



FACTSHEET 7/2016

Empty Homes

National Policy Context

Empty Homes have been given added importance during the past five years. Homes Fit for the 21st Century: The Scottish Government's Strategy and Action Plan for Housing in the Next Decade: 2011-2020 contained key actions to tackle the issue of empty homes.

In 2010, the Scottish Government set up the Scottish Empty Homes Partnership, in partnership with Shelter Scotland, to assist local authorities to build capacity in their strategic housing role to bring empty private housing back into use.

Legislative Context

There have been legislative changes that have supported the better use of empty properties in Scotland.

- [The Housing \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#) allowed local authorities to use council tax records to identify vacant properties and bringing them back into use. This legislation was enacted in October 2011.
- [The Local Government Finance \(Unoccupied Properties etc\) \(Scotland\) Act 2012](#) was passed in December 2012. This legislation gave local authorities the power to vary the amount of council tax levied against empty properties, and if applicable implement a surcharge of up to 100% as a lever to bring empty homes back into use.

Glasgow City Council made changes to the level of discount given to owners of empty properties through their committee structure in October 2013. The level of discount was reduced to 10% and came into effect on April 2013.



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Scottish Government Initiatives

Empty Homes Loan Fund

The Scottish Government introduced an Empty Homes Loan Fund in 2012. The purpose of the initiative was to support a range of projects to bring empty homes back into use as affordable housing.

The Glasgow Empty Homes Loan Fund Partnership Programme was successful in bidding for £700,000 and two RSLs in Glasgow were successful in securing this loan funding. Glasgow Housing Association received £460,000 which enabled them to bring 19 empty properties back into use. Lochfield Park Housing Association received £240,000 which enabled them to bring 10 properties back into use in the Brucefield Park area.

Town Centre Empty Homes Fund

The Scottish Government introduced the Town Centre Empty Homes Fund in June 2015. The aim of the fund was to convert disused commercial premises into residential properties whilst targeting empty homes that required extensive work to make them habitable.

Four RSLs were successful in bidding for grant and loan funding under this scheme which will result in 37 additional homes being brought back into use.

Table 1 Successful Town Centre Empty Homes Fund Bids

RSL	Number of Units	Grant Funding	Loan Funding
Southside HA	14 units	£420,000	£280,000
GHA	2 units	£37,000	£37,000
Glenoaks HA	2 units	£30,000	£30,000
Shettleston HA	19 units	£475,000	£475,000



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Local Context

Council Tax records indicate that there are 1857 empty properties within Glasgow at March 2016. These properties are those that have been empty for more than six months in March 2016. The number of empty properties has increased slightly, 111, (6%) since 2011, following the changes to the council tax levy implemented in 2013.

Table 2 Empty Homes Identified Through Council Tax Records

Council Tax codes	March 2011	March 2016
Long Term Empty Exemption	1336	1437
Standard 50%	165	37
Deceased	121	299
Requiring Major Works	46	35
Bankruptcy	29	17
Repossessioned	49	32
Total	1746	1857

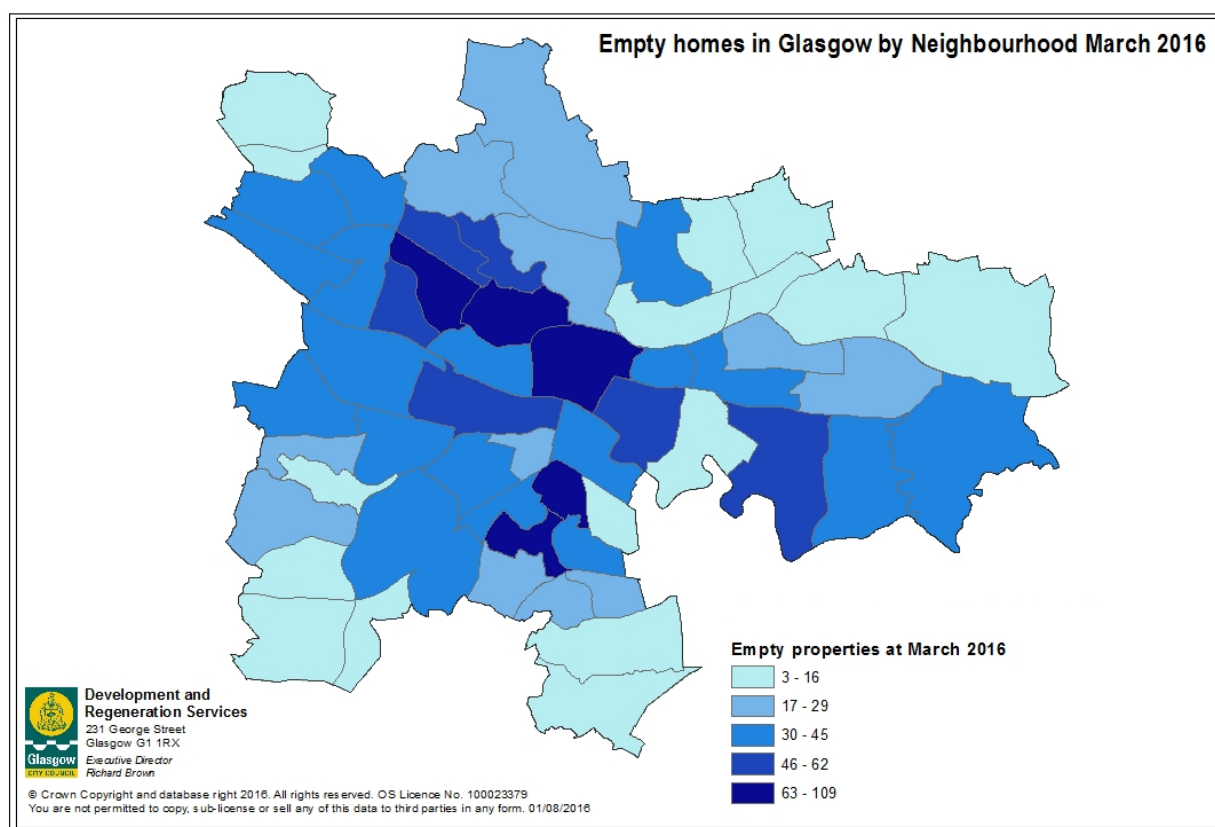
Records also indicate there are 472 properties classed as second homes in Glasgow at March 2016. This shows a decrease of 353 when there were 825 properties classed as a second home at March 2011.



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Neighbourhood Level

In terms of empty homes at neighbourhood level, there is a high concentration of empty properties in Hyndland, Dowanhill and Partick East (109), Langside and Battlefield (93), and Hillhead and Woodlands (80). See Map below.



Glasgow's Empty Homes Partnership

The Glasgow Shared Services Project, a tripartite project between Glasgow City Council, Glasgow Housing Association and Shelter Scotland commenced in mid-2015. An advisory board was developed to oversee the project with a dedicated officer employed from August 2015.



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The initial focus of the Empty Homes Partnership has concentrated on engaging with owners of empty properties within the four priority areas within Glasgow, as designated by Glasgow City Council. These are Ibrox/Cessnock, Haghill, Govanhill, Easterhouse, where there has been problems identified in private sector housing.

The Empty Homes Officer offers range of practical assistance depending on individual circumstances to enable the owner to bring the property back into use. The types of assistance includes:-

- signposting owners to forms of loan assistance,
- energy efficiency measures,
- assisting owners to develop successful strategies to bring their property back into use.
- providing assistance on the responsibilities of owners, if they decide to rent their empty property in the private sector.

As part of Development and Regeneration Services' Acquisition Strategy, Glasgow City Council is working in partnership with locally based housing associations primarily within the designated priority areas, or in other areas where maintenance or common repairs have been identified. It is envisaged that this strategy will assist Glasgow City Council to work in partnership with locally based housing associations to acquire empty properties within these areas and increase the supply of affordable housing. It also will lead to positive outcomes in relation to factoring, property maintenance and the wider regeneration of the area.

A matchmaker scheme was developed within Glasgow in November 2015. The aim of the scheme is to match owners of empty properties in the private sector with potential purchasers to assist in bringing empty properties back into use. The scheme has initially focused on empty properties within the priority areas. One empty property has been brought back into use through the scheme. To further promote the scheme, links have been made with the Mortgage Guarantee Scheme which seeks to promote opportunities for first time buyers.



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Work has also been undertaken by the empty homes officer in partnership with GHA to identify ex Glasgow City Council properties with the aim of bringing these properties back into GHA ownership and increase social housing supply in pressured areas. 23 empty properties have brought back into use this way.

Empty Properties Brought Back Into Use

Since inception of the scheme in August 2015, 171 empty properties have been brought back into use. This accounts for around 24% (697) of the total of empty properties brought back into use this year in Scotland.