

Empty Property Newsletter

Housing Needs & Development

Aug 2011

Herefordshire Council is committed to tackling the challenge of bringing empty properties back into use across the County, in line with the Herefordshire Housing Strategy and Empty Property Strategy.

Research shows that cost and time factors of renovation works are one of the biggest obstacles to bringing empty homes back into use. Herefordshire Council offers advice and assistance to owners to try and save money on renovation costs and options on how to ensure the property is reoccupied as soon as possible, which benefits the owner and helps bring forward more accommodation in the County.

Make the most of the VAT reduction!

If a property has been empty for two years or more, the owner is able to get a reduced rate of **VAT from 20% to 5%** on most of the renovation costs. Herefordshire Council can provide a letter that will enable the owner to claim the reduction in VAT which may enable them to make substantial savings on the costs of bringing the property back into use, either for personal use, selling, letting or business use.

New Kemble Managed Leasing Scheme

Herefordshire Council are pleased to announce the launch of the new Kemble Managed Leasing Scheme. The scheme aims to take the stress out of letting your property and is for properties that are in good lettable condition. The property will be fully managed by Kemble Housing, who will guarantee the rent for the length of the lease, which is 2 years and can be renewed, along with free inventories and no set up charges. Properties will be let to tenants registered with Home Point who are looking for long term accommodation. The management fee will be 12% of the rent plus VAT and rent levels will be in line with Local Housing Allowance. To find out more or to check how much rent you may be able to receive please contact 01432 261905.

Temporary Social Housing (TSH):

The scheme is designed to help the owners of empty properties in need of some refurbishment to bring them up to a habitable standard. Grant assistance can be available for properties that have been empty for more than 6 months and in an area of housing need. In some cases, grants may meet the total costs of renovation.

In exchange for grant assistance the owner is required to lease the property to a Housing Association for a minimum of six years. During the lease the owner would receive a guaranteed monthly rental income from the Housing Association.

Recent success in Herefordshire



Empty Properties in summer – Overgrown gardens

Herefordshire Council receives complaints every summer from neighbours of empty properties where gardens have been left unattended while the house is empty, thereby becoming eyesores, a nuisance to the community and attracting fly-tipping. Some properties are empty for genuine reasons, such as probate, which can take a long time to process before the property is either reoccupied or sold on, and renovation, as the garden is usually the last section to be completed and renovation works can take some time.

It is the owner's responsibility to keep the garden tidy whether the property is occupied or not.

The best solution to avoid garden issues is to make sure properties are not kept empty any longer than possible.



Three reasons to prevent the garden of your empty property becoming a problem:

1. **Think of your neighbours** – The local authority may legally require you to cut back overgrown gardens if they cause a nuisance or affect the amenity of an area.
2. **Consider the value of your property** – Untidy gardens make the area unattractive and put off potential house buyers in the area.
3. **Prevent property from falling into disrepair** – Vegetation can cause damage and blocked drains can lead to damp and rot.

Three ways to prevent the garden of your empty property becoming a problem:

1. **Visit regularly** – Clear little and often before the garden grows out of control.
2. **Prevent crime** – keep hedges and trees cut back to reduce hiding places and make it less attractive to fly tippers and trespassers.
3. **Get your empty property occupied** – An occupied house deters crime and antisocial behaviour and makes the area a better place to live.

How do YOU get involved?

Some empty property owners are reluctant to undertake necessary work to bring the property back into use. There may be many different reasons for this. Herefordshire Council can offer advice and support to empty property owners in identifying the most suitable way of gaining an income from their property.

No matter what the condition of your property, there are various options available to you, from leasing schemes to grant funding.

Herefordshire Council can assist you with any route you choose to take to bring the property back into use.

For advice and assistance on what options may be available to bring an empty property back into use please contact the Housing Development Officer on

01432 261905

or visit the website at
www.herefordshire.gov.uk/housing/empty-properties.

Report an empty property

If you live next door to an empty property, or pass one on your way to work we would like to hear from you. If you know somebody who owns an empty property – perhaps a relative or a friend, or someone who lives abroad – we would like to know about it. You can report this via our website, www.herefordshire.gov.uk/housing/empty-properties/reporting an empty property, or call 01432 261905.

Empty properties brought back into use

Financial Year	No. of properties brought back into use
2010-2011	143
2009-2010	177
2008-2009	153
2007-2008	145