

Highland Council submission on the housing emergency

I refer to the recent request for information regarding void properties in Council housing.

As of last week, Highland Council had 310 void properties. This is out of a total housing stock of 15,008.

Our relet time for the first quarter of 2024/25 was 46.5 days which is an increase from the 38.68 days from the previous quarter.

Of the 310 void properties:

- 249 are regarded as “normal” and subject to standard processes and reletting procedures
- 23 are surplus to long-term requirements and we are looking to either sell or demolish/refurbish
- 4 are held for decant arrangement e.g. in event of a house fire/flood
- 34 are experiencing major structural works (this includes capital investment works and insurance claims).

In regard to your query as to more detail,

- Improving performance – Highland performance is excellent compared to many other councils, but there continue to be big challenges with relet works – 1. Delays with clearance of meter debt and meter replacement 2. Contractor capacity 3. Costs of relet works.

- Acquisitions – In 2023/24, Highland purchased 29 open market properties and transferred these into Council house use. Indications are that this will be replicated in 2024/25, though it should be noted that options for buying properties in rural areas are limited because of the extensive refurbishment costs involved and we would urge the Government to fully-fund these measures to boost rural housing supply.

Regards

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Highland Council