

Empty home brought back into use from...Maybole



Address: Cassillis Road, Maybole
Total length of time empty: 11 years.

The previous Empty Homes Officer (EHO) first got in touch in October 2012 as she was aware of the property through her own knowledge of the area.

The property had been held by the previous owners for a period of 30 years, and was used as their principal home until 2003 when they moved to another property. The property was originally on the market, but the owners had struggled to find a buyer.

In 2012, the EHO got in touch to try and explore options with the owners. As the property had fallen into considerable disrepair by this time, the EHO particularly highlighted the option of the Empty Homes Loan. An initial inspection in October 2012 found that works to bring it back into use would be significant. Contact with the family was sporadic due to a range of issues including language difficulties and the owners' son taking responsibility for the project. The EHO continued to engage with them during this time. An application was received in August 2013, and quotes received at this time estimated these works at £40,000. It was intended at this time that the loan would cover £20,000 worth of works, with the family paying for the remainder with their own funds. The property would then be rented out and repayments would be made on this basis.

Contact with the family again stopped, and when the new EHO took over the post in February 2014 further efforts were made to make contact with the family. In May 2014 the family responded to an Empty Homes Survey sent to their address, indicating their intention to again try to renovate the property and rent it out. The EHO called the family and arranged a meeting with them at their restaurant in May 2014.

During this meeting, the EHO again highlighted the Empty Homes Loan as a potential option, but also stressed the difficulty in finding tenants who would be willing to rent a 3 bedroom property in this area. Demand is not high in Maybole, and as such the EHO highlighted the possible problems in moving forward with this – not least of which being that the loan was for a considerable amount of money which would not be easily met by rental payments (and certainly not met over 3 years at LHA). The owner advised that he had received a quote for £30,000 for the works, and that he would provide us with this as he wished to pursue the Empty Homes Loan option.

I highlighted to the owner the potential for him to pay out significant costs to renovate the property for little financial gain over the long-term due to the limited demand for properties in this area, and suggested getting a valuation of the property based on selling it as it currently stands. Following these discussions, the owner subsequently put the property up for sale, and it was recently sold to an individual who intends to renovate the property for their own use as a retirement property. The EHO has made contact with this new owner and will provide support where possible.

Outcome: As a result, the property was sold on the open market in November 2014.

Case study details supplied by Ross Morris, Empty Homes Officer, South Ayrshire Council.