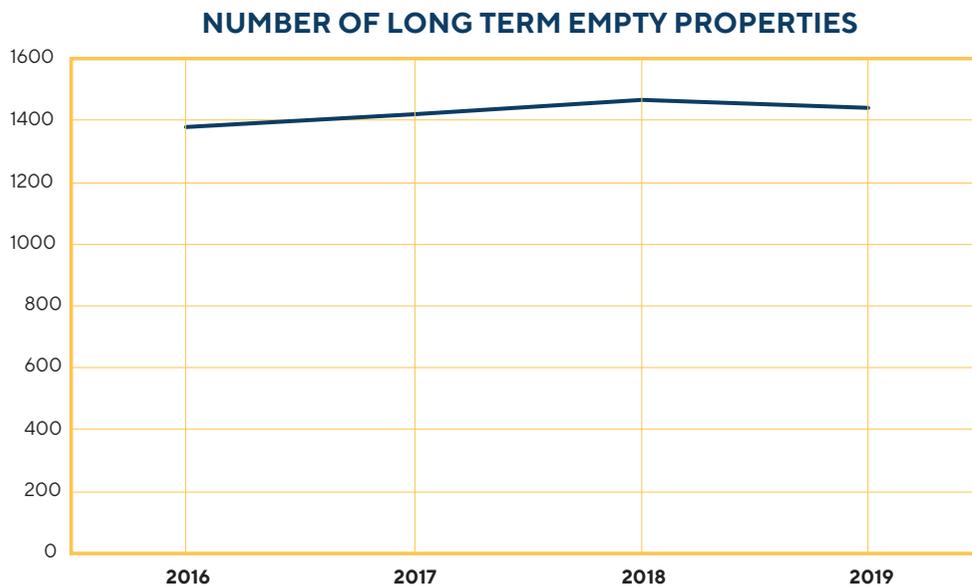


Summary

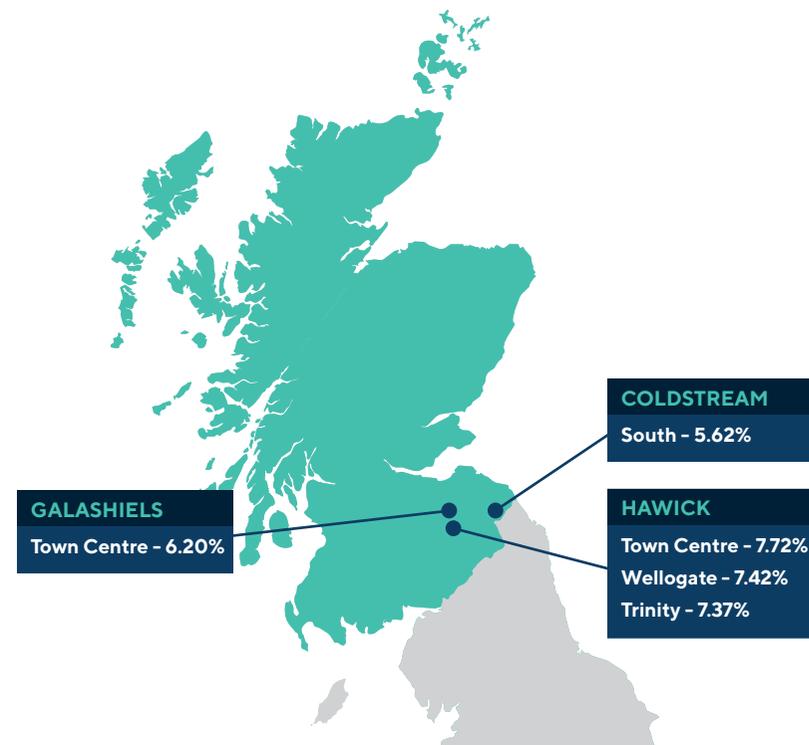
Between 2016 and 2019, SBC has seen its number of long-term empty homes rise by 4.6% from 1,379 to 1,443. (This is taken from a snapshot of data provided to Scottish Government of homes that are recorded as empty for 6 months or more on council tax data).



The data shows us that almost 60% of these have been empty for more than twelve months. This suggests that a significant number of empty homes have been empty for at least 2 years. In reality, in most cases they will probably have been empty for 3 years or longer.

There is a significant drop in the chances of empty properties being returned to use once they have been empty for more than two years. The longer a property has been empty, the harder it becomes to bring it back into use. The condition of the property deteriorates making it less aesthetically appealing and also increasing the amount of time and money required to bring it up to standard for sale, rent or owner occupation.

HIGHEST LEVELS OF LONG TERM EMPTY (LTE) PROPERTIES IN 2019



There are some clusters of data zones in and around town centres where there are high levels of empty homes as a whole although within these there may be significant variations, with some data zones having high occupancy levels. There are also individual data zones with higher levels of empty homes, in some instances coinciding also with larger than average volumes of second homes.



Recommendations

The variety of data zones with high levels of empty homes illustrates the wide range of reasons why homes can become or remain empty, and why a mixture of approaches are needed to make significant and lasting inroads into reducing the total number of empty homes across the LA area.

The table below sets out broad options on how to structure empty homes work into three broad strands that recognise the different approaches needed to bring homes back to use and the wider contribution empty homes work can make to overall strategic delivery.



There is no one size fits all solution, and tailored interventions are needed based on knowledge of specific localities and surrounding areas. This demonstrates the need for a dedicated empty homes service that can work on a case by case level, while also taking a strategic overview of the local authority as a whole, to identify where larger scale interventions may be needed to reverse the trend of declining levels of vacancy.

	DEDICATED EMPTY HOMES SERVICE	EMPTY HOMES STRATEGY	PARTNERSHIP WORKING
Aim	Work proactively with owners of long term empties to bring them back into use.	Improve areas by addressing issues that may have led to, or been caused by, increasing numbers of long term empty homes..	Develop effective partnerships with key stakeholders to address long term empty homes.
Recommended actions	<p>Work with owners of long term empty homes to identify, and work to overcome, barriers to bringing homes back into use.</p> <p>Identify properties that are long term empty and draw up action plans to return them to use where owners cannot be traced or aren't engaging.</p> <p>Make better use of the powers and legislation to engage with owners of long term empty properties and encourage them to bring them back into use.</p>	<p>Develop a matrix to be used to assess the priority for bringing empty properties back into use and draw up a marking scheme for priority scoring.</p> <p>Consider how empty homes work fits into town centre action plans.</p> <p>Identify priority areas to be targeted for action as a result of using priority scoring matrix.</p> <p>Identify areas of highest housing need that correlate with areas that have empty homes and consider options to bring in as affordable housing.</p> <p>Using the matrix to identify those empty properties that can be brought back into use quickly and with limited investment.</p>	<p>Work with Registered Providers to identify opportunities to jointly bring empty homes back into use.</p> <p>Work with colleagues across the Council to identify empty properties and agree the most appropriate action to bring them back into use.</p> <p>Explore opportunities to use the renovation of empty homes to boost the local economy.</p>