



National Association of Empty Property Practitioners

Supporting the people who bring empty property back into use for housing

Newsletter

28th June 2008: The latest selection of news of interest to Empty Property Practitioners. If you want a news item published here or on the website please contact news@naepp.org.uk.

Help us change our name....and win a prize

At the last Executive Meeting it was agreed to pursue a change of name for NAEPP. There are various reasons for this eg:

- the current name is cumbersome
- many local authorities will only pay one membership subscription for individual employees; the nature of the current name is such that people who are members of CIH or CIEH may experience difficulty persuading their authority to take out Corporate Membership of NAEPP
- the rather impressive-sounding name leads people to expect more from NAEPP than is reasonably possible, given its small size and minimal resources
- the name should encourage a greater sense of participation and ownership by the members.

So...here is a 4-step process to arrive at a new name:

1. suggestions for a new name from membership
2. shortlisting by the Exec
3. voting by the membership
4. implementation

A £25 voucher will be awarded to the first person to suggest the name that is finally selected.

You can make your suggestions by emailing them to democracy@naepp.org.uk . **The deadline is the 9th July.**

Discussions at the Executive threw up suggestions that, for instance, a new name might include the word *Network* or *Forum* or that *Empty Homes* might be preferable to *Empty Property*.

EPO Job at LB Newham: to £40k

Here's a prime job opportunity from LB Newham on behalf of a consortium of 7 East London local authorities. More please.....

Empty Property Project Officer (2 year fixed-term)

LB Newham Council on behalf of the East London Renewal Partnership

£37,542 - £40,095 pa inc.

We are looking to recruit an Empty Property Project Officer to work for the east London sub-region based at London Borough of Newham's offices in High Street North, Manor Park.

The Empty Property Project Officer will be employed on behalf of 7 east London Boroughs to support empty property work and the use of all types of Management and Compulsory Purchase Orders in private sector housing. In the first instance this will require the establishment and maintenance of management structures and procedures for a series of EU compliant framework agreements with contractors to deliver tenancy and works management of properties affected by Orders.

The Officer will also support Borough Officers in expanding their private sector empty property programmes by improving liaison between Boroughs, generating sub-regional publicity for available support and providing specialist support in expanding enforcement work where advice and support has failed to achieve results.

For an informal discussion on the post please contact Peter Snell on 020 8430 2424.

Ref: **HP39620A**. Closing date: **7 July 2008**.

Full advert downloadable at <http://naepp5.planetdrupal.ca/frontpage>

Business rate changes start to bite

Following recent changes whereby empty commercial property now has limited exemption from business rates, some interesting trends have started to emerge.

The changes were introduced on the 1st April this year, with office and retail properties benefiting from a 3-month grace-period and industrial properties having a 6-month grace period. The rules will apply to all commercial properties from 1st October 2008.

Demolition contractors make hay

Building magazine (20th June 2008) reports that demolition contractors are doing a roaring trade following the changes. “A new government tax on empty buildings has prompted a huge rise in demand for demolition contractors as developers rush to flatten deserted properties”, writes Dan Stewart. (see <http://www.building.co.uk/story.asp?sectioncode=29&storycode=3116374>).

A reader comments on the *Building* website “It’s not what we could describe as sustainable....”

Arson Fears

Richard Cook of Arun District Council advises us of an email circulated from CIPFA about suspicious fires in empty commercial properties following the introduction of the new rules. Richard quotes the unattributed email as follows:

“I have just heard a story of a fire that occurred in a long-term empty property two days after a conversation between the owner and the NDR person at the council (No, I don’t know which one!) about the Rating (Empty Property) Act- quite a co-incidence - eh!

“It does raise the point that you might want to alert your local Fire Authority (and Police?) that this new charge is coming in next Tuesday week, which might give rise to the incidence of fires in empty properties.

“If you gather evidence of such occurrences, I am sure DCLG and WAG will be VERY interested.”

Richard suggests it might be advisable to contact Fire Authorities locally to draw their attention to the new arrangements if they are not aware.

Changes to NAEPP admin arrangements

(A personal note from David Gibbens)

Most people will be aware that I have taken over the admin from Kelly but few people outside of the Exec committee are aware of the nature of the changed arrangements or the reasons for them.

The proposal came from me to redress what had become an unacceptable balance between my workload in supporting NAEPP and the rewards.

Until the new arrangements came into place in January I have never sought any payment for what had been a very considerable amount of work in my own time. I had made it my job to support NAEPP into independence, taking on the not entirely exciting job of Treasurer and the more exciting but nevertheless demanding task of creating and supporting the NAEPP website. I also supported Kelly in various ways eg in organising the AGM, where Kelly did the lion’s share of the work on the basis of a profit-share with NAEPP.

I’m proud of my contribution to NAEPP over many years (and to empty_homes_network_uk before that) but the scale of unpaid work had become unsustainable. I identified a way forward that seemed fairer to myself whilst offering benefits to NAEPP. Essentially this involves taking on the full range of admin services for NAEPP, including book-keeping, website maintenance (and also picking most routine expenditure of the organisation) under a paid arrangement covered by a Service Level Agreement (see website for latest version).

Whereas Kelly was paid by the hour I receive a percentage of the membership income, giving me a direct incentive to build the membership of the organisation and make it as effective as possible. But to put this in perspective, the estimated income based on current membership levels would be somewhere around £3,750 per annum. It is not a money-spinning proposition and, remaining personally committed to NAEPP as I am, I expect to continue to devote time and energy to the organisation well over and above what might reasonably be expected for that income level.

My hope is that there may be other Communities of Practice that would benefit from such a service and I have created a trading name (peer2peer services) with that possibility I mind. I am not holding my breath though....!

I hope that, after many years of service, I will not now be perceived as being driven by purely mercenary considerations.

David Gibbens