

ACTION ON VACANT PROPERTIES

**EMPTY HOMES SERVICE
UPDATE**



Ministerial Foreword

In my Action on Vacant Homes plan last year, I pledged to get to the bottom of why there are so many homes lying empty in Jersey, in the recognition that there is no simple “quick fix” answer or solution to this problem.

I believe we have a moral duty to ensure as many homes as possible are available for Islanders to live in. We must not forget that we are a small Island, and we simply can’t afford to not make best use of the homes we already have.

What continues to concern me, is the level of complacency we have seen over the decades, which has allowed this problem to grow whilst perfectly good homes have been left to rot; losing our heritage and causing harm to the quality of our built environment.

I established the Empty Homes Service earlier this year to understand the true scale of complexity that underpins the empty homes issue. There are clearly many personal and sensitive issues behind why many of these homes are left empty, but there are also cases where there are not; where homes seem to be simply abandoned or forgotten about, and owners who can’t or won’t be found.

As work progresses, it’s becoming clearer to me that our current legal frameworks and guidance aren’t up to the standard needed to avoid these situations arising. This isn’t about fundamentally changing individual property rights in Jersey, but instead making sure we have proportionate and fair mechanisms in place to more effectively deal with the issue.

I have real concern for our inability to know whether the owner of an empty home – or any other home for that matter – is resident in Jersey. This is an issue that has been raised many times before, and one that I want to raise again. I am also interested in the operation of our Wills and Succession Law, the registration of wills and relationship to stamp duty and the process of establishing distant heirs when a property is left intestate.

Other issues of interest to me include what I believe to be an inherent unfairness in the Parish Rates system, where the structure of how rates are valued essentially means many run-down and neglected properties will be paying the lowest rates, whilst those Islanders who care for and invest in their property are making up the difference. As I highlighted in my initial action plan, I don’t think taxing empty homes will help bring them back into use – especially in the absence of an Island-wide revaluation of Parish Rates – but I am clear that I want to continue the conversation on what I believe to be an issue of fairness and consistency, and one which extends well beyond the issue of empty homes.

I’m really pleased with what has been a strong and encouraging response to the Empty Homes Service, demonstrating the importance of this issue to Islanders. Empty homes are a wasted resource that is hard to accept when we so desperately need more homes for

Islanders to live in. I will be continuing this work and bringing forward proposals over the course of my term, to start unpicking this issue once and for all.



Minister for Housing and Communities
Deputy David Warr

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1. Introduction

The Minister for Housing and Communities launched the Empty Homes Service in January 2023, following the publication of his [Action on Vacant Properties Plan](#) which set out a series of actions and future policy options to support long-term vacant homes being brought back into use.

The Empty Homes Service has two main functions, which focus on:

1. Providing guidance to owners of empty homes, where they might be unsure on how to go about bringing a property back into use, or where they might be facing specific difficulties that the service can either help them overcome or can take into account when developing future policies.
2. Working with the community to identify where long-term empty properties exist, why they might be empty, and what can be done to return them to use as quickly as possible.

Islanders are able to log the location of empty homes using the online webform at www.gov.je/emptyhomes, by emailing emptyhomes@gov.je or, by calling the service on 01534 441614.

The Action on Vacant Properties plan highlighted that the Minister for Housing and Communities will seek to publish an update after the first six months of the Empty Homes Service being established, and that this update will include a forward plan for pursuing the additional options that remain under consideration, should it become clearer that they will be able to play a positive role in Jersey's housing market. **This report, therefore, provides an update on the work of the Empty Homes Service in its first six months and summarises the Minister's intended path towards further action.**

2. Objectives for managing vacant homes

The Action on Vacant Properties plan identified the Minister for Housing and Communities' objectives for pursuing action on vacant homes, emphasising the importance of establishing a pathway to address the issue in a tangible way, and being prepared to take action where it is needed.

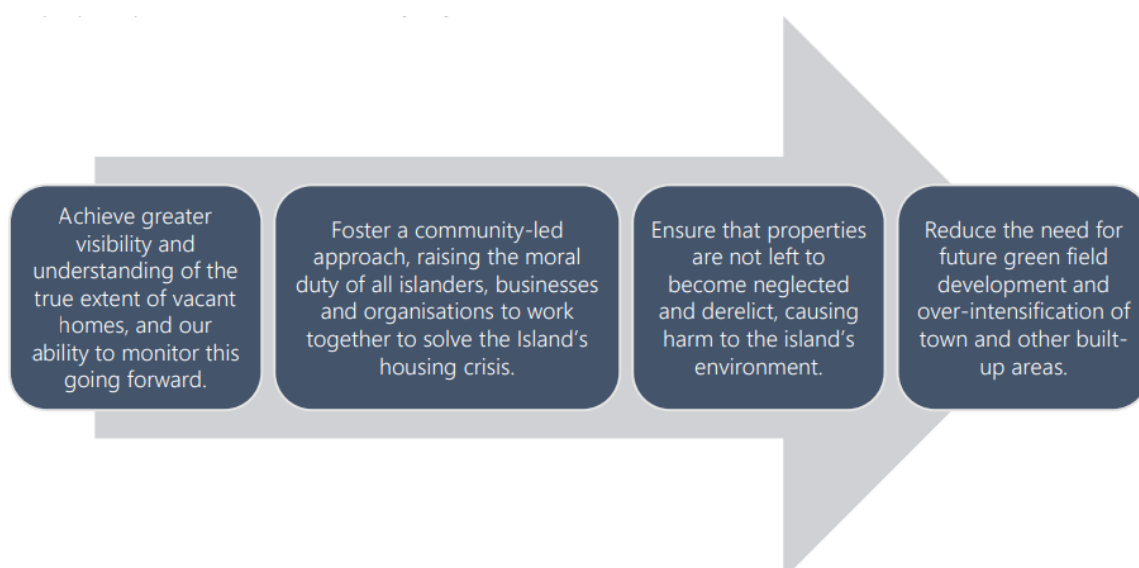


Figure 1: Action on Vacant Properties Plan - objectives for managing vacant homes in Jersey

In trying to achieve these objectives, the plan also highlighted the importance of ensuring:

- Solutions are pragmatic and deliverable, remaining focused on bringing properties back into use.
- Recognition of the need for a balance between immediate and imperfect solutions, and longer-term, systemic solutions.
- Great care is taken to avoid policies that will lead to unintended consequences, such as increasing costs to those who are already having financial difficulties in bringing homes back into active use.
- We do not adopt a blanket approach that will unfairly impact upon owners of vacant properties where there are justifiable reasons for the property being and remaining vacant for a period of time.

The work of the Empty Homes Service is, therefore, being undertaken in light of these objectives and considerations.

3. Activities of the Empty Homes Service in its first six months

The launch of the Empty Homes Service earlier this year saw a strong public response leading to 260 cases being brought to the attention of the service in its first six months. This represents 29% of the 900 homes that the Action on Vacant Properties plan estimated to be truly vacant in Jersey.

The main route for properties to be reported to the service has been via the online web reporting system available at www.gov.je/emptyhomes, where Islanders are able to notify the service of the location of a property using GIS-based mapping software, whilst providing some high-level information about the property, where this may be known.

The focus in the first six months of the service has been twofold: firstly to create a comprehensive database listing all reported empty homes and to then subsequently undertake high-level case reviews of each property.

The database includes details such as the unique property reference number (UPRN), full address, property type, ownership details, external photographs taken from public vantage points, any heritage value of the property, and observations on its condition.

The high-level case reviews have been carried out in order to understand:

1. The location and condition of the property.
2. The last known owner(s) of the property, using the information held in the Public Registry.
3. The listing of the property and ownership (up to 2016) on the published Parish Rates lists, which are available to review in the Jersey Library.
4. The planning history and heritage status of the property.
5. Any other remarkable details that may be of interest relative to a property's status.

To date, almost half of all properties reported to the service so far (100/260) have been subject to a high-level case review, with the aim of completing a review for each property reported to the service, within the first year of the service being active.

These initial case reviews are essential to help understand what may have led to each home becoming empty, and therefore what type of action or support might be best deployed to bring the property back into use.

Other activities have included working with the Empty Homes Network¹, to develop data management and evaluation tools, and to ensure best practice by the Empty Homes Service in Jersey. For example, the Empty Homes Network described the gov.je/emptyhomes webpage as an “exceptional example” of its type, whilst also recognising the opportunity to improve its visibility and content in the future.

4. Location and characteristics of homes reported to the service

The Empty Homes Service has received reports of empty properties from across the Island, which are centrally recorded using GIS software:

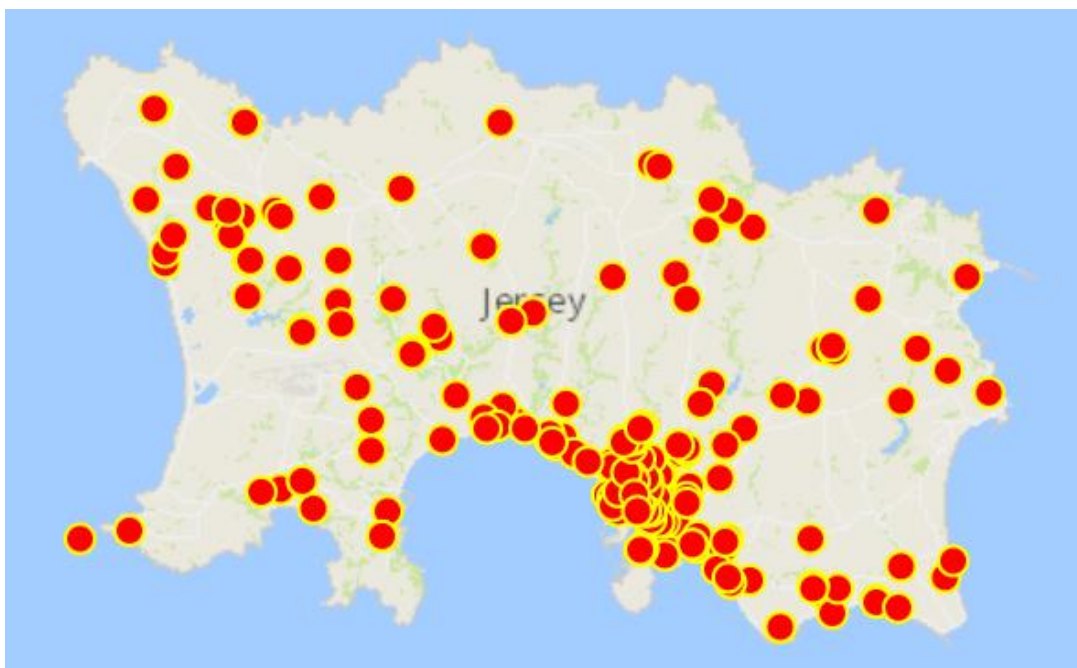


Figure 2: Location of all properties reported to the Empty Homes Service to date.

It is evident that there are some emergent ‘hot spots’ of homes reported to the Empty Homes Service in the North and West of St Helier, together with clusters of properties in St Peter and along the south coast of the Island.

The below graphs show both the number of enquiries received by the service as they came in over the first six months and the number of enquiries per parish. Most enquiries were received in the first six weeks of the service being advertised, and the majority related to properties in St Helier and St Peter.

¹ The Empty Homes Network is a UK organisation established to support people involved in delivering empty property strategies.

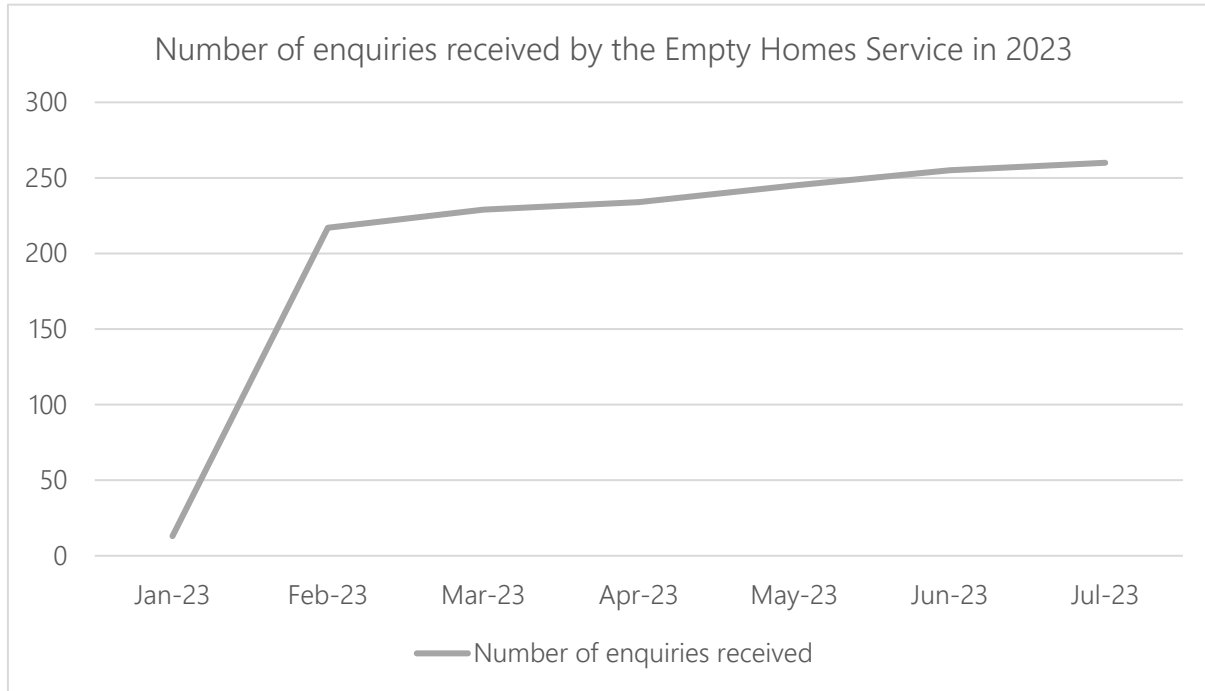


Figure 3: Number of enquiries received by the Empty Homes Service in 2023

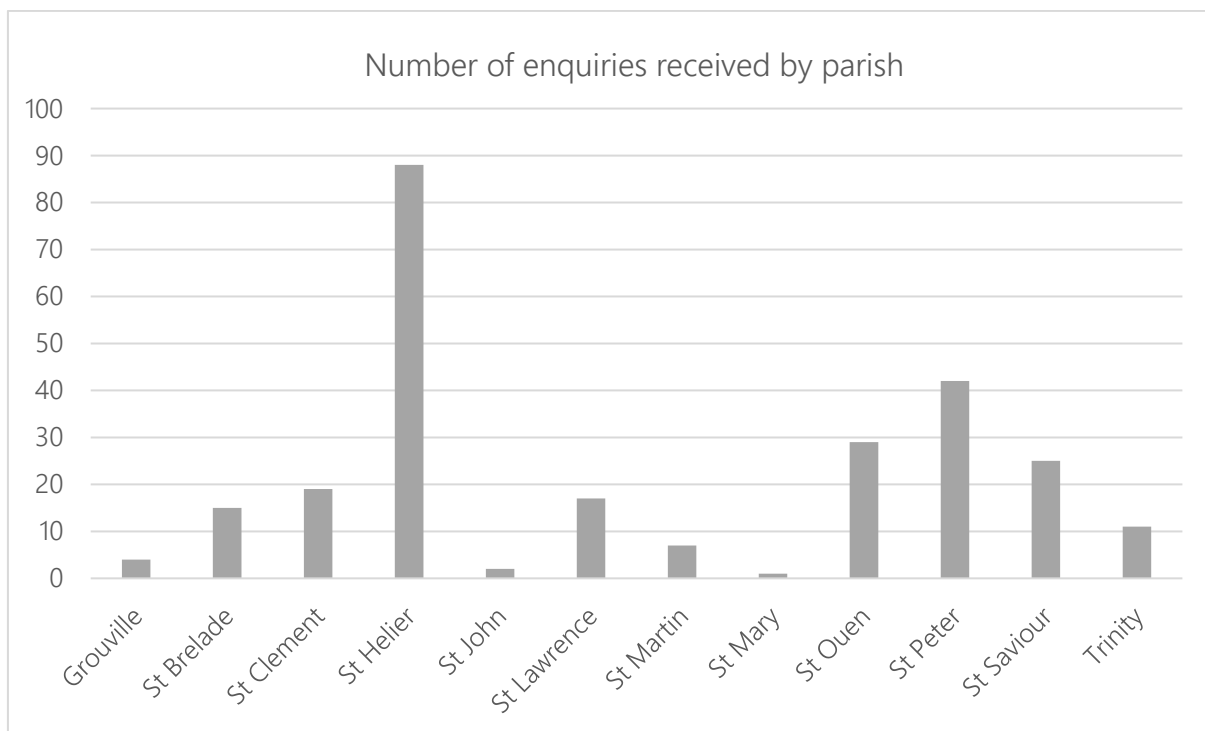


Figure 4: Number of enquiries received by parish

Relative to the findings of the 2021 Census, the proportionality of empty homes reported to the service is broadly consistent with the location of properties that were identified as being empty on Census Day, although St Ouen and St Peter both show notably higher rates of reporting.

Parish	Original % of total vacant homes on Census Day	Number of homes reported to Empty Homes Service to-date	% of homes reported to Empty Homes Service, and % difference from Census
Grouville	5	4	1.5 (-3.5%)
St Brelade	10	15	5.8 (-4.2%)
St Clement	9	19	7.3 (-1.7%)
St Helier	39	88	33.8 (-5.2%)
St John	3	2	0.8 (-2.2%)
St Lawrence	5	17	6.5 (+1.5%)
St Martin	4	7	2.7 (-1.3%)
St Mary	2	1	0.4 (-1.6%)
St Ouen	4	29	11.2 (+7.2%)
St Peter	5	42	16.2 (+11.2%)
St Saviour	12	25	9.6 (-2.4%)
Trinity	3	11	4.2 (+1.2%)
ALL	100	260	100

Table 1: Comparison of Census data to data received by the Empty Homes Service by parish

It is worth clarifying that the 100 case reviews included three property locations (cases) that included multiple properties. This means that from the 100 case reviews, there are 132 property units involved. Current analyses show that from the 100 case reviews (132 units) currently having been undertaken, 38 homes have been identified as having been brought back into use, being actively marketed, or are currently being refurbished with a view to being brought back to the market. This equates to 29% of the properties reviewed to date. The related statistics per parish can be seen in the graph below:

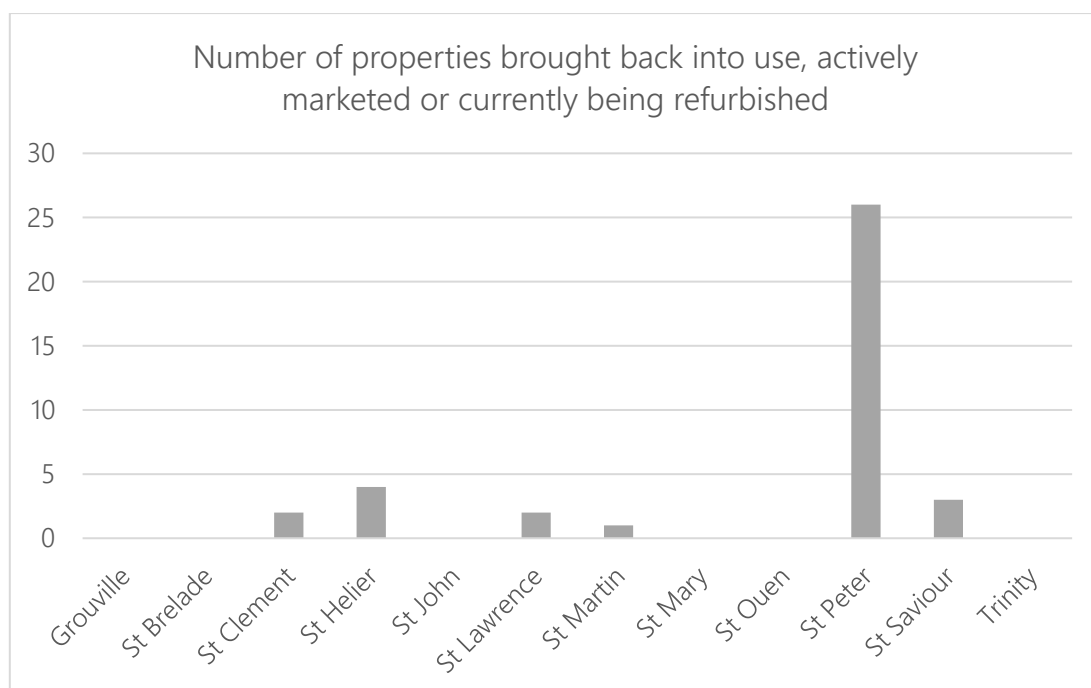


Figure 5: Number of properties recorded as brought back into use, actively marketed or currently being refurbished

5. Heritage at risk

Of the 100 case reviews completed to date, over a third (38) have been identified as having a listed heritage status. The Minister for the Environment provided the Empty Homes Service with a list of properties that were recorded as heritage potentially at risk when the Historic Environment Review was undertaken between 2011-2016. As a result of the work undertaken by the service so far, the Minister for Housing and Communities has been able to notify the Minister for the Environment of an additional 25 properties that were not previously identified as heritage at risk. As case reviews continue, it is expected that this number will increase.

As part of the case-review process, planning histories have been reviewed which helps to determine whether or not there is an active intention – or at least an attempt – to undertake work to a property that may support it being brought back into use.

Of the listed heritage properties reviewed to date 17/38 have been found to have no recent planning history, indicating no active interest or attempt to undertake works to these properties, that may otherwise support them coming back into use.

Of the 21/38 properties reviewed that *do* have recent planning history, 15 have received planning permission, two have been refused permission, two are pending permission and two applications have been withdrawn. On this basis, it is reasonable to suggest that there is no evidence to indicate that difficulties in obtaining planning permission is a principal cause for these 38 properties to remain vacant.

The Minister for the Environment will consider what, if any, action should be taken in relation to properties that are deemed to be heritage at risk, having regard to factors such as the condition of the property and the nature and value of heritage features that may be lost as a result of the property not being occupied or maintained.

6. Land condition reports

In addition to the 38 properties identified as heritage at risk, case reviews have also considered the general condition of properties and land, and whether or not the condition of the property may be causing serious harm to the character and quality of the environment, or, presenting health and safety risks.

The Action on Vacant Properties plan identified that powers exist under the Planning and Building (Jersey) Law (2002) to take action in relation to land condition, and the Minister for Housing and Communities committed to pursue such properties and make referrals to the Minister for the Environment, as per Action 3 of the Action on Vacant Properties plan.

Of the 100 case reviews undertaken to date, 36 properties are considered to be in such a condition that is causing serious harm to the character and quality of the environment. These properties have been referred to the Minister for the Environment for his consideration.

7. Publicly owned empty homes

Upon the announcement of the Action on Vacant Properties plan and Empty Homes Service, there was some public concern raised as to the number of empty properties that appear to exist within public ownership. The Empty Homes Service has worked with Jersey Property Holdings (JPH) to obtain the details of all empty homes that are in the direct ownership of the States of Jersey, which falls under the responsibility of the Minister for Infrastructure.

It has been identified that there are a total of 20 homes currently empty, 14 of which are associated with the development of plans for new hospital facilities. These homes are being managed by JPH, in conjunction with the new healthcare facilities' project team.

The use of these homes has remained under constant review since they were acquired, having regard to the progress of the new healthcare facilities project, the condition of the dwellings and public service housing requirements. Seven of the properties are currently occupied or in use.

The six other units identified under public ownership include four which are being considered for refurbishment or sale, one which will be subject to wider site redevelopment plans and one which is associated with educational use.

The need to ensure homes in public ownership do not remain empty for any longer than necessary is well understood, and the Empty Homes Service will continue to work with Jersey Property Holdings to ensure that decisions are made – and action taken – with these properties, as soon as possible. A key consideration, however, is the significant demolition and construction activity surrounding the Overdale properties as the Acute facility is developed.

States-owned entities

In terms of wider public ownership, through States-owned entities, it is known that Andium Homes own a number of long-term vacant properties that have been acquired by the company as part of land assembly to support redevelopment activity and the provision of new affordable homes. These properties are in the north of town area, many of which now have planning permission for redevelopment and where development activity is either underway or due to commence soon.

Others include those which are still pending a conclusion, such as those surrounding the Gas Place site, which are subject to the Government's plans to develop a new primary school. It is the intention for these properties to be acquired by the States of Jersey and redeveloped for that purpose.

Ports of Jersey own various properties within the English and French Harbour area. The buildings originate from the period 1700-1737, retain their exterior character and stonework and make a significant contribution to the historic character of the harbour area.

Properties currently vacant within this area include the La Folie Inn, listed at Grade 3; South Pier House, listed at Grade 4; and Jersey Sub Aqua Club, listed at Grade 3. These properties are all currently vacant and in poor condition. However, Ports of Jersey are actively progressing a masterplan for the Harbour and South Pier area.

The States of Jersey Development Company have confirmed that they do not currently own any empty homes.

The Minister for Housing and Communities will be seeking to work with States-owned entities to ensure that when properties are acquired and retained as part of assembly activities, they remain occupied for as long as possible, in advance of new development taking place.

8. Assessment of current housing market activity

The Empty Homes Service undertook a review of homes being actively marketed for sale with vacant possession or chain free (as of August 2023), which identified 143 properties. The current housing market conditions in Jersey mean that there has been a significant increase in the number of overall advertised sales across the housing market, whilst property transactions have reached record lows.

There is no comparable data for properties advertised with vacant possession from previous years, hence it is not possible to establish whether the number of vacant possession properties identified are out of proportion with previous years in Jersey's housing market. However, when compared to the number of properties identified as being vacant and for sale in the 2021 Census (66 homes on Census Day), the 143 advertised properties identified by the Empty Homes Service could indicate a 117% increase in the number of vacant homes being marketed for sale, above the Census 2021 reported figures. However, it is important to note – as set out in the Action on Vacant Properties plan – when the number of empty homes recorded on Census Day for the reason 'unknown' is prorated, this indicated a possible 140 empty homes for sale on Census Day, which would be more-or-less equal to the total identified by the Empty Homes Service in its review of the current housing market.

Due to the nature of the property market, there will always be a natural 'churn' of empty homes coming to market and then going on to be re-occupied, and with this there will be fluctuations in the number of empty properties being marketed at any one time.

In terms of the distribution of vacant possession/ chain-free homes currently being advertised in Jersey, this is considered to be broadly consistent with the statistics published within the Census report. However, the percentage total in St Helier is notably higher, which affects the percentages across other parishes.

Parish	Original % vacant homes on Census Day	Number of homes identified by EHS (marketed as vacant possession/chain free)	% of overall total identified and difference compared to the total number of vacant homes on Census Day
Grouville	5	5	3.5 (- 1.5%)
St Brelade	10	13	9.1 (-0.9%)
St Clement	9	11	7.7 (-1.3%)
St Helier	39	84	58.7 (+19.7%)
St John	3	2	1.4 (-1.6%)
St Lawrence	5	3	2.1 (-2.9%)
St Martin	4	1	0.7 (-3.3%)

St Mary	2	0	0.0 (-2.0%)
St Ouen	4	3	2.1 (-1.9%)
St Peter	5	4	2.8 (-2.2%)
St Saviour	12	15	10.5 (-1.5%)
Trinity	3	2	1.4 (-1.6%)
ALL	100%	143	100%

Table 3: Actively marketed homes identified as vacant possession or chain free compared to Census data

9. Understanding empty homes through the administration of Parish Rates

Action 1 of the Action on Vacant Properties report cited that the Minister was to pursue collection of anonymised, voluntary, vacancy data collected through inserts issued with parish rates declarations in 2023. A total of 335 forms were returned through this exercise and 146 empty homes were declared. Note that in some instances, more than one property was reported as being empty per form.

Parish	Original % of total vacant homes	Number of rates form supplementary leaflets returned	Number of vacant homes cited
Grouville	5	62	10
St Brelade	10	56	28
St Clement	9	55	24
St Helier	39	10	11
St John	3	25	5
St Lawrence	5	7	6
St Martin	4	19	10
St Mary	2	0	0
St Ouen	4	2	1
St Peter	5	11	9
St Saviour	12	20	24
Trinity	3	55	0
Online	n/a	13	18
ALL	100	335	146

Table 4: Anonymised vacancy data received via parish rates declarations for 2023

As also set out as part of Action 1 of the Action on Vacant Properties plan, it is recognised that a more effective and reliable approach would be to seek a change to the Parish Rates (Jersey) Law (2005), to allow the specific collection and sharing of data in relation to empty homes in the future. The Minister remains committed to pursuing this Law change.

The work of the Empty Homes Service, which has made use of the published Parish Rates lists at the Jersey Library, has identified that the administration of parish rates varies somewhat across

each of the parishes, and there is a lack of consistency as to how the data is presented and made available for public viewing.

Two properties reviewed by the Empty Homes Services have been found to not appear on the published rates lists, which have been referred to the relevant parishes to establish why this may be.

10. Location of owners of empty homes

The details of home ownership are available through the Public Registry, where property deeds dating back to 1800 are available to view on the Public Registry online system. These records highlight the ownership based on the last property transaction for the property, but this does not include information on beneficial ownership after the original owner has died (if the property has not subsequently been formally transacted to the new owner), nor does it establish whether a property owner is resident in Jersey.

Some information on residency is available from that collected through the administration of the Control of Housing and Work (Jersey) Law (2012), though this information cannot currently be shared with the Empty Homes Service due to data protection. There is currently no central record of properties and beneficial ownership in Jersey.

A proposition has been previously brought to the States Assembly (p.93/2020), requesting that the Council of Ministers create a digital register of all commercial and residential properties in the Island that contains details of the ultimate beneficial ownership of those properties for the purposes of aiding policy formation and, if necessary, the regulation of the housing and commercial property markets.

A review of the scoping and viability of such a register was commissioned by the Chief Minister, which was published earlier in 2023. This report was published with the caveat that it does not represent the views of the Government of Jersey. Commissioned before the election in 2022, it is a contribution to future policy debate and discussion and will be considered in determining the best approach in delivering on the decisions of the States Assembly.

In particular, it is worth noting that the Jersey Financial Services Commission maintains a full register of the ultimate beneficial ownership and control of Jersey companies, including those that own real property. Legislation would be needed should government wish to access this information for the purposes of a property register, and this would require further detailed consideration of any issues.

Jersey trusts cannot own Jersey immovable property in their own right, but trustees may own companies on behalf of beneficiaries that then own real property. The Jersey Financial Services Commission do not hold a register of non-Jersey companies which own property in Jersey.

The Minister for Housing and Communities will re-start conversations on the possibility of establishing a digital register of all properties and, in particular, residential properties in Jersey, to include information as to whether or not such persons are deemed to be resident in Jersey. Consideration will also be given as to whether there is a role for wills and succession legislation and guidance to address improvements to how distant heirs are established when a property is left intestate.

11. Additional considerations to date

Wills and succession

Some key features within the first six months of the service include the investigation of a long-term empty property, where the owner died a number of decades ago. It has been established that there are no known heirs in Jersey, and there has been difficulty in identifying and establishing contact with distant heirs living off-Island.

The Minister for Housing and Communities will be considering this case in liaison with both the Receiver General and Law Officers, to establish the most appropriate way forward. Without concerted action, properties such as this will continue to remain vacant in the long-term, essentially having become stuck in a position where there is no clear or easy route to a resolution.

This case has highlighted a previously unmentioned issue in relation to the effectiveness of any future empty property tax. If an owner cannot be traced, a tax cannot be paid, and hence a tax would not be effective in bringing properties of this nature back to the market. It also raises questions regarding the Wills and Succession Law, and whether existing provisions should be reviewed to ensure that when a property is left intestate, the process to establish heirs and confirm ownership is sufficiently robust to avoid properties being left long-term empty by reason of unclear or unclaimed ownership, or due to long-lasting disputes.

A point has also been raised to the service in relation to the making of wills and possible delays or barriers to the registration of a will due to stamp duty cost implications in some circumstances. This issue will be further explored.

Parish Rates valuations

A key part of the Action on Vacant Properties plan was to consider a potential tax on empty properties, as per P.48/2022 which stated that an effective mechanism should be introduced to discourage domestic properties from being left vacant for long periods.

The Action on Vacant Properties plan gave the view that introducing a tax on empty properties would not be effective because of the significant risk that the administrative costs could outweigh the revenue generated. Once in place, a new tax would be a significant administrative undertaking and would require dedicated resources to complete the ongoing required compliance work such as updating or verifying third-party property valuations. There would also be a large amount of work required to make the legislative and operational changes necessary to introduce a new charge.

Whilst it is maintained that introducing a tax on empty properties would not be effective, as a result of the early work by the Empty Homes Service and the closer analysis of the application of Parish Rates, it is considered that further work to evaluate the existing rates valuation system would be worthwhile. The reason for this is that the existing rates system evaluates rateable values based on a property's characteristics. This means that poorly maintained 'low value' empty properties are more likely to pay the lowest rates.

For example, one sampled long-term empty property was listed to have a rateable value of 1,000 quarters, whereas the neighbouring properties (which were of a similar construction and size), had rateable values of 8,000 – 12,000 quarters. An additional levy on empty homes through the rates system would be applied upon its rateable value, but if this value is inherently low because of how rateable values has been calculated, then the levy would be built from a disproportionately low base, compared to other properties that are occupied and well-maintained.

As highlighted in the original Action on Vacant Properties plan, the rateable value of a property is based on its potential rental value as per the last assessment. The rateable values have not been reassessed across the Island since 2003 despite previous attempts; most recently, in 2019, the Rates Working Group agreed by majority not to revalorise. The plan also highlighted that the absence of an Island-wide revaluation may mean that any additional charge within the rates system could exacerbate issues already present in the rates system.

The Minister for Housing and Communities is therefore interested in further exploring the fairness and consistency of the rate valuation system, as a first step towards the possibility of seeking changes to the Rates Law that would allow the introduction of new policy considerations into the rate valuation and charging system.

12. Summary update for the initial Action on Vacant Properties plan

The following table provides a summary update against the initial actions highlighted in the 2022 Action on Vacant Properties plan:

Action	Status update
<p>Action 1: Anonymised vacancy data will be collected through parish rates declarations for 2023. The Minister for Housing and Communities will continue to work with the Comité des Connétables, as the Supervisory Committee of the Rates (Jersey) Law 2005, to develop law drafting instructions to achieve a statutory basis for collecting occupancy status through the rates system in the future.</p>	<p>Partially complete Anonymised vacancy data was collected through the 2023 parish rates declarations. The Minister for Housing and Communities is continuing to consider his approach to propose suitable changes to the Rates Law and will do so by working with the parishes.</p>
<p>Action 2: A community-led reporting mechanism will be established before the end of January 2023, enabling Islanders to report homes which they believe to have been left vacant for a long period of time, and/or properties which they believe to be in a very poor condition and creating harm to the environment. This will be promoted through an active communications campaign and supported by a dedicated resource in the Empty Homes Service.</p>	<p>Complete The Empty Homes Service, which included the community-led reporting mechanisms (gov.je/emptyhomes and emptyhomes@gov.je) was established before the end of January 2023 and is supported by a dedicated resource within the Strategic Housing and Regeneration Team.</p>

Action	Status update
<p>Action 3: The Minister for the Environment and Minister for Housing and Communities will work in partnership, taking immediate steps towards making better use of the homes we already have and, in particular, will adopt a more proactive approach in managing land condition in Jersey.</p>	<p>Ongoing The Minister for Housing and Communities has made his first case referrals to the Minister for the Environment. The Ministers will continue to work in partnership towards advancing policy in relation to making better use of the homes we already have.</p>
<p>Action 4: The Minister for Housing and Communities will seek to support HM Receiver General in identifying vacant and ownerless properties, to enable action to bring any such properties back into active use as soon as possible.</p>	<p>Ongoing The Minister for Housing and Communities is in liaison with HM Receiver General in the case of a specific long-term empty property, and will continue with additional case referrals, as any appropriate cases come to light through the service.</p>
<p>Action 5: The Minister for Housing and Communities will promote and support the role of States-owned entities in the purchase and redevelopment of vacant properties. In particular, support will be given for initiatives that look to develop local skills and meet wider government objectives for construction innovation and carbon neutrality.</p>	<p>Ongoing Early discussions have begun in relation to the possible acquisition of empty homes and retrofitting opportunities.</p>
<p>Action 6: The Minister for Housing and Communities will establish an Empty Homes Service, before the end of January 2023, to provide advice and guidance to Islanders, undertake monitoring, service-demand analysis and policy development, and make referrals to the Regulation Directorate and HM Receiver General, where required.</p>	<p>Complete The Empty Homes Service was established before the end of January 2023 and is supported by resource from within the Strategic Housing and Regeneration Team.</p>
<p>Under consideration: The Minister for Housing and Communities will consider the development of law drafting instructions for the creation of new powers, invested in the Minister for Housing and Communities, to manage empty dwellings through Empty Dwelling Management Orders, similar to the provisions made by the UK's Housing Act.</p>	<p>Under consideration This action is pending the completion of case reviews, which will provide the evidence base necessary to evaluate the potential effectiveness of this policy, relative to the type and nature of vacant homes identified.</p>
<p>Under consideration: Consider compulsory purchase action for vacant homes, where all other available options</p>	<p>Under consideration This will remain under consideration.</p>

Action	Status update
have been exhausted and the public interest in acquiring a given property can be proven.	
Tax option 1: Introduce an additional charge on empty properties within the existing Rates Law to disincentivise owners from keeping properties vacant.	Under consideration The Minister for Housing and Communities is revisiting his position in relation to the Rates Law, in light of how many empty homes will be paying lower rates than occupied properties which are well-maintained. This consideration will be centred on the principles of how rateable values are established.
Tax option 2: Introduce a new annual tax levied against vacant homes to encourage properties back into the market.	This Minister maintains his position that he is not minded to pursue this option.

Table 5: Status update on actions published within the Action on Vacant Properties report

13. Next steps for the Minister for Housing and Communities

Bringing empty homes back onto the market remains a priority for the Minister for Housing and Communities, as part of a wider ambition to make better use of the homes we already have. The work of the Empty Homes Service in its first six months has demonstrated the complex and often personal nature of homes being left empty for long periods, and that there is no simple or single solution.

It is considered too early in the process to offer definitive conclusions, particularly around the progression of possible legislative changes. It is, however, important that case reviews are completed as soon as possible, to allow near-term progress with further referrals to the Minister for the Environment (as required), and to ensure sufficient evidence and clarity to support the progression of policy and legislative changes in the future. This will be supported by a further round of public engagement activity in relation to the Empty Homes Service, to ensure as many homes as possible have been considered as part of this process.

The Minister for Housing and Communities will make public announcements as further progress is made over the term.