

Isle of Anglesey County Council

Scrutiny Report

Committee:	Corporate Scrutiny
Date:	16 September 2026
Subject:	Measuring Progress against the Empty Homes Strategic Plan 2023-2028
Scrutiny Chair:	Cllr. Jeff Evans

1. Who will be the portfolio holder / lead officer presenting the report?

Portfolio Member	Role
Councillor Carwyn E Jones	Portfolio holder for Housing
Service Officer (supporting)	Role
Ned Michael	Head of Housing Services

2. Why the Scrutiny Committee is being asked to consider the matter

Measuring progress against the Empty Homes Strategic Plan 2023-28

3. Role of the Scrutiny Committee and recommendations

- ☒ For assurance
☐ For recommendation to the Executive
☐ For information

Recommendation(s): That the Scrutiny Committee accepts the content of the report, which provides assurance that the strategic plan remains relevant and is being delivered and monitored
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4. How does the recommendation(s) contribute to the objectives of the Council's Plan?

The strategic plan contributes to the Council Plan by helping to ensure that everyone has the right to call somewhere home by increasing the amount of housing stock available.

5. Key scrutiny themes

Key themes the Scrutiny Committee should concentrate on:
1. Delivering and monitoring the Strategic Plan 2. Challenges, risks and capacity of the Service

3. Priorities that are underperforming or need further focus
4. Impact on local communities

6. Key points / summary

This report presents progress in implementing the Empty Homes Strategic Plan 2023-2028 during the period 2023-2026. The plan focuses on collecting and using data more effectively, raising awareness of the support available, providing financial assistance to owners, and using enforcement methods where appropriate to bring empty properties back into use.

Since April 2023, 211 empty properties have been brought back into use or created as additional units, with 78 of these benefiting from financial assistance such as grants or loans. The Council has also completed a number of important projects, including refurbishing Plas Alltran in Holyhead and developing the former Beaumaris Social Club site into new affordable homes.

During the reporting period, the capacity of the service was strengthened by appointing an Assistant Empty Homes Officer, new processes were developed for collecting information and reporting on empty properties, and grants and loan schemes continued to be used to support owners and increase the local housing supply.

Despite this progress, challenges remain, including an increase in the number of long-term empty homes, rising renovation costs and resource constraints that affect the ability to use enforcement powers more widely. As a result, the focus over the next year will be on developing a scoring matrix for prioritising properties, improving data and CRM processes, raising awareness among owners, and continuing to increase the number of empty properties brought back into use.

The report shows that the Strategic Plan has made a positive contribution towards increasing the housing supply, improving communities and ensuring that more empty properties are used for the benefit of Anglesey residents.

7. Impact assessments

- 7.1. Has an integrated impact assessment (equality considerations, the socio-economic duty, and the Welsh language) been carried out?

☒ Yes

☐ No

If no, explain why:

7.2 Potential impacts on groups protected under the Equality Act 2010

No negative impact has been identified and no further action is required

7.3 Potential impacts on those experiencing socio-economic disadvantage (strategic decisions)

No negative impact has been identified and no further action is required

7.4 Potential effects on opportunities to use Welsh and not treat the language less favourably than English

No negative impact or treatment less favourable than English has been identified

7.5 Potential impact on the Council's Net Zero Carbon target

Positive

Bringing empty properties back into use makes a positive contribution to the Council's commitment to responding to the climate emergency and working towards becoming a net zero organisation. By reusing the existing housing stock, it is possible to reduce the need for new developments and the carbon emissions associated with building new homes. Many of the properties being renovated also benefit from energy efficiency improvements such as insulation, more efficient heating systems and other energy-saving measures, reducing the carbon footprint of the properties in the long term. It will, however, be difficult to measure carbon emissions.

8 Financial implications

First-time buyer support grant schemes are funded by the Council Tax premium

9 Appendices

Empty Homes Strategic Plan 2023-28 Progress Report

10 Report author and background papers

Elliw Llŷr, Strategic Commissioning and Policy Manager
Osian D. Jones, Empty Homes Officer

ANNUAL REPORT

Empty Homes Strategic Plan 2023–2028

1. Summary

Number of long-term empty homes on Anglesey

- 2023-24: 421
- 2024-25: 512
- 2025-26: 582

Number of properties brought back into use or created since April 2023: 211

Number of empty properties brought back into use through financial schemes and incentives: 78

See appendix 1 for infographic on empty homes

Key achievements

- The Council has continued to make progress in tackling empty properties since 2023, with 204 properties returned to use and 7 additional units added to the Council Tax list as new units.
- Redeveloped the former Beaumaris Social Club site into intermediate rent flats
- Purchased an empty property and provided 4 social flats at Plas Alltran, Holyhead
- Purchased an empty property by agreement in Pendref, Dwyran and renovated it for onward sale on a shared-equity basis.
- Purchased two empty houses at Coedwig Terrace, Penmon and renovated them for onward sale on a shared-equity basis.
- The Empty Homes Team contributed to the creation of a handbook for stakeholders interested in empty properties, working in collaboration with Welsh Government.
Welsh Government's Empty Properties in Wales Handbook (Part 1 and Part 2) [[Empty Properties in Wales: handbook 1](#) and [Empty Properties in Wales: handbook 2](#)] supports the publicity work of the Empty Homes Team, and we are pleased to have contributed to an essential document for the sector.
- The Empty Homes Team strengthened its capacity during 2025 by appointing an Assistant Empty Homes Officer. This has increased service resources and enabled the team, now comprising two members of staff, to respond more effectively to a growing number of cases, carry out more site

- visits, and provide additional support to owners to bring more empty properties back into use.
- National recognition when Plas Alltran was shortlisted for 3 awards by the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH).

Challenges:

Empty properties are a wasted resource. See appendix 2 for information on why there are more empty properties.

- At a time when Anglesey's housing stock is under significant pressure, including high house prices compared with local wages, a lack of available affordable housing, and an increasing risk of homelessness and pressure on housing services, bringing empty properties back into residential use offers a sustainable and environmentally responsible way to increase housing supply and improve housing availability.
- There has been a gradual increase in the number of long-term empty homes that are empty and unfurnished, rising from 428 on 1 April 2023 to 582 on 1 April 2025. The data relates only to properties liable for the Council Tax Premium and does not include properties eligible for exemptions or temporary grace periods. See appendix 1 for context as to why there is an increase in empty properties.
- Identifying empty properties that are not registered or recognised on the Council Tax list and are not reported by members of the public or elected members. In particular, properties removed from the rating register, known as TOR (Taken Out of Rating) properties, present an additional challenge and are often the most difficult properties to deal with.
- Owners' financial constraints when facing increasing renovation costs.
- The need to prioritise enforcement intervention within the Council's resources across relevant teams. There is limited capacity to take enforcement action, move cases forward and use available powers, including consideration of enforced sale to recover any debts registered against the property.

Priorities for next year:

1. Develop the Scoring Matrix
 2. Increase awareness among owners and strengthen the approach to contact through the CRM system
 3. Make use of the budget to offer support to owners of empty homes
- Overall progress (RAG):



2. Key priorities

Key priority 1: Data

What we had planned to do:	Update our data on empty properties so that we can analyse the characteristics of long-term empty properties and target our response.
What we achieved:	The additional information we collect enables the Team to identify: - How much of the empty homes list has received any intervention from the Team - The tenure type, whether owner-occupied, tenanted, second homes/holiday accommodation, or other. - The average timescale for bringing an empty property back into use in the county. The information collected above provides a better understanding of patterns and owners' core needs, such as which types of support and advice are most effective in helping to bring empty properties back into use.
Performance (RAG):	
What we did not achieve and why:	Develop a Scoring Matrix for empty properties. The Scoring Matrix is used to refer properties to the Empty Homes Surgery, where any potential outcomes and enforcement actions are considered. We have started entering scores across three categories to measure the level of concern associated with a property: low, medium and high. We assign a 'high' level where we receive an official complaint or concern from members

	of the public, elected members or internal officers. Going forward, we will look to assign low or medium levels to properties we are working with that have not yet been brought back into use, assigning a medium level where appropriate and a low level to properties where we are aware the owner is considering options or has plans that do not currently require support from the Team. Following the new Welsh Government handbook, a template has been distributed to enable officers to develop and implement a scoring matrix.
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Key priority 2: Publicity

What we had planned to do:	Guidance on bringing empty properties back into use Details of the support available and how to access funding Offer shared-equity grants and other grants for empty properties A method for reporting concerns or complaints about empty properties
What we achieved:	- During 2023, an Empty Homes Questionnaire was distributed to property owners to gain a further understanding of the circumstances that lead to properties remaining empty and to identify opportunities to support owners in bringing their properties back into use. - A total of 77 responses were received, providing valuable insight into the challenges facing owners and the condition of empty properties on the Island.

	• The Empty Homes Questionnaire was distributed again in 2025. From the responses, we can recognise the constraints owners face in taking steps to bring their properties back into use, as well as the type of support that would assist or facilitate the process for them. This gives Empty Homes Officers an opportunity to offer relevant advice to individuals and provides a basis for developing dialogue. • An online method was introduced for members of the public to report concerns or complaints about empty properties on the Island through the CRM system. Not every property comes to the Team's attention, and many often go undetected. The method for reporting empty properties offers an opportunity to strengthen data and awareness, ensuring that details on Council Tax records are updated. Reporting empty properties helps prevent environmental, appearance-related, or health and safety problems.
• Performance (RAG):	
• What we did not achieve and why:	• A guide for owners on bringing empty properties back into use was not completed. We recognise that a general document accessible to owners would be beneficial and useful. • Priority was given to direct engagement with owners, administering financial support schemes, and developing new processes, namely the CRM system, which limited the resources available to complete this element in full.

Key priority 3: Offering financial support

• What we had planned to do:	• Provide financial support for owners of empty properties as a way of bringing those properties back into use. • Encourage the use of local businesses, both small and large.						
• What we achieved:	The Council has taken a proactive role in making the most of funding from different sources to offer financial support to owners of empty homes. Since 2023, 78 empty properties have been returned to use through the provision of financial support, including grant incentives or interest-free loans. The schemes include the First-Time Buyers Grant, Home Improvement Loans, the Houses into Homes Scheme, and the National Empty Homes Grant Scheme. See Table 1 for an overview. The following has been spent on the First Time Buyers Scheme through a grant which is funded through a Council Tax Premium <table border="1" data-bbox="662 1157 1370 1276"> <tr> <td>2025/26</td><td>£465,532.15</td></tr> <tr> <td>2024/25</td><td>£547,853.51</td></tr> <tr> <td>2023/24*</td><td>£267,994.08</td></tr> </table> <i>*During the 2023/24 financial year, the First Time Buyer Grant and the use of the Council Tax Premium were suspended following the Isle of Anglesey County Council's Budget proposal. Committed funding from the previous financial year allowed the Service to continue with existing applications.</i> We have also committed £560k to help people buy their home which can be used in parallel with the First Time Buyers Scheme. Between 2023-24 and 2025-26, 12 applications have been approved for the Anglesey Homebuy Scheme. Whilst the Isle of Anglesey Homebuy Scheme does not directly contribute to returning empty properties back into use, two applications have purchased and	2025/26	£465,532.15	2024/25	£547,853.51	2023/24*	£267,994.08
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	renovated their properties in conjunction with the First Time Buyer Grant Scheme. Since 2023, financial support for owners of empty homes has been expanded and the Council has entered into an agreement to participate in the National Scheme. The Scheme was available during 2023–2024 and 2024–2025, and has been extended for an additional year in 2026–2027. Not every authority has participated in the National Empty Homes Grant Scheme, which provides owners with access to a budget to help accelerate renovation work and bring their homes back into use once again. The Council plays an important role in supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and local businesses by providing access to a range of financial support schemes, including grants and loans. These incentives encourage business development, economic activity and prosperity in the area, while improving housing standards in the private sector and, as a result, the standard of living for residents of the Island. The figures below show the number of local businesses involved in delivering the First-Time Buyers Grant scheme. It is worth noting that some businesses were mentioned on more than one application. 2023-24 – 55 2024-25 – 69 2025-26 – 59 See table 1 for types of intervention that bring empty homes back into use:
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Table1: intervention

Type of intervention	• Total	• %
• Advice and guidance	• 74	• 35.1%
• VAT concession	• 37	• 17.5%

• Financial support (grants, loans)	• 78	• 37.0%
• Compulsory Purchase Order / Purchase by Agreement	• 6	• 2.8%
• Former local authority properties purchased and returned to the housing stock	• 12	• 5.7%
• Problem empty properties purchased, renovated and sold on a shared-equity basis	• 4	• 1.9%
• Total	• 211	• 100%
	•	•

The following offers explanation on the terms used above:

Advice and guidance refers to Tailored advice and guidance is provided suit the owner's individual circumstances, requirements, and end use of their properties. This includes advice on the most suitable options for bringing a property back into beneficial use, information on relevant grants, loans and incentive schemes. Signposting owners to appropriate services such as the Homelessness Team (relating to Landlords) and the Empty Homes Officers provide practical support and encouragement to help owners address barriers and maximise the use, value and security of their properties.

Vat concession refers to properties which have been vacant for over two years may be eligible for VAT reduction on renovation works, significantly reducing the overall cost of repair and renovation works. Attributes to making repair works more viable, affordable to owners and speeds up the timeline to return the property back into use.

• Performance (RAG):	
• What we did not achieve and why:	• Purchasing properties through the Transitional Capital Accommodation Scheme / Empty Property Purchase by Agreement Scheme. • During 2023, we completed the purchase of three properties under our purchase, renovation and onward-sale scheme at an affordable rate. Since then, such opportunities have not arisen. We consider that increases in house prices, materials costs and labour costs for repairing properties have made this approach unsustainable. Although we continue to consider opportunities, we have not identified a property suitable for this scheme.

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Key priority 4: Enforcement

What we had planned to do:	Bringing properties back into use through discussion and encouragement is preferred, avoiding the need for enforcement measures that require more time and money. EDMOs are complex and present risks for local authorities, as capital funding is required and may be attached to the property as a local charge, and specialist legal advice is needed.
What we achieved:	We worked in partnership with other Council teams to pursue enforcement action where appropriate, including requesting the use of statutory enforcement powers and notices available under relevant legislation to address issues associated with long-term empty properties. The Council used a Compulsory Purchase Order to purchase the former Social and Sports Club in Steeple Lane, Beaumaris, where the dangerous building was demolished and redeveloped into six one-bedroom flats at affordable rent, offering an opportunity for local people in Beaumaris. During 2024, new tenants moved into the property, bringing the building back into use once again. Six new units were added to the Council Tax bands, providing additional ongoing income for the Council Tax Team and the Housing Team.
Performance (RAG):	
What we did not achieve and why:	This priority was not achieved. Although Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMOs) were considered in appropriate cases, no case

	progressed to implementation because of the complexity of the process, the significant resource requirements, and ongoing efforts to resolve cases through engagement with owners and other intervention measures. EDMOs remain an option where alternative approaches have been explored and exhausted.
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5. Risks

- Main risks:
 1. A reduction in grant or loan funding available to support owners.
Government has announced that it will discontinue the Council's loan schemes, including the Home Improvement Loan Scheme and the Houses into Homes Scheme, after 2030.
 2. Increasing construction and renovation costs that reduce the viability of development projects.
- What we did to manage them:
 - We have reduced the loan terms to ensure the remaining funding is used in the best possible way, distributing the remaining money fairly and effectively.
 - In exceptional cases, the Team retains discretion to consider any application on a case-by-case basis.

6. Looking to the future

- Key priorities for next year:
 1. Data
Further develop the Scoring Matrix for prioritising empty properties, including homes that are not causing problems, in order to obtain complete data on the empty homes list.

Further develop reporting and performance-monitoring processes, particularly in relation to data and the current position on empty homes.
 2. Publicity

Increase awareness among owners of the support available by improving our website, which will include a guide for owners.

Improve our approach to sharing information about the empty homes grant through the CRM system in order to make formal enquiry management easier and more robust.

3. Offering financial support

Continue increasing the number of empty properties returned to use through incentives and financial schemes, ensuring that the Council maximises funding through the Council Tax Premium and government sources. We will explore which interventions we can use to encourage empty homes back into use by utilising the Premium collected from Council Tax.

4. Enforcement

Continue working with teams to consider the enforcement powers available for use on our empty properties where we have not established dialogue or where there is no plan to bring the property back into use.

Continue increasing the number of empty properties returned to use.

- Any changes to the plan:

Consider implementing formal enforcement approaches across the Council and develop business case on interventions to assist owners to bring their properties back into use.

7. Key achievements (optional)

- Examples of successful stories or projects:

1. The Council used a Compulsory Purchase Order to purchase the former Social and Sports Club in Steeple Lane, Beaumaris, where the existing dangerous building was demolished and redeveloped as six new one-bedroom flats. These flats are offered at intermediate rent to people, particularly those with a local connection to the area, with tenants taking occupation of the property during 2024.

- The project highlights the importance of considering formal enforcement action for our most problematic empty properties.



2. CIH shortlist 2024-25

- Plas Alltran is a Grade II listed building located near the harbour in Holyhead. Over the years, the property was in private ownership and had deteriorated significantly, attracting problems associated with anti-social behaviour.
- Because of its prominent location in the town centre, the condition of the building had been a local concern for many years.
- In partnership with Cadw and Welsh Government, Housing Services succeeded in purchasing and renovating the historic building, transforming it into four affordable social flats. Important architectural and gothic features of the listed building were retained as part of the work.
- The project contributed to tackling a problematic empty property, providing additional affordable homes, and improving the appearance of a prominent area of Holyhead.
- The project was also recognised nationally when Housing Services was shortlisted for an award by the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH).





3. First-Time Buyers Case Study

Before



After



“The Empty Homes Grant has made an enormous difference to us. Without this support, there was simply no way we could have afforded to carry out the essential works needed to make the property safe and livable. The house had been empty for a long time and required significant investment just to bring it up to standard. This grant allowed us to transform the property into a home we can live in and feel proud of.

In reality, we would not have been able to buy a home of this size on Anglesey without this scheme. With current local house prices, purchasing a property of this size would have been completely out of reach for us. The grant gave us an opportunity we never thought we would have – the chance to restore an empty home, bring a property back into use for the community, and also support local businesses to carry out the works.” – Former applicant to the First-Time Buyers Grant scheme

4. Purchasing Empty Properties by Agreement

- From time to time, the Council purchases long-term empty properties by voluntary agreement with the owner. Following purchase, the Council undertakes renovation work with the intention of selling the property on to people who need a home or to first-time buyers, provided that they have a local connection to the relevant area. Following substantial repair and renovation work, the property is marketed on a shared-equity basis to enable buyers to purchase it at an affordable price. The scheme gives more people an opportunity to access home ownership within their local communities, particularly in areas where house prices are often challenging and the choice of suitable homes is limited.

- Before - Pendref, Dwyran



- After - Pendref, Dwyran



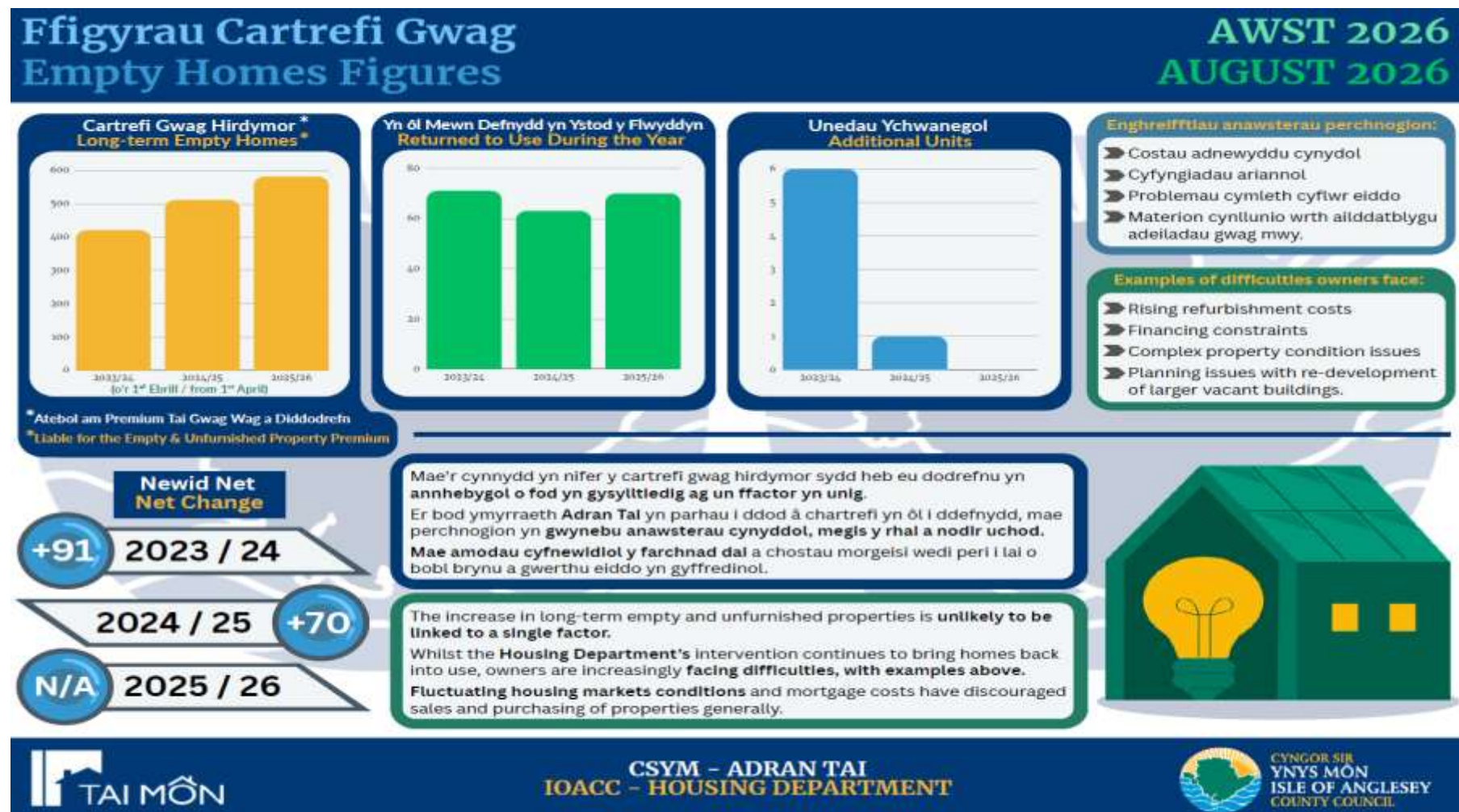
- Before - Coedwig Terrace



- After - Coedwig Terrace



Appendix 1



Appendix 2

Why there has been an increase in empty properties?

The increase in long-term empty and unfurnished properties is unlikely to be linked to a single factor. Whilst Housing Services intervention continues to bring homes back into use, owners are increasingly facing difficulties such as rising refurbishment costs, financing constraints, complex property condition issues and issues with re-development of larger vacant buildings.

A recent report by the [Empty Homes Network](#) suggests that overall empty properties throughout Wales have been increasing gradually since 2022. This demonstrates that most local authorities have seen an increase of long-term empty properties.

Fluctuating housing markets conditions and mortgage costs have discouraged sales and purchasing of properties generally.

The increase of long-term empty properties should therefore be viewed in the context of wider economic and housing market conditions rather than solely as a reflection of service performance.

The number of long-term empty homes rose from 421 in April 2023 to 582 in April 2025, representing an increase of 38.2% over two years. This indicates that the rate at which properties are becoming long-term empty currently exceeds the rate at which they are being brought back into use. While intervention activity appears to have maintained stable outcomes, additional measures may be required to address the growing inflow of properties entering long-term vacancy.