



PRESS RELEASE

19 September 2018

2018/071

Consultation on potential Council Tax hike to address long term empty homes issue

Derbyshire Dales residents are being asked for their views on charging the owners of long term empty properties up to four times the amount of Council Tax as regular home owners.

Income from the empty homes premium would be used to fund activity to support bringing long term empty homes back into use - and the premium could be increased dramatically thanks to new legislation currently going through Parliament.

It means that from April next year local councils such as Derbyshire Dales could have the power to double the Council Tax on homes empty for two to five years, triple the tax on homes empty for five to 10 years and quadruple it for those empty for more than a decade.

Councils already have the power to levy a 50% premium - the whole Council Tax plus half again - on homes that have been unoccupied and substantially **unfurnished** for more than two years, although Derbyshire Dales District Council has not adopted this.

A District Council spokesperson said: "We estimate this will impact up to 600 long term empty homes in our area - and we want to know what local people think about the idea to introduce the new premium, as an encouragement to bring these properties back in to use.

"Allowing long term empty homes to remain unoccupied is a waste of resources, especially as the Derbyshire Dales is one of the least affordable areas in the Midlands, with residents on lower incomes struggling to access housing to rent or buy. There is also pressure to build new homes on greenfield land.

"In 2016 the Derbyshire Dales was recorded as the sixth worst area in England for the number of empty homes per 100 people at 0.9, and we also know that the Dales has the highest percentage of long term empty homes in Derbyshire, at 1.9% of the total housing stock."

The District Council has established an Empty Homes Hub with the aim of developing a corporate approach to the issue of long term empty homes.

Meanwhile, the proposal in a White Paper is being taken forward through the Rating (Property in Common Occupation) and Council Tax (Empty Dwellings) Bill. This Bill is progressing through Parliament without any difficulty and would appear to be on track to becoming law in 2018/19.

The District Council wants to hear from all residents about the proposals but particularly from owners who may be struggling to rent out or sell their home and the neighbours of empty homes affected by the condition of an empty property. Complete the questionnaire at www.derbyshiredales.gov.uk/emptyhomessurvey before 31 October.

ENDS

For more information, please contact: Jim Fearn on 01629 761195 / 0780 4019123, email: jim.fearn@derbyshiredales.gov.uk or Cara Marchant on 01629 761128, email: cara.marchant@derbyshiredales.gov.uk