

Why Empty Homes Matter

How bringing empty homes back to use can contribute to delivering the vision and principles in Housing to 2040.



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Empty homes have an important role to play in helping to deliver the right homes, in the right places for people in Scotland. The Scottish Government has published Housing to 2040. It sets out an ambitious vision of what housing should look like by 2040 and a plan of how to achieve this vision.

Bringing empty homes back into use will help deliver on all four parts of this plan;

More homes at the heart of great places

Bringing empty homes back to use can help to meet the demand for affordable homes in our most densely populated towns and cities.

It can also help to revive and revitalise town centres, villages and rural communities that have seen population decline, helping to once more make them great places that people are proud to call home.

Affordability and choice

By bringing empty homes back to use, alongside delivering on the ambitious government commitment to provide an additional 110,000 affordable homes over the next ten years, of which 70% must be social homes, local authorities can make full use of the housing resources at their disposal. This will ensure that there is the widest possible range of types and tenures of homes available to all, irrespective of which part of the country or council they live in.

Affordable warmth and zero emissions homes

Bringing empty homes back in to use can help to drive down the carbon emissions caused by housing and housing construction. Where the home is retrofitted to improve energy performance, it can also help to drive down the cost of heating and reduce the operational carbon emitted.

Improving the quality of all homes

Every empty home has been a home for someone in the past, and could potentially be a home for someone again in the future. By working to support renovation of suitable empty homes and returning these homes back to use, local authorities can help to breathe new life into old homes, improving the quality of housing stock and improving the quality of life in the communities with empty stock.

Our Why Empty Homes Matter information pack focuses on how empty homes work can contribute to meeting the vision and principles that underpin each part of the Housing to 2040 Route Map.



Case studies -

More homes at the heart of great places

North Lanarkshire Buyback and Open Market Purchase Scheme

North Lanarkshire Council, open market purchase scheme provides new homes and futures for families and individuals across the authority area.

The scheme enables the purchase of properties that are for sale on the open market and are generally former council houses which were purchased under right to buy. The council receives a grant funding contribution from the Scottish Government towards the cost of each purchase.

The properties boost their current housing stock, represent good value for money and most importantly, make a real difference for people within our communities.



Buy-back schemes

The Pairc Trust

The Pairc Trust was established in 2003. The Trust has a long term vision to reverse a century of population decline in South Lochs.

One of the first buildings the Trust returned to use was The Care Unit in Gravir. The building, which had been empty for 8 years, was damp and derelict, a dark and unwelcoming sight on a dated housing scheme. The Trust completely stripped back the property so that only the gable walls and foundations remained. They changed it from one building into two separate houses, insulated to the highest standards and with solar thermal panels on the roof and an air source heat pump.

The completed houses stand out as being modern and new and are a visible demonstration of how a Community Trust can improve an area and build a community led, positive future.

Case studies -

Affordability and choice

YMCA Glenrothes

YMCA Glenrothes has actively responded to the issue of homelessness in Fife through its 'Empty Homes' renovation programme. Working closely with the local council EHO, YMCA Glenrothes refurbishes empty properties and transform them into longer term tenancies for Fife people who have experienced homelessness. The properties are renovated to the Scottish Housing Quality standard and designed to be as energy efficient as possible. The homes are managed by the charity and support is also provided to tenants.

As well as housing, "Empty Homes" has provided additional benefits for the local community. Work experience was enabled pre-Covid for 29 Fife College construction students who completed their Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQ).

Latch (Leeds Action to Create Homes)

Latch purchase empty and rundown houses and refurbish them to create energy efficient supported housing for people who are homeless or in housing need and are ready to make positive changes in their lives.

Tenants have their own Latch support worker, who helps them to move in to their new home and continue to support them as they adjust gradually to independent living.

The properties Latch purchase will often be in areas that have become run-down. By buying them and returning them to housing stock they help to regenerate these neighbourhoods reducing the risks of anti-social behaviour and improving the lives of people already living there.



Empty houses to lived-in homes

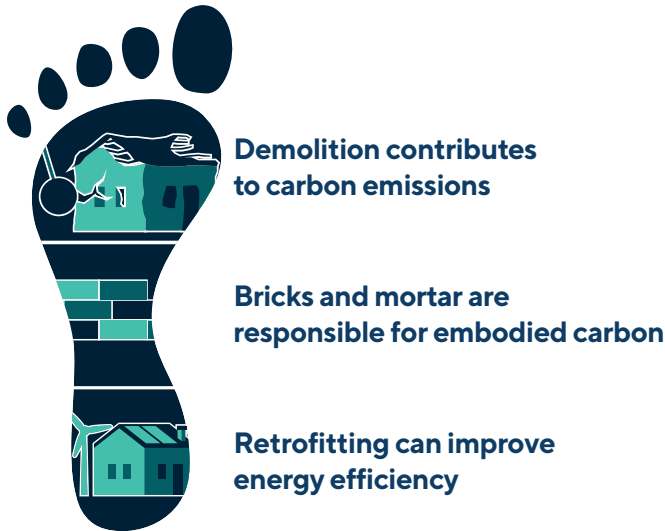
Case studies - Affordable warmth and zero emissions homes

Woodside Flats

Woodside Flats are three 18-storey tower blocks in Glasgow that were originally built in the 1960s and signposted an important gateway into the city.

Over time, their external appearance deteriorated, and the blocks were earmarked for demolition. However, residents wanted the buildings improved and not demolished.

Queens Cross Housing Association committed to retrofitting the three towers. The overall cost for was £13.3 million - an average of around £43,000 per flat. Project architect Rupert Daly said 'By retrofitting rather than demolishing, the whole life carbon footprint of these buildings is likely to be closer to net zero than most new builds.'



Empty homes matter

What neighbours say about living next door to an empty home

'I can't take much more. I don't have the means to go to lawyers and pay large legal bills chasing a person who runs from his responsibilities. I have lived in my house and brought up 3 girls here and I used to love it. I hate living here but I have no choice. I am trapped and a prisoner I couldn't sell my house even if I put it on at half the value.'

Case studies - Improving the quality of all homes

Buy Back in Irvine

A 1960 four bedroom two storey end-terraced villa had been empty for ten years. The property had attracted a range of anti-social behaviour and there were ongoing complaints from neighbours, the local tenants and residents association, as well as reports in the local press.

Facing the prospect of a potential Compulsory Purchase Order, the owner finally agreed to sell the property back to the Council at a price which reflected its current value.

Once brought back up to standard the property will provide safe, attractive family accommodation as well as improve the visual appeal of the area. It will also be a huge benefit to the local community who have been suffering as a result of living next to it for a decade.



'My mental health is seriously affected now. It's a lovely day today and I am on a day off and I used to sit in my back garden. But when your outlook is hedges, weed and grass some of it roof height. It's approaching all my windows. He has weeds growing inside his house.'

Our **Why Empty Homes Matter information pack** gives more information on these case studies and further examples of how empty homes work can contribute to meeting the vision and principles that underpin each part of the Housing to 2040 Route Map.

www.emptyhomespartnership.scot