

Bringing Empty Homes Back into Use in County Durham

Strategy Statement

1. Background and Context

1.1 Background

An empty home is classed as any residential property that is unoccupied and unfurnished. Over time these houses can start to cause concern not only for the owner of the house but also for the surrounding community. The Council may need to intervene particularly if a property is left unoccupied for 6 months or more.

The reasons why a house remains empty are numerous. In broad terms it is likely to be down to market forces making a property difficult to sell or let; or it could be individual circumstances ranging from an owner's ill health to apathy or neglect.

This strategy statement is intended to provide an overview of the actions being taken in the private sector to address the problem of empty homes and identify any future improvements to the service.

1.2 Rationale for action

Bringing empty homes back into use can bring the following benefits:

For the Owner:

- Increased income and/or return on investment
- Eliminates liability for Council Tax
- Security against vandals and anti-social behaviour
- Reduces insurance costs

For the Community:

- Helps to address decline in an area
- Enhances visual amenity of the area
- Delivers additional affordable homes
- Increases confidence in an area

For the Local Authority:

- It can assist in meeting housing need and so reduce numbers on the housing register

- It can improve housing conditions
- It can regenerate blighted areas
- It can improve the efficiency of Council Tax collection and produce savings on temporary accommodation expenditure
- It can assist in managing urban areas including reduced calls to the Police, Fire Brigade and the Council
- It can produce better relations between local authorities and the private sector.

1.3 Position in County Durham

- 1.3.1 This section has been informed by research commissioned by the Council through arc4 that studied the issues associated with empty homes (particularly in relation to 3 renewal areas).
- 1.3.2 Table 1 details the location and number of empty homes in County Durham. There are a total of 10,110 empty homes across the County which represents 4.1% of total dwelling stock. This is higher than both the national average (2.9%) and the regional average (3.6%). However, the overall void rate masks some spatial differences as it ranges from between 2.5% (Newton Aycliffe) and 5.8% (Weardale).
- 1.3.3 Within County Durham, the highest proportion of empty properties is in Weardale (5.8%), Bishop Auckland (5.6%) and Spennymoor (5.1%) sub-areas. The lowest levels are in Newton Aycliffe (2.5%) and Durham City (2.8%).
- 1.3.4 It should be noted that the use of percentages; whilst demonstrating the relative incidence of empty homes; fails to identify where the greatest concentrations are (see below).
- 1.3.5 Over the past 10 years, the proportion of vacant dwellings across County Durham has fallen from 5.1% of dwelling stock in 2001 to 4.1% in 2012. This percentage still represents a serious issue that requires intervention and there is no indication at the present time that this slight long term downward trend will continue.

SHMA Housing Market area	Total Dwellings	Total Occupied Dwellings	Unoccupied Dwellings			% Empty	Empty rate per 1000 dwellings
			Total	Second Homes	Empty Homes		
Barnard Castle	4624	4317	307	89	218	4.4	44.2
Bishop Auckland	22694	21155	1539	176	1363	5.6	56.2
Central	23981	22894	1087	181	906	3.6	36.1
Chester-le-Street	22475	21521	954	207	747	3.2	31.9
Consett	21315	20245	1070	139	931	4.2	41.6
Crook and Willington	11439	10775	664	82	582	4.8	48.1
Durham City	18225	17285	940	400	540	2.8	28.2
Easington and Peterlee	22380	21345	1035	147	888	3.8	37.9
Newton Aycliffe	11929	11576	353	43	310	2.5	25.2
Seaham	19362	18441	921	130	791	3.9	39.0
Sedgefield	7133	6809	324	33	291	3.9	39.0
Spennymoor	17649	16580	1069	116	953	5.1	50.9
Stanley	15463	14693	770	94	676	4.2	41.6
Upper Teesdale	1925	1774	151	69	82	3.9	39.5
Weardale	61410	5534	606	213	393	5.8	58.3
Wingate	8626	8137	489	50	439	4.8	48.2
County Durham Total	235,360	223,081	12,279	2,169	10,110	4.1	40.8
North East (2011)	1,180,260				42,246	3.6	35.8
England (2011)	22,971,520				662,105	2.9	28.8

Table 1: Dwelling stock and empty properties in County Durham

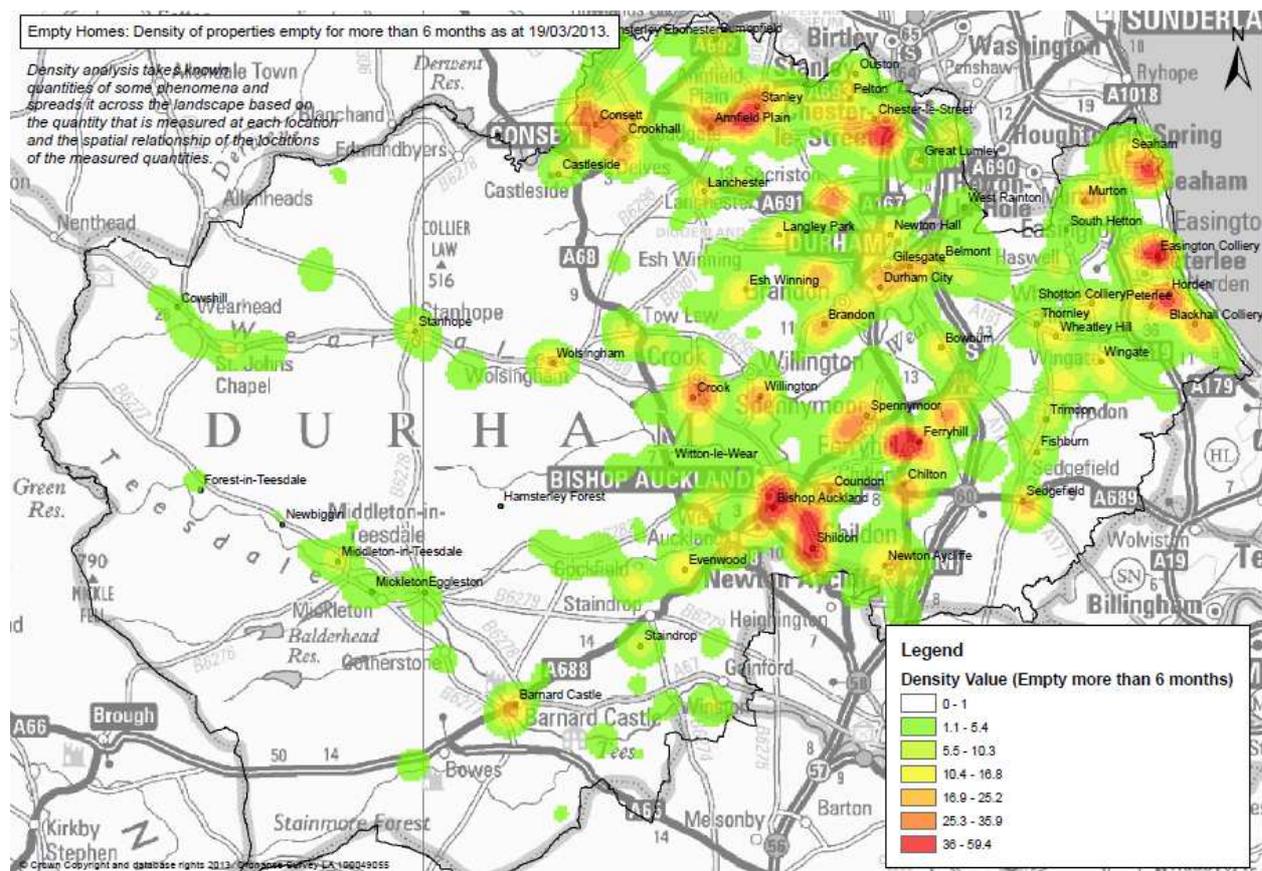
Source: 2012 SHMA, 2011 Housing Strategy Statistical Appendix

- 1.3.6 There are significant concentrations of empty homes in certain parts of the County and these are outlined in Map 1 below. . These clusters of empty homes skew the overall county percentage.
- 1.3.7 The social sector is included in this overall level of voids. It sometimes encounters similar levels of low demand amongst their stock as in the private sector as a whole but generally percentage levels of empty properties are lower.
- 1.3.8 It is accepted in the private sector that there is a necessary level of voids that facilitates market turnover – often referred to as the transactional void rate. This sometimes is categorised as voids that have been empty for 6 months or less but wider definitions have been used. The arc4 research proposed that the acceptable void level is anything less than 3% and this has produced the following table (Table 2) identifying ‘surplus’ voids of around 1.14% or 3,317 properties.

Area	Total Stock	Total Vacant	% Vacant Total	% stock surplus vacants ¹	Number surplus vacants	%less than 6 months
Barnard Castle	6784	293	4.32	1.43	97	1.6
Bishop Auckland	22644	1242	5.48	2.54	576	2.1
Central	29927	1199	4.01	1.18	352	1.6
Chester-le-Street	22471	727	3.24	0.82	184	1.4
Consett	20438	841	4.11	1.20	244	1.6
Crook and Willington	11438	545	4.76	1.86	212	2.0
Durham City	18230	573	3.14	0.54	98	1.3
Easington and Peterlee	21284	793	3.73	1.13	240	1.5
Newton Aycliffe	11922	287	2.41	0.17	21	1.3
Seaham	15952	581	3.64	1.09	173	1.6
Sedgefield	7129	270	3.79	1.14	81	1.4
Spennymoor	17666	918	5.20	2.38	420	2.1
Stanley	15433	677	4.39	1.53	235	1.8
Upper Teesdale	1912	112	5.86	2.86	55	1.3
Weardale	6127	405	6.61	3.61	221	1.6
Wingate	5764	280	4.86	1.87	108	2.0
TOTAL	235121	9743	4.14%	1.14%	3317	1.6%

. **Table 2:** Surplus vacant properties

¹ over 3% voids



Map 1 Overall distribution of empty homes in Durham

1.4 Government Policy

The Government, in conjunction with the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), is encouraging local authorities to take a proactive approach to bringing empty homes back into use as part of its 2011 National Housing Strategy, 'Laying the Foundations'. The Government's ambition is to "increase the number of empty homes brought back into use as a sustainable way of increasing the overall supply of housing and to reduce blight on neighbourhoods".

Durham has benefitted from this increased emphasis on empty homes as follows:

Name of scheme/provider	Value of Investment	Number of properties
Rnd 1 livin (Purchase and repair)	£630,000	35
Rnd 1 Derwentside Homes Purchase/lease and repair)	£136,000	8
Rnd 1 Durham Action on Single Housing (Purchase and repair)	£270,000	8
Rnd 1 Five Lamps (Lease and repair)	£680,400	40
Cluster bid DCC (Purchase and repair)		120
Rnd 2 livin (Purchase and repair)	£360,000	20
Rnd 2 TCUK (Cyrenians)	£310,000	5
Rnd 2 DISC	£235,000	10

Table 3 List of HCA funding schemes to bring empty homes back into use 2013-16

1.5 Current Approach of Durham County Council

Durham County Council has a team of officers within the Housing Regeneration team with the remit of tackling empty homes. This team prioritises action on empty homes within the eight regeneration areas (see Appendix 1) but also operates a safety net for the rest of the county.

There are 6 Private Landlord & Empty Homes Officer posts. The post is a combined role which deals with landlord initiative issues and also bringing empty homes back into use. Out of the total of 6 officers - 2 officers are based in a locality team in the North of the county at the Stanley office, 2 officers are based in a locality team in the East of the county at the Seaham office and 2 officers are based in a locality team in the South of the county at the Spennymoor Office.

The Private Sector Housing Strategy identified empty homes as one of the Council's five key priorities for intervention in the private sector and aimed to see a reduction of empty homes below the 4% level through the implementation a number of new and existing initiatives such as private sector leasing; Empty Dwelling Management Orders; a tenant referencing service and the provision of more loans to assist with repairs and improvement (see options in section 3 below).

The private sector housing team takes a proactive and informal approach to influencing and encouraging owners to bring empty homes back into use including:

- Face to face meeting with owners to assess needs and develop a set of actions designed to bring the property back into use;
- Advice on becoming a responsible private landlord where sale is not an option;
- A tenant referencing service for new and existing landlords in identified housing regeneration areas;
- Advice on loans to complete essential repairs through the council's financial assistance policy;
- Free advice and support regarding disrepair and refurbishment needs including drafting schedules of work if appropriate.

Once informal approaches have been exhausted, the team will then seek to develop an enforcement approach as detailed in the joint protocol with the council's Environment Protection Team. The enforcement element of the Council's work has not yet become a significant feature of empty homes work (see below).

Performance on bringing empty homes back into use is as follows:

Year	Number of Empty Homes brought back into use
2010/11	67
2011/12	43
2012/13	54
2013/14 (target)	75

The Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) have been reviewing the performance of the empty homes work and their recommendations are incorporated into this statement.

1.6 The Housing Market

Empty homes are often a reflection of low demand. The housing market in County Durham reveals a mixed picture with a number of unpopular areas suffering from poor market conditions.

Whilst some empty homes are relatively easy to bring back into use; there are empty homes in other areas which fail to let or be sold even if they are in a good state of repair and are well managed.

The Council needs to consider whether there are areas it would be unwise to invest time and resources because of the risk of poor returns. The research from arc4 recommends that areas where risks are highest should be avoided unless there are holistic approaches to social and economic as well as physical regeneration in place.

Paradoxically our main efforts to bring empty homes back into use have been focussed on renewal areas where the market is at its weakest. This has often required Council officers to put in considerable efforts for little return. In effect Council resources have been pitched against the market rather than working with the market.

Unless the Council can offer a coordinated approach to repositioning local housing markets through comprehensive interventions across the full range of services then resources for empty homes should be targeted at those areas where there are not potentially unsustainable.

2. Aims and Objectives

2.1 Aim

The County is committed to reducing the number of long term empty homes in the private sector. This Empty Homes Strategy Statement sets out how the Council

- assists the housing market to make the most of its housing stock; ensuring empty homes are occupied by a wide range of household types
- identifies empty homes and their owners and pursues options to bring them back into use.
- reduces neighbourhood blight and nuisance

2.2 Objectives

It is the Council's intention to:

- (a) To facilitate access to good quality advice and assistance for owners of empty homes
- (b) To make use of a wide range of tools and policy mechanisms to encourage landlords (through incentives and enforcement) to bring empty homes back into use.
- (c) To take advantage of all funding opportunities that may assist in bringing long term homes into use.
- (d) To make use of partnership working with both internal and external agencies and departments (including Environmental Health and Housing Solutions)
- (e) To develop comprehensive market intelligence on the prevalence of empty homes in the county.
- (f) To respond effectively to community concerns and promote the empty homes service to members of the public and other stakeholders.
- (g) .

3. How we are addressing our Empty Homes objectives

(a) Access to good quality advice and assistance

The delivery of reliable countywide advice and assistance on empty homes is an essential pre-requisite to bringing them back into use. This can be achieved through:

- (i) Officers available to collaborate and work with owners and the public in bringing empty homes back into use and making them safe in the intervening period.
- (ii) A dedicated phone line and email address to assist owners.
- (iii) A webpage devoted to the provision of good quality relevant information to assist owners and others.

- (i) Officers available to collaborate and work with owners and the public in bringing empty homes back into use and making them safe in the intervening period.

The Council employs dedicated Empty Homes/Private Landlord officers who provide a point of contact for the public to report issues relating to empty homes. If there is a risk that the property poses a danger to the public or is a target for criminal behaviour then the property will be reported as a risk to the appropriate authority or council department. Steps will be taken to secure the property whilst seeking contact with the owner. Generally officers will offer advice and encouragement to help an owner sell or rent the property and identify possible funding opportunities.

They can also seek to match owners with prospective purchasers. Their work, however, is focussed on renewal areas and does not prioritise anything other than the most urgent empty homes cases outside these areas (the safety net system)

(ii) A dedicated phone line and email address to assist owners

The Council has a private sector helpline that can signpost owners of empty properties to specific sources of advice and assistance (03000 262 140).

It receives around xx calls per month of which around xx% are connected to empty homes.

There is a dedicated email address (privatesectorhousing@durham.gov.uk) which receives around xx emails per month of which xx% are enquiries about empty homes

The advice line needs a higher profile so that owners are aware of the facility and usage is increased.

The email address could be amended to be specific to empty homes (eg emptyhomes@durham.gov.uk)

(iii) A webpage devoted to the provision of good quality relevant information to assist owners and others

There is a specific page on the Council's website devoted to empty homes but although it lists the powers the Council has; advice is limited. The page requires reviewing and developing and this project is underway.

(b) A wide range of tools and policy mechanisms

This can be achieved through:

- (i) The development of new Financial Assistance Products especially loans
- (ii) Assisting first time buyers to purchase empty homes
- (iii) Community self-help initiatives
- (iv) Local Council Tax arrangements (withdrawal of discounts)
- (v) Effective enforcement measures

(i) The Development of Financial Assistance Products especially loans

Durham's Financial Assistance Policy offers the following loan products for helping landlords bring empty homes back into use:

- A capital and interest repayment loan
- An equity loan
- An interest free loan

Interest in these products is low – there has been just one loan completed for an empty homes so far – it is believed that landlords are put off by the prospect of a financial means test.

Research by arc4 recommends that a different type of loan product is made available to private landlords. They do not have the same needs as vulnerable households nor should they be subject to the same conditions. Any interest free loan should be made available for repayment over fixed periods and for this product alone, the requirement for a means test should be removed.

(ii) Assist first time buyers to purchase empty homes

Long term empty homes are often regarded as suitable for 'buy to let' investment and are often seen as too challenging for owner occupiers because of the levels of improvement and repair work required. The areas where empty homes predominate are often places where the privately rented stock is increasing and the Council recognises the need to rebalance the tenure mix through encouraging first time buyers (and other prospective owner occupiers) to purchase and provide additional 'stability' to a community. The financial assistance policy has not provided loan assistance for such purchasers to date and more needs to be done to encourage new owner occupiers to invest in these homes.

(iii) Community self-help initiatives

Addressing empty homes can sometimes be more effectively carried out by local community groups. An example of this would be the Craghead Development Trust (based near Stanley) who have established a community based social enterprise and amongst their activities have embarked on a programme of bringing empty homes back into use.

(iv) Local Council Tax arrangements (withdrawal of discounts and introduction of empty homes premium)

New rules on council tax collection after April 2013 provide additional financial incentives to bring empty properties back into use. Empty homes are no longer exempt or partially exempt from council tax and furthermore after 24 months they attract council tax at the rate of 150%. This is likely to encourage landlords to rent or sell their properties. The increases are intended to fund the extra costs of the LCTSS (Local Council Tax Support Scheme) but the OSC review suggest investigation into use of any surplus funds generated by this initiative.

(v) Utilising Enforcement Measures

The Council has at its disposal a number of enforcement measures although some have rarely been used. These include:

- **Compulsory Purchase (CPO)** – these can be made by the Council under the Housing Act 1985 and the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 – they are normally considered on their merits as a last resort where the owner has refused to cooperate or communicate. This course of action can only be considered if there is a plan in place for the property's swift disposal after CPO.

- **Enforced sale** – under the Law of Property Act 1925, the authority has the right to sell an empty home where a charge on the property has not been redeemed (usually connected with unpaid Council tax). It can also be used with Works in Default where notices have been served on owners. If these notices are ignored then the Council has the right to carry out the work in default of the notice served. If this goes unpaid the Council has the right to place a charge on the property and subsequently enforce sale to clear the debt. Enforced sale can be a cheaper and quicker alternative to CPO
- **Empty Dwelling Management Order (EDMO)** The Housing Act 2004 allows the LA to take out an EDMO to make sure that an empty property is occupied. The LA can make EDMOs on properties that have been empty for at least two years. There are two types of EDMO – interim and final. An interim EDMO lasts 12 months but a final EDMO can last up to seven, 14 or 21 years. An EDMO allows the LA to:
 - take over from the landlord and manage the empty property and
 - make sure that empty properties are occupied and managed properly.
 To date no EDMOs have been progressed by the Council. Adequate arrangements need to be in place to ensure good management is in place once the EDMO is granted.
- **Planning legislation** The Council has planning powers (under s215 of the Planning Act) to require an owner to undertake external work to tidy up the appearance of a property where this is unsightly – and this can include empty properties. This form of action cannot require an owner to bring a property back into use but can ensure the property is not damaging the amenity of an area (and can also encourage the owner to sell that property and bring it back into use)

(c) Take advantage of all funding opportunities

This can be achieved through:

- (i) Accessing funding from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA)
- (ii) Utilising DCC funding from the Medium Term Financial Plan and other sources
- (iii) Accessing other public funding opportunities

(i) Accessing funding from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA)

The Council has been successful in drawing down funds for the HCA in conjunction with its partner Registered Providers and other community organisations. The allocations to June 2013 are listed in Table 3. We anticipate this funding programme to continue (subject to the 2013 CSR and HCA programmes post March 2015).
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There are currently 167 houses in the empty homes programme with an additional 120 units should the HCA 'cluster programme' take off. All homes require bringing back into use by March 2015 according to HCA grant conditions.

(ii) Utilising DCC funding from the Medium Term Financial Plan and other sources

Funding by the local authority is limited and there will be few opportunities to commit additional resources at this time of financial constraint. Nevertheless, the Council has awarded £1.2million from its own Medium Term Financial Plan as match funding for the HCA cluster programme. This however is its only contribution to resourcing empty homes work (other than staffing).

The continued allocation of funds by central government through the New Homes Bonus (NHB) offers an opportunity to recycle funds to bring more empty homes back into use. It is an unringfenced pot of money and is inextricably linked to the Council's annual financial settlement and so is not readily available for specific purposes. It has been assessed that the County has lost around £1.69m in net funding since NHB introduction. Nevertheless additional resources devoted to empty homes may create a 'virtuous circle' of funding that could enhance net receipts (or at least reduce overall net losses). There could also be opportunities within the current planning system to divert s106 contributions to the empty homes programme (rather than building new affordable homes either on or off-site).

(iii) Accessing other public funding opportunities

The Council continues to identify new public sector funding opportunities and has recently been included in the National Empty Homes Loans Fund pilot that will offer landlords access to low interest loans in return for lettings at an affordable rent

(d) Partnership working

This can be achieved through:

- (i) Working with private owners and public sector landlords in renewal areas (including selective licensing areas) and elsewhere
- (ii) Working with specialist RPs and other community based organisations to help deliver affordable housing for specific client groups
- (iii) Develop new links between housing solutions and the empty homes service

(i) Working with private owners and public sector landlords in renewal areas (including selective licensing areas) and elsewhere

The Council has developed good working relationships with private landlords in its selective licensing areas and this has helped bring empty homes back into use. As the renewal areas are completed the partnership work with private landlords needs to be extended and developed to other priority areas.

The work includes the advertising of a limited number of homes (that comply with decent homes standards and have EPC's and gas certificates) on the Durham Key Options website.

(ii) Working with specialist RPs and other community based organisations to help deliver affordable housing for specific client groups

There is scope to work with registered providers; especially those who are dedicated to meeting the needs of vulnerable households; to facilitate refurbishment work that can combine apprenticeships and training with meeting housing needs. As the pressure continues on the social rented stock the private sector and its stock is being increasingly relied upon to offer alternative accommodation. Where this can be provided through RPs either as landlords or through leasing arrangements then professional management can be offered at rents that are sub market (and therefore more affordable).

(iii) Develop new links between housing solutions and the empty homes service

(e) Comprehensive market intelligence

This can be achieved through:

(i) Utilising Council Tax records to record levels and locations of empty homes

(i) Utilise Council Tax records to record levels and locations of empty homes

The Council currently uses its records to identify empty homes (powers as defined by s85 of the 2003 Local Government Act). The data can be used by the billing authority only for public functions in the public interest.

(f) Promote the empty homes service

This can be achieved through:

(i) Promoting the service via the DCC website

(ii) Identifying other marketing opportunities

(i) Promote the service via the DCC website

The Council recognises the importance of highlighting its empty homes service on its website but needs to adopt a more proactive stance to allow the Council's powers and functions to be properly promoted as part of a service

(ii) Identify other marketing opportunities

There is no coordinated marketing strategy to enable landlords; the local authority and other stakeholders to come together to coordinate a response to under-utilised housing stock. Owners of empty homes need to be contacted on a regular basis to allow them the opportunity to engage with the authority.

4. Action Plan for Bringing Empty Homes Back into Use

(a) Access to good quality advice and assistance			
OBJECTIVE	ACTION	DATE	COMMENTS
Officers available to collaborate and work with owners in bringing empty homes back into use and to make them safe in the intervening period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review protocols with other council departments • Develop a system of making regular contact with landlords through letters/questionnaires • Establish 'forums' where landlords and prospective purchasers can meet. 	March 2014	
A dedicated phone line and email address to assist owners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the advice line number on the Council's web site and through leaflets and posters • Create a new dedicated email address for empty homes 	Dec 2013	
A webpage devoted to the provision of good quality relevant information to assist owners and others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a more interactive page dedicated to addressing empty homes and providing practical assistance to owners 		
(b) A wide range of tools and policy mechanisms			
OBJECTIVE	ACTION	DATE	COMMENTS
Develop Financial Assistance Products especially loans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch a new interest free fixed period loan for private landlords (without a means test) as part of a revised Council financial assistance policy (FAP). This may be given subject to conditions (such as improved management standards or nomination rights from the Council) 	March 2014	

Assist first time buyers to purchase empty homes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate homesteading schemes that can offer empty homes for sale at a discount in return for carrying out improvement works and retaining the homes in owner occupation. Market DCC loans for purchasers to assist with repairs and improvements 	Oct 2013	
Community self-help initiatives		tba	
Local Council Tax arrangements (withdrawal of discounts)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Should there be surplus resources (over and above that required to ensure the LCTSS is cost neutral to the MTFP) then these resources should be ring fenced to empty homes projects. 	tba	
Utilising Enforcement Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In order to prepare for EDMOs the Council needs to identify a suitable managing agent to take over the management of empty homes and secure its occupancy. A scoping study for the use of enforced sale needs to be prepared to allow this type of action to be progressed where appropriate. 	tba	

(c) Take advantage of all funding opportunities

OBJECTIVE	ACTION	DATE	COMMENTS
Accessing funding from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek further funding opportunities from the HCA in conjunction with local housing providers. 	tba	
Utilising DCC funding from the Medium Term Financial Plan and other sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research the possibility of using a limited amount of New Homes Bonus (NHB) to fund additional staffing who can assist in returning empty homes back into use and so enhance the Council's NHB allocation (an 'Invest to Save' model). Incorporate an explicit commitment in Durham's new Local Plan to use s106 monies to bring empty homes back into use as a means of meeting housing need 	tba	
Accessing other public funding opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximise the opportunities for landlords to access the pilot Empty Homes Loans Fund 	tba	

(d) Partnership working

OBJECTIVE	ACTION	DATE	COMMENTS
Working with private owners and public sector landlords in renewal areas (including selective licensing areas) and other areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore leaseback arrangements with private landlords and interested RPs • Identify short life funding opportunities (especially in renewal areas) • 	tba	
Working with specialist RPs and other community based organisations to help deliver affordable housing for specific client groups		tba	
Develop new links between housing solutions and the empty homes service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend advertising of long term empty homes on the Durham Key Options website and develop a set of criteria to determine inclusion on the DKO system 	tba	

(e) Comprehensive market intelligence

OBJECTIVE	ACTION	DATE	COMMENTS
Utilise Council Tax records to record levels and locations of empty homes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a monitoring system using council tax records • Utilise council tax records to write to all landlords of empty homes 	tba	

(f) Promote the empty homes service			
OBJECTIVE	ACTION	DATE	COMMENTS
Promote the service via the DCC website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a marketing strategy for empty homes service on the councils webpages • Make use of all aspects of internet and intranet as well as social media outlets. 	tba	
Identify other marketing opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek other means of publicising the service 	tba	

APPENDIX 1

Durham County Council Renewal Areas

Chilton
 Dean Bank, Ferryhill
 Wheatley Hill
 Esh Winning
 Craghead
 Dawdon
 Easington Colliery