

Empty Homes Advice

How to re-use your empty home



An empty home costs you money

You still need to pay Council Tax on your empty property, add to that insurance and maintenance costs and it can cost more than you think.

Benefits of bringing an empty home back into use

There are many financial benefits from bringing an empty home back into use and these can include:

- A regular rental income if rented
- A capital sum if you sell

But there are also many other benefits;

- It could provide a home for someone in need
- Re-using empty homes makes use of a wasted asset

What can I do with my empty home?

You could sell or rent your property.

Renting

You might need to repair your property first to bring it up to standard.



You could rent your property privately or use a letting agent to rent out the property for you – their fees and services will vary.

To help choose a suitable agent, you could contact the National Approved Letting Scheme (NALS) who promote quality standards for letting agents (www.nalscheme.co.uk or call **01242 581712**).

You could also contact the Association of Residential Landlords (ARLA), who self-regulate letting agents and provide information and guidance for landlords and tenants (www.arla.co.uk or call **0845 345 5752**).

Or for help finding tenants to rent your property, contact our Housing Advice Team on **01539 797526**. They try and help people who urgently require a home.

If this is the first time you have been a landlord, you may find information on the following websites helpful:

National Landlords Association
www.landlords.org.uk

North West Landlords Association Ltd
www.nwla.co.uk

Residential Landlords Association
www.rla.org.uk

British Property Federation
www.bpf.org.uk

Selling

These are some of the ways you could sell your empty home -

- You could sell on the open market or use an estate agent.
- You could sell at public auction – this is quick but you need to price your property realistically.
- You could sell to a builder/developer.
- Or, you could join the council's FREE Matchmaker Scheme or use this scheme alongside an estate agent.



The Matchmaker Scheme

The scheme works by 'matching' empty property for sale with buyers. Put simply the council promotes empty homes available across the district in the hope of helping buyers get a foot on the property ladder.

Homes are advertised on the council's website

www.southlakeland.gov.uk

Housing pages and on display in council offices. Interested buyers (particularly those looking for an empty property) can sign up to the scheme and will be contacted when an empty property, matching their requirements, becomes part of the scheme.

The Empty Homes Officer will pass on the potential buyers contact information to the empty home owner to follow up.

You can still join the Matchmaker Scheme if you are already with an estate agent, as the council is a 'matchmaker' and not a part of the sales process.

For more information visit **www.southlakeland.gov.uk/services/housing/empty-homes/matchmaker-scheme.aspx**

Or contact the Empty Homes Officer on **01539 717219** or email **Empty.Homes@southlakeland.gov.uk**

Other Useful Information – Ways to help you save money

Reduced-rate of VAT

If your property has been empty and unoccupied for over two (consecutive) years, your builder may be able to charge you a lower rate of VAT on the building materials (5% at the time of writing).



The Empty Homes Officer can check dates with our Council Tax department and write a letter to you to confirm how long the property has been unoccupied. This could help you make substantial savings. Please check current VAT reduced rate details at www.hmrc.gov.uk or contact HMRC on **0845 010 9000**.

If you would like a copy of this document in another format such as large print, Braille, audio or in a different language, please call **0845 050 4434** or email **customer.services@southlakeland.gov.uk**



Save Money on Renovations

The council can also help you save money on renovating your home. If you let the Empty Homes Officer know you intend to renovate your empty home you will then receive a letter with a list of local suppliers who are offering discounts (or other deals) to empty home owners who are carrying out renovations.

This could help you save money as well as help to support local businesses. You might also want to contact the following trade bodies:

Federation of Master Builders
Tel: **020 7242 7583**
www.fmb.org.uk

National Federation of Builders
Tel: **0845 057 8160**
www.builders.org.uk

CORGI Consumers (gas)
Tel: **0870 401 2300**
www.trustcorgi.com

NICEIC Electrical Contractors
Tel: **0870 013 0382**
www.niceic.org.uk

For further information please contact:

Empty Homes Officer, South Lakeland District Council,
South Lakeland House, Lowther Street, Kendal, Cumbria LA9 4DL

Tel: 01539 717219

Email: Empty.Homes@southlakeland.gov.uk

Website: www.southlakeland.gov.uk