the best use of your property.



Useful information... Trusted Traders

The Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin Trader Register has been set up for the benefit of both local consumers and businesses.

Businesses registered with the scheme have all demonstrated their commitment to fair and honest trading practices and delivering good customer service.

The project aims to reassure consumers, providing information on employing a trader and working with traders if things don't go right.

Whilst we cannot recommend a business, you are advised to use traders listed with the Trader Register when looking for a home improvement trader to carry out repairs or building work on your home.



Find details of plumbers, electricians, builders, double glaziers, gardeners, painters and decorators, and many more trades.

Visit the website at www.shropshire.gov.uk/trading-standards/trader-register and follow the link to the Trusted Traders Register.

Alternatively for more information call Mears Shropshire Home Services on 01743 344632.

Useful contacts...



- Planning** — 0345 678 9004
planning.comments@shropshire.gov.uk
- Historic Environment** — 0345 678 9004
Historic.environment@shropshire.gov.uk
- Building Control** — 0345 678 9004
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