



Consultation on the

Draft Moray Empty Homes Strategy 2015 – 2018

Long term empty properties can cause problems, both for the owner and wider community. Empty homes can attract criminal activity and anti-social behaviour. If empty homes are neglected, they can cause physical damage to adjacent properties, can reduce the marketability of properties in the vicinity, and can deter investors and hamper economic development.

Moray has a severe shortage of housing. We would like to help owners to bring their empty properties back into use. We have prepared a draft Empty Homes Strategy, which sets out what we might do to achieve this. The Strategy recognises that some owners may require some advice, assistance, and in some circumstances, financial support to bring their property back into use.

We would like to know what you think about our plans.

Q1 Action: Maintain a database of empty homes

The Council will use Council Tax records to begin to establish a database (list) of empty homes. We will add to this database over time. We need a complete list of empty homes so that we can assess the effectiveness of the Strategy.

Do you agree with this action?

| Strongly agree | Agree | Neither/nor | Disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|----------------|-------|-------------|----------|-------------------|------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |

Please tell us what you think about this action:

What else could we do?

Q2 Action: provide support, advice and assistance to owners of long term empty homes, with the aim of bringing empty homes back into occupation

Our Strategy is based on the principle that the primary responsibility for maintaining private sector properties lies with the owner, and that this responsibility should be met with less reliance on grant subsidy to assist with the cost of house repairs and improvements. We propose to provide accurate, tailored, advice and assistance to owners, and to publish a suite of leaflets offering advice.

Do you think this will help owners to bring their empty homes back into use?

| Strongly agree | Agree | Neither/nor | Disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|--|-------|-------------|----------|-------------------|------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Please tell us what you think about this action: | | | | | |
| What else could we do? | | | | | |

Q3 Action: to research and develop options for provision of financial assistance to owners of empty homes

We have an agreement in principle with the Scottish Government for access to £150K funding from its Empty Homes Fund. This will provide interest free loans of up to £15K per empty property to bring properties back into rent or back into ownership. We propose to develop qualification criteria for Moray during the consultation period of this Strategy.

Do you think this will help owners to bring their empty homes back into use?

| Strongly agree | Agree | Neither/nor | Disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|--|-------|-------------|----------|-------------------|------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Please tell us what you think about this action: | | | | | |
| What else could we do? | | | | | |

Q4 Action: to prioritise activity to maximise effective use of available resources

Many of Moray's empty homes are in very rural locations. We propose to focus our effort and resources on empty homes in areas where there is the most housing demand. Key factors could be:

- The property is in an area where there is a shortage of housing¹. This could be defined by the settlement boundaries in the Local Development Plan².
- The property forms part of wider regeneration activity.
- The property is detrimental to adjoining households.
- The property is dangerous
- The property is attracting criminal activity or anti-social behaviour
- The property is detrimental to the amenity of the area/community.

Do you think this is the right way to prioritise use of our resources?

| Strongly agree | Agree | Neither/nor | Disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|--|-------|-------------|----------|-------------------|------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Please tell us what you think about this action: | | | | | |
| What else could we do? | | | | | |

¹ As evidenced in Moray's Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA); available at http://www.moray.gov.uk/moray_standard/page_1917.html

² Moray Development Plan is available at http://www.moray.gov.uk/moray_standard/page_51210.html

Q5 Action: to contribute to the objectives of the Moray Economic Strategy and “Elgin-City for the future”

The Moray Economic Strategy’s Town Centre Regeneration Scheme aims to “improve retail frontages and upgrade the look of high streets”. This includes long term empty homes, mainly flats, often above shops, where it is likely that repair and upgrading works are required. It is likely that town centre regeneration would involve many different agencies and departments, not just housing.

Do you think this is the right way to prioritise use of our resources?

| Strongly agree | Agree | Neither/nor | Disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|--|-------|-------------|----------|-------------------|------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Please tell us what you think about this action: | | | | | |
| What else could we do? | | | | | |

Finally, about you.....

Q6 Your answers are confidential, and your name will not be associated with your response. However, it would help us to analyse our survey if you would tell us a little about yourself.

| | | |
|------------|--|--|
| Your town: | | |
|------------|--|--|

| | | Please tick <input type="checkbox"/> |
|----------|---|--------------------------------------|
| Are you: | an owner of an empty home | |
| | an owner occupier | |
| | a private renter | |
| | a Council or Housing Association tenant | |
| | other | |

Thank you for helping us with this

The results of this consultation will be considered by Communities Committee on 3 February 2015.

Please return this questionnaire to any Council Access Point **by 19 December 2014**.

All information you provide is strictly confidential and will be held in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.