



**Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government**

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth
Minister for Faith

**Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local
Government**
Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Lord Alton of Liverpool
House of Lords
London
SW1A 0AA

Tel: 0303 444 3672
E-Mail: lord.bourne@communities.gsi.gov.uk
www.gov.uk/mhclg

Dear Lord Alton,

19 November 2018

During the Oral Question on Rogue Landlords, asked by Lord Kennedy on 13 November, I promised to write to you in response to your question about the number of properties owned by private landlords that are standing empty.

I mentioned in my response in the Chamber that this is an important issue which we have gone some way towards addressing. Most recently, we took through the Rating (Property in Common Occupation) and Council Tax (Empty Dwellings) Act 2018, which received Royal Assent on 1 November. I expect the measures in this Act, which will introduce council tax premiums on empty homes, to have a significant effect in reducing the number of empty properties, although it may take some time to fully impact.

As it stands, the number of empty homes is broadly in decline. In 2017, there were 605,891 empty properties, across both social and private tenures. Of these, 560,259 were privately owned. By comparison, the total number of empty homes in 2010 was 737,147 and the total number of privately owned empty homes was 672,949. That is a reduction of around 20% in the number of privately owned empty homes, as well as in the total empty homes figure.

Some that are empty may be owned, privately, by former owner-occupiers or owners who have inherited the property. Their falling empty will not represent a loss in the stock of housing available in the private rented sector. There will be legitimate reasons why some of these properties are empty, such as undergoing renovation, being processed through probate or being put up for sale. That is why the figure which represents long-term empty properties (those vacant for two or more years) may well be more indicative of the scale of problematic property vacancy.

Here, too, the figures show a dramatic reduction of one third, from a total of 299,999 long-term empty properties in England in 2010 to 205,293 last year. Data on long-term vacant properties is not broken down by type of tenure, so I am unfortunately not able to state with confidence what proportion of these are privately owned. Given how substantial the reduction in long-term empty properties has been over the last seven years, however, it is very likely to be a significantly lower figure than previously.

The 2018 figures on empty private housing stock are due to be released next year. I will look forward to reviewing them and the continuing effectiveness of the Government's measures to tackle empty homes in due course.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N. Bourne', written in a cursive style.

LORD BOURNE OF ABERYSTWYTH