

Frequently Asked Questions

What is this site for?

This site is to help make it as easy as possible for you to get empty homes in your area put back into use. It makes councils accountable for responding and dealing with the empty homes you report.

How do I use the site?

Enter a postcode or address in the box on the homepage and you are presented with a map of that area. Click where the empty property is, fill in the details, upload a photo if you have one and press submit. That's it.

Is it free?

Yes. The costs of developing and running this site are shared between the Empty Homes Agency, Shelter Cymru and Shelter Scotland through the generosity of their funders. We are all registered charities, so if you believe in their aims and would like to make a contribution, please do: [Empty Homes](#), [Shelter Cymru](#), [Shelter Scotland](#).

Do you remove silly or illegal content?

We reserve the right to remove any reports or updates which we consider to be inappropriate.

How do councils bring empty properties back into use?

All councils in England and Wales have powers to bring empty homes back into use. Many are very good at it, some are not. Most councils seek to persuade and help the owner to bring their property back into use; they only use legal powers such as Empty Dwelling Management Orders when help and persuasion have failed.

Most empty homes are brought back into use eventually by their owner. But in many cases this takes years. Empty homes often decline fast – they become overrun with weeds and attacked by the weather. They are often used by squatters, fly tippers, vandals and are sometimes subject to arson. The whole neighbourhood suffers waiting for the owner to deal with their property.

Councils help and persuade owners to bring their properties into use faster. Even so the process can be slow, especially if the property is in very poor repair or the owner is unwilling to do anything. In most cases it takes six months before you can expect to see anything change, occasionally longer. This doesn't mean the council isn't doing anything, which is why we encourage councils to update you to let you know what is happening.

We will contact you twice (a month and six months after you report the empty home) so you can tell us what has happened. If the council doesn't do anything, or you think their response is inadequate we will advise you what you can do next.

If the empty home is owned by the government or one its agencies, councils are often powerless to help. However you might be able to take action directly yourself using the [Community Right to Reclaim Land](#)

Will reporting an empty home make any difference?

Yes. Councils can make a real difference, but they have lots of things to do. Many councils only deal with empty homes that are reported to them. If people do not report empty homes, councils may well conclude that other areas of work are more important.

There are over 840,000 empty homes in the UK. The Empty Homes Agency estimates that over half of these are unnecessarily empty. The effect of this is to significantly reduce the available housing stock fuelling the UK's housing crisis. A by-product of this waste is that far greater pressure is put on building land as more homes are built to meet the shortfall. The Empty Homes Agency estimate that bringing just a quarter of the UK's empty homes into use would provide homes for 700,000 people, save 160 square kilometres of land and save 10 million tonnes of CO₂ over building the same number of new homes.

Privacy Questions

Who gets to see my email address?

If you submit an empty property, your details are provided to us and to the council. We will never give or sell your email address to anyone else, unless we are obliged to by law.

Will you send nasty, brutish spam to my email address?

Never. We will email you if someone leaves an update on a report you've made, and send you questionnaire emails four weeks and six months after you submit a problem, asking for a status update; we'll only ever send you emails in relation to your report.

Organisation Questions

Who built this site?

This site was built by [mySociety](#). mySociety is the project of a registered charity which has grown out of the community of volunteers who built sites like [TheyWorkForYou](#). mySociety's primary mission is to build Internet projects which give people simple, tangible benefits in the civic and community aspects of their lives. Their first project was [WriteToThem](#), where you can write to any of your elected representatives, for free. [Donate to mySociety](#)

Where's the "source code" to this site?

The software behind this site is open source, and available to you mainly under the GNU Affero GPL software license. You can [download the source code](#) and help us develop it. You're welcome to use it in your own

projects, although you must also make available the source code to any such projects.

People build things, not organisations. Who *actually* built it?

This adaptation of [FixMyStreet](#) was written by Matthew Somerville. Thanks go to [Ordnance Survey](#) (for the maps, UK postcodes, and UK addresses – data © Crown copyright, all rights reserved, Ministry of Justice 100037819 2008), Yahoo! for their BSD-licensed JavaScript libraries, the entire free software community (this particular project was brought to you by Perl, PostgreSQL, and the number 161.290) and [Bytemark](#) (who kindly host all our servers). Let us know if we've missed anyone.

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