



FULL REPORT

Low-use homes in rural and coastal areas of the UK: Geography, impact and responses

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1. Introduction

This report presents evidence on the extent and impact of ‘low-use’ homes in rural and coastal areas of the UK and offers ideas for measures to tackle this problem. Low-use homes are dwellings that are significantly under-used, where a resident is not ordinarily present. This includes long-term vacant or derelict dwellings, but also those used as second homes, and those rented out for short periods. One estimate of the scale of the issue comes from the 2021 census which showed that there were 1.5 million unoccupied dwellings in England. This figure included ‘truly vacant’ properties, as well as second homes.¹ The census also estimated that in some hotspot coastal areas of England and Wales, 1 in 10 addresses were being used as holiday homes (defined as second homes that are used for holiday purposes).² While much of the research on vacant and empty homes has tended to focus on urban areas, this project focused on rural and coastal areas that face particular housing pressures and dynamics including tourism, seasonal availability of employment, and concentrations of low-use properties (LUPs), often manifest as second homes and short-term lets (with these two categories often overlapping).

England	1.5 million unoccupied dwellings (6.1% of all dwellings)
Wales	120,450 unoccupied dwellings (8.2% of all dwellings)
Scotland	115,000 unoccupied dwellings (4.2%)

Table 1: Estimate of unoccupied dwellings (including vacant and second homes) using data from the Census 2021 (England and Wales) and the National Records of Scotland. Northern Ireland does not have comparable data, though see notes in Appendix B

This report offers a broad assessment of the problem of low-use property by bringing together quantitative and qualitative data to build an evidence base on low-use homes in ‘blue’ and ‘green’—coastal and rural—localities. We use council tax data collected through freedom of information requests to record the extent and concentration of low-use properties at a granular

¹<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/bulletins/numberofvacantandsecondhomesenglandandwales/census2021>

²<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/articles/morethan1in10addressesusedasholidayhomesinsomeareasofenglandandwales/2023-06-20>

level *within* local authorities to pinpoint problem areas. We combine this data with a statistical analysis of house prices in these areas to consider whether areas of second homes are associated with higher property prices. This data will be especially useful to policymakers and other stakeholders looking to pinpoint areas with high concentrations of low-use properties where interventions may be necessary. We then report on feedback from interviews with 66 participants across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland: planners, councillors, policy specialists, campaigners and the representatives of local communities. This data tells us about the kinds of problems that low-use dwellings generate, the effectiveness of existing policy tools, and the kind of measures that might yet be developed to tackle the impact of concentrations of low-use homes.

The ownership and availability of homes in many rural and coastal areas has become a massively contentious issue across many parts of the UK where low-use homes have become abundant. Increased homeownership and housing wealth has generated the means of purchasing second homes, mostly in rural and coastal zones. This expansion has been further facilitated by the ability to temporarily switch homes into income generators by using online platforms like Airbnb. This has enabled long-term under-use of investment properties to be financially covered by letting them out for short and longer periods at premium rents. This process has also been associated with incentivising the movement of long-term rental and owner-occupied properties into the short-term lettings market in areas where high levels of tourist demand are evident and where planning and other controls have not caught-up with the effects of the platform market.

Our evidence shows that many locations have been socially ‘hollowed out’ by the presence of low-use homes. This means that local concentrations of low-use homes are seen as an important sign of the UK’s significant wealth inequalities. These inequalities are strongly linked to a housing system that has produced homeowners benefitting from rising house prices, low interest rates (until 2023) and low levels of regulation on private landlords and providers of whole-home short-term lets. Meanwhile, those on low-to-middle incomes in the private rented sector face rising rents and a decreased availability of affordable homes to rent or buy (Pacitti, 2024). This has particular implications for rural areas; for example, a recent report estimated that there has been a 31% increase in renters in rural areas of England in the last decade (County Councils Network, 2024). All of this is symptomatic of housing which is increasingly viewed not as a place to live, but as an asset that can be used to build generational wealth. In towns and localities where low-use homes are abundant, there is an increasing concern that low-use properties are taking supply away from low and, increasingly, middle-income households whose need for a home is in competition with investment motives. As we show later, many struggle to find long-term housing options and are effectively excluded from their own home areas or the achievement of asset ownership due to precarious employment and the high cost of housing in their localities.

Empty and second homes have also become a key concern for policymakers. The policy landscape is evolving rapidly as new measures have been recently introduced around the UK, including new tax premiums on empty and second homes, planning changes to enable restrictions on second homes and short-term lets, and licensing schemes for holiday lets. Wales and Scotland have been pioneering efforts to tackle empty and second homes, while England has recently announced new measures to track and potentially restrict short-term lets. While political gridlock and a lack of data in Northern Ireland have meant equivalent measures have so far not been attempted, our research participants felt strongly that low-use homes are a major issue in some coastal areas. In this report we provide an overview of the UK policy landscape on this topic and suggest further policy ideas to build on it.

The report is structured as follows: the next section provides a review of key reports and research that have examined low-use homes. In section 3 we present our findings from council tax data collection, showing the distribution of low-use homes in rural and coastal areas. Sections 4 and 5 present the qualitative data, first detailing what planners, councillors, campaigners, resident groups and other key actors identified as the key social, economic and related impacts on rural and coastal localities across the UK's four nations. We then discuss the range of existing and recent policy initiatives and evaluate them based on our interview data. Finally, section 6 offers a series of concrete proposals to further address the social and economic impacts of low-use property. An appendix is provided offering detail on the methods we used to gather the spatial and social data undergirding the report.

For those wishing to download a full set of maps and data you can access this at: <https://figshare.com/s/52019a9bfb60978ecd70>.

2. Research on low-use homes

Scholars and policymakers have long grappled with the question of empty homes, second homes and low-use property more broadly, though these have been defined and conceptualised in myriad ways. Existing research can generally be broken down into two categories: first, research on empty and vacant homes, focused largely on urban areas, and second, work focusing on second homes, more often studied in rural and touristic areas. While both of these categories are useful in the study of low-use homes, we focus more on the second homes literature, given its heightened relevance for rural and coastal areas. By no means comprehensive, this section offers a brief overview of key studies in the existing literature on empty and second homes, especially in relation to rural and coastal areas of the UK, and signposts to further resources.

Academic literature on empty homes and vacancy has mainly focused on urban contexts: for example, inner-city abandonment in the US (Caramaschi and Chiodelli, 2023), deindustrialisation and shrinking cities (Couch and Cocks, 2013), and vacancy as a result of post-2008 crisis speculation and property bubbles (O’Callaghan, 2023). This literature offers important insights into the complexity of measuring and assessing vacancy in relation to population loss, city decline and wider socioeconomic dynamics and political transformations. Lončar and Pavić (2020) summarise the impacts of vacant properties in existing literature, which include economic issues such as increased municipal costs and reduced public revenue, environmental impacts, and social issues such as public safety. O’Callaghan (2023) illustrates how activists have focused on the contradiction between high vacancy rates and growing housing insecurity, and how vacancy has come to be a symbol of housing system failure in many cities. Often, such vacancy is associated with long-term empty properties that may be fully vacant or abandoned. However, within their proposed framework on housing vacancy, Caramaschi and Chiodelli (2023) include ‘underoccupancy or unoccupancy’ in which they include properties that are materially functional but do not perform the function of a full-time home. This includes second homes used seasonally or non-primary homes held for investment or speculative purposes.

Turning to research on second homes, one of the earliest studies was Bielckus, Rogers and Wibberley’s 1972 study of second homes in England and Wales, which made connections between changing patterns of household affluence and the distinct problem of concentrations of low-use homes in many coastal and rural areas in the two countries. Coppock’s (1977) study was another comprehensive overview of second homes, studying the issue from various international perspectives. A key point highlighted in the research literature on second homes in the UK is the difficulty in defining and measuring both second and empty homes, which researchers have suggested is likely to lead them to be undercounted (Paris, 2009; Dunning and Moore, 2020). While research on second homes has been conducted globally and especially in

Europe (Gallent et al., 2005; Roca, 2016), a large portion of academic literature on second homes emerges from Nordic countries (Ellingsen and Hidle, 2013; Back, 2020; Müller, 2021) and addresses topics such as motivations of second homebuyers, rural decline, and environmental impacts. The high proportion of Nordic research may be due to the fact that holiday and second homes are accessible to a broader section of society in countries such as Sweden.

In contrast with the Scandinavian context, Müller (2021) deems the UK a 'special situation' due to uneven land ownership patterns, and remarks that UK literature has focused more on second homes as a threat to the fabric of rural communities. In the UK context, Paris (2009) notes that vast growth in housing wealth and mobility led to increased homeownership on a broad scale, as well as a growth in second homes. Other factors include an ageing population meaning rising retirees with disposable income, new forms of (flexible) labour, and the use of second properties as investments (Gallent et al., 2005; Norris et al., 2010).

In the existing literature, the impacts of second homes are discussed primarily regarding interactions with housing markets, and to a lesser extent in relation to broader issues such as rural sustainability and a decline in services. Paris (2009) argues that second homeownership may be considered a form of 'rural gentrification' as countryside and coastal areas are transformed into gentrified leisure sites, magnifying wealth disparities between local residents and outside buyers, and helping to render housing unaffordable. However, Paris also contends that 'locals' are not easily defined and may themselves overlap with second homeowners, as the latter may include descendants of local residents who return to use an inherited or purchased property as a second home or to live longer-term. Paris warns that we cannot assume a causal relationship between the prevalence of second homes and unaffordability or other housing issues, and that this should be a question for research.

Colomb and Gallent (2022) note that second homes and short-term lets may move properties out of the 'full-time' residential stock, placing upward pressure on housing costs and exacerbating housing shortages for long-term residents. This has differential impacts on homeowners, who may offset or even benefit from tourism pressures by participating in the short-term let market, and tenants, who are at greater risk of displacement. The authors refer to a 'rural affordability crisis' for young and less affluent households in many parts of the UK. However, Gallent et al. (2022) also offer a recent example where second homes might appear to assist declining communities, as some young families returned to live in their second homes in a Welsh town during the Covid-19 pandemic, made possible due to flexible working arrangements. Still, it is unclear whether this is a long-term trend as the 'urban flight' witnessed during Covid has to some extent reversed (Colomb and Gallent, 2022).

Our report builds on recent efforts to focus more broadly on 'low-use properties', defined as any residential property without a permanent resident. A lack of data has often been considered a problem for policymakers and researchers, but work by Bourne (2019) used an

innovative approach to address the lack of data in this area by using the same techniques of quantitative analysis, mapping and data collection used in this report. Bourne used council tax records gathered using Freedom of Information requests for local authorities across the UK to map the distribution of low-use properties and to examine the relationship between concentrations of low-use and house price affordability. The study received data from 112 local authorities in England and Wales, covering 23 million residents (41% of the population) and 34,000 low-use properties (3.4% of all dwellings) and estimated the value of low-use properties at £123 billion. Bourne found that low-use homes tend to be found in the most and least affordable areas, but that low-use homes tend to be more expensive as tourism increases and affordability decreases. He also concluded that almost half of the population of England and Wales live in areas where LUPs are more expensive than properties with full-time residents.

Some of the most in-depth research that has been conducted on the impacts and policy implications of empty and second homes in the UK have come from reports commissioned by governmental and non-governmental bodies, such as Wallace et al.'s (2005) systematic review of second and empty homes in rural areas of the UK. There are also numerous country-specific reports: for England (Dunning and Moore, 2020; Wilson, 2023), Scotland (McDonald and Wightman, 2018; Scottish Government, 2023; Scottish Empty Homes Partnership, 2023; Dodds and Dalgligh, no date), Wales (Anglesey and Gwynedd Joint Planning Policy Service, 2020; Brooks, 2021; Powel et al., 2021, Tewdwr-Jones et al., 2002), and Northern Ireland (Paris, 2008). For a summary of existing statistics and data sources in each country, see Appendix B.

3. Low-use property across England, Wales and Scotland

In this section we present data showing the geographical distribution of low-use properties across local authority districts in England, Scotland and Wales. We obtained anonymised council tax records of empty and second homes, based on properties granted council tax discounts or charged a premium. The results presented here examine areas of concentration at two scales, local authority and Lower Super Output Area (LSOA). A LSOA is a stable unit of analysis that has around 1,500 people or 650 households in each area. The benefit of presenting our work using this geographical scale is that each area contains around the same number of people, though the physical area of each LSOA varies. This helps to reveal more granular distributions which can inform policies to tackle high concentrations of low-use property. We also analysed low-use data in conjunction with house price data to consider whether there is a relationship between low-use properties and housing affordability.

To obtain data for England and Wales, we built on Bourne (2019) and used freedom of information requests to all remaining local authorities. Despite our efforts, not all local councils returned data. For Scotland, such council tax data is made publicly available.³ We therefore ended up with a dataset of 205 local authorities (nearly two-thirds of England, Scotland and Wales councils). Unfortunately, equivalent data is not available for Northern Ireland, as the country has a different council tax system (known as ‘rates’) and does not grant discounts or charge premiums on empty or second homes. While our analysis focuses on rural and coastal areas, we also obtained data for local authorities containing urban areas.

While we discuss our methods in detail in appendix A, it is important to note the study only counted those dwellings that fall under council tax discounts or premiums, and not those classed as ‘exemptions’. This is because council tax ‘exemptions’ cover situations such as the recent death or incarceration of the resident. Discounts cover properties empty for longer than six months, second homes and properties being renovated, implying a degree of choice on the part of the owner. Second homes may also include properties that are let out as short-term lets (but not those let commercially that pay business rates, as these are not liable for council tax). We have no way of knowing whether second homes are being let out, or for how much time, as local authorities do not collect this data. Another limitation of council tax data is that, since councils have not been obliged to grant discounts for LUPs since 2013, their recorded numbers

³<https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/households/household-estimates/2022>

of LUPs may be undercounts. These are important points that we return to in our policy discussions later.

All maps as well as local authority and LSOA data can be downloaded from: <https://figshare.com/s/52019a9bfb60978ecd70>

3.1 Distribution of low-use property in each national context

Figures 1, 2 and 3 (showing England, Wales and Scotland respectively) illustrate the percentage of low-use property for each data-returning local authority. We can see that local authorities with higher overall proportions of low-use property can be found in parts of Wales, the South West of England and East Anglia, and Argyll & Bute and the Outer Hebrides in Scotland. The maps are presented with colour coding that shows the percentage of low-use properties by deciles. Deciles help us to see the extent of low-use property in each authority by dividing the data into ten even splits. The national maps are split into deciles to show how each compares with the overall, national distribution of the extent of low-use homes.

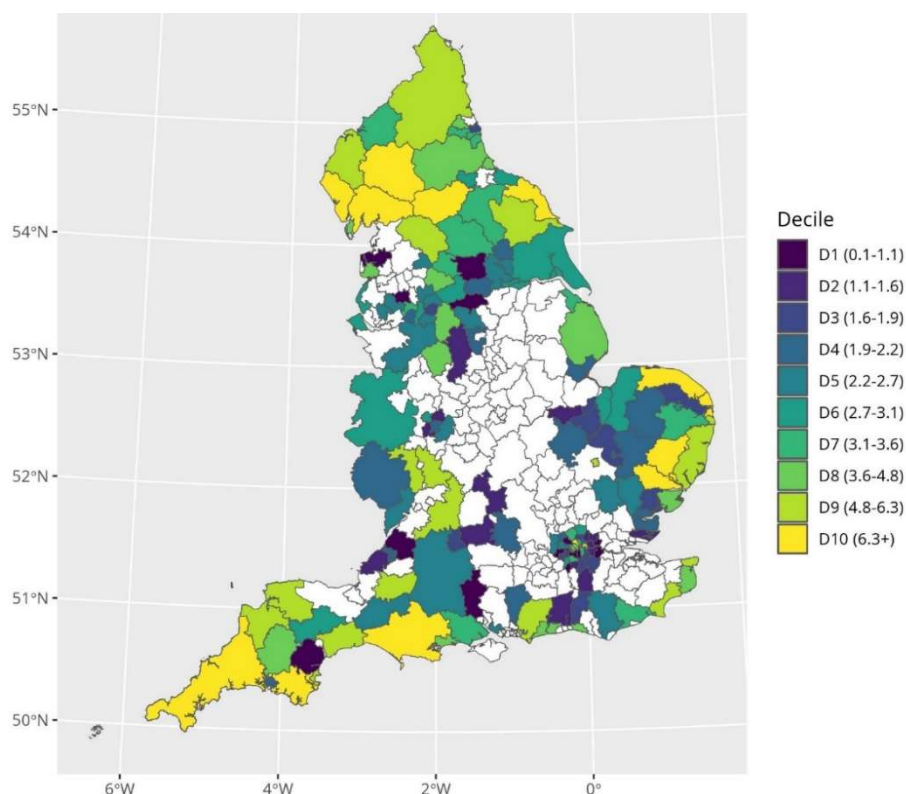


Figure 1: England, percentage of low-use dwellings in each local authority returning data

Our data for England has good coverage of rural and coastal areas. This shows that significant numbers of local authorities in the South West, East Anglia and national park areas of the north of England appear in the two highest deciles, with around one in twenty homes (and more) in these districts being discounted or subject to premiums for being a low-use property.

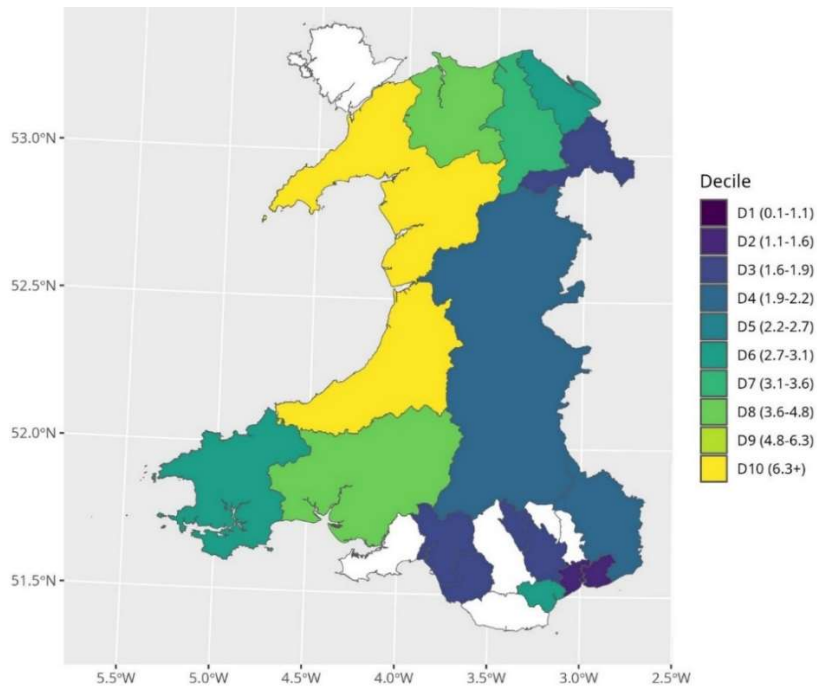


Figure 2: Wales, percentage of low-use dwellings in each local authority returning data

Wales shows a high level of low-use properties in the middle and northwest coast areas. While Anglesey is noted for having large numbers of second homes we did not have a return from this local authority.

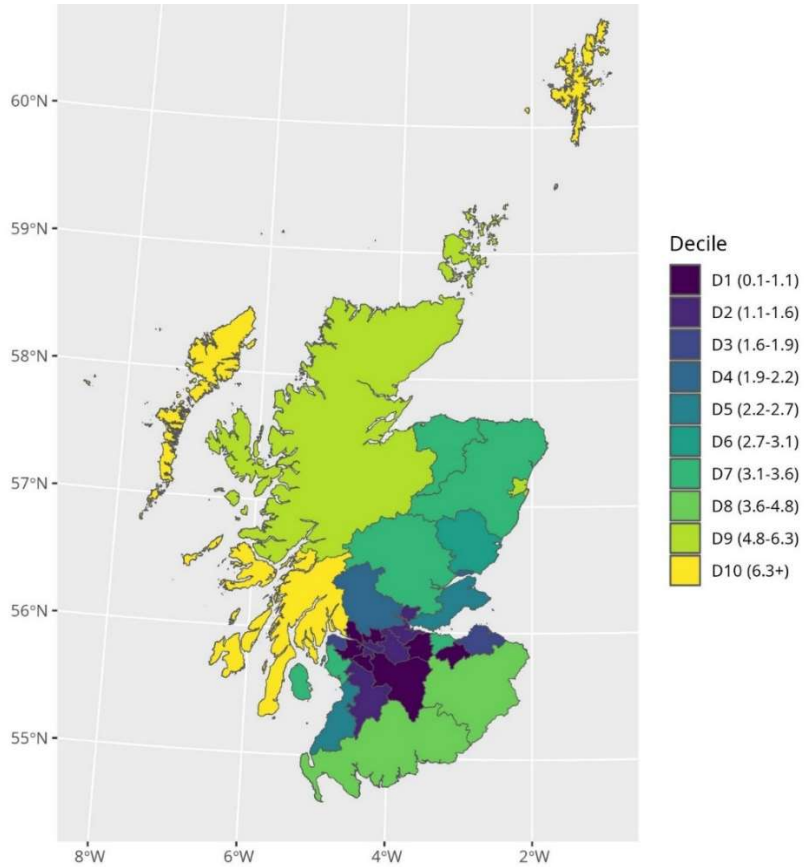


Figure 3: Scotland, percentage of low-use dwellings in each local authority

The Scottish council areas in the highest two deciles for low-use homes include Highland, Argyll & Bute and Aberdeen City. While not visible on the national map, Scotland has 4 of the 5 local authority districts in the UK with the most *concentrated* levels of low-use properties, clustered especially in Edinburgh and Glasgow.

Local authority	Region	# Low-use homes	Total homes	Percent low use	Average price of low-use homes	Average price, other homes
City of London	London	2,023	7530	27%	£896,663	£896,663
Babergh	East of England	7,143	41880	17%	£398,046	£387,622
Ipswich	East of England	10,067	61680	16%	£241,189	£244,356
Mid Suffolk	East of England	7,442	46010	16%	£367,821	£362,334
North Norfolk	East of England	7,176	55610	13%	£343,337	£330,073
Kensington and Chelsea	London	10,271	89350	11%	£2,383,678	£2,043,890
Gwynedd	Wales	6,677	61540	11%	£325,310	£270,334
South Lakeland	North West	5,641	53770	10%	£350,427	£318,375
South Hams	South West	4,468	45260	10%	£529,257	£413,591
Na h-Eileanan Siar	Scotland	1,436	14862	10%	NA	NA
Scarborough	Yorkshire and The Humber	5,496	57960	9%	£247,617	£237,018
Dorset	South West	15,698	181140	9%	£411,138	£387,699
Argyll and Bute	Scotland	4,045	48388	8%	£212,024	£202,774
Ceredigion	Wales	2,716	35420	8%	£295,507	£279,190
Richmondshire	Yorkshire and The Humber	1,775	23210	8%	£396,583	£348,647
Cornwall	South West	19,759	276490	7%	£412,708	£336,215
Great Yarmouth	East of England	3,273	48650	7%	£225,046	£226,093
Camden	London	7,537	114590	7%	£1,209,725	£1,139,564
Eden	North West	1,757	27190	6%	£306,575	£275,935
Shetland Islands	Scotland	736	11462	6%	NA	NA
Copeland	North West	2,136	33810	6%	£162,488	£151,385
Cotswold	South West	2,803	44810	6%	£513,522	£486,062
Cambridge	East of England	3,667	58720	6%	£534,157	£510,167
Chichester	South East	3,522	58720	6%	£577,186	£545,787
Malvern Hills	West Midlands	2,209	36860	6%	£382,722	£383,100
North Devon	South West	2,840	47410	6%	£366,684	£327,625
Allerdale	North West	2,757	47710	6%	£236,426	£191,270
Aberdeen City	Scotland	6,856	122239	6%	£139,202	£156,022
Tower Hamlets	London	7,812	139630	6%	£583,503	£563,922
Thanet	South East	3,714	67880	5%	£325,635	£324,608

Table 2: Top 30 local authorities in terms of percentage low-use properties. Also showing average price of low-use homes in comparison with other homes

3.2 Analysis of Lower Super Output Areas

While the national maps can point to local authorities with higher overall proportions of low-use properties, we now turn to the LSOA level, which offers a more granular perspective of concentrations of LUPs *within* local authorities. These maps may be useful for policymakers to pinpoint areas with particularly high concentrations of LUPs.

The maps can be consulted individually for each returning local authority from the repository. Here we highlight a selection of maps to offer a sense of what the data shows and the contrasting experiences of various rural and coastal areas.

The first set of maps demonstrates the full scale of low-use property distributions at LSOA level. These maps are calibrated by the range, or extent, of low-use properties at the LSOA level in each local authority.

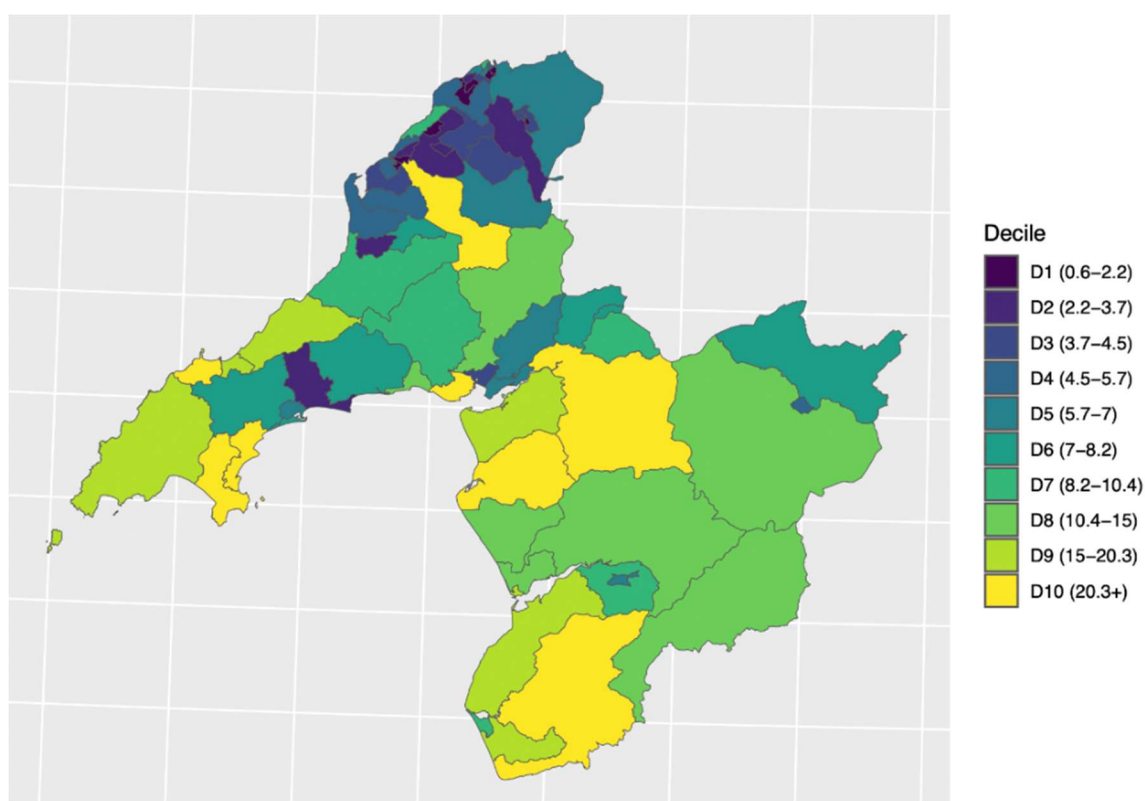


Figure 4: Low-use dwellings as a percentage of all dwellings for each LSOA in Gwynedd, Wales

The highest decile in Gwynedd, Wales represents LSOAs containing over 20% low-use homes.

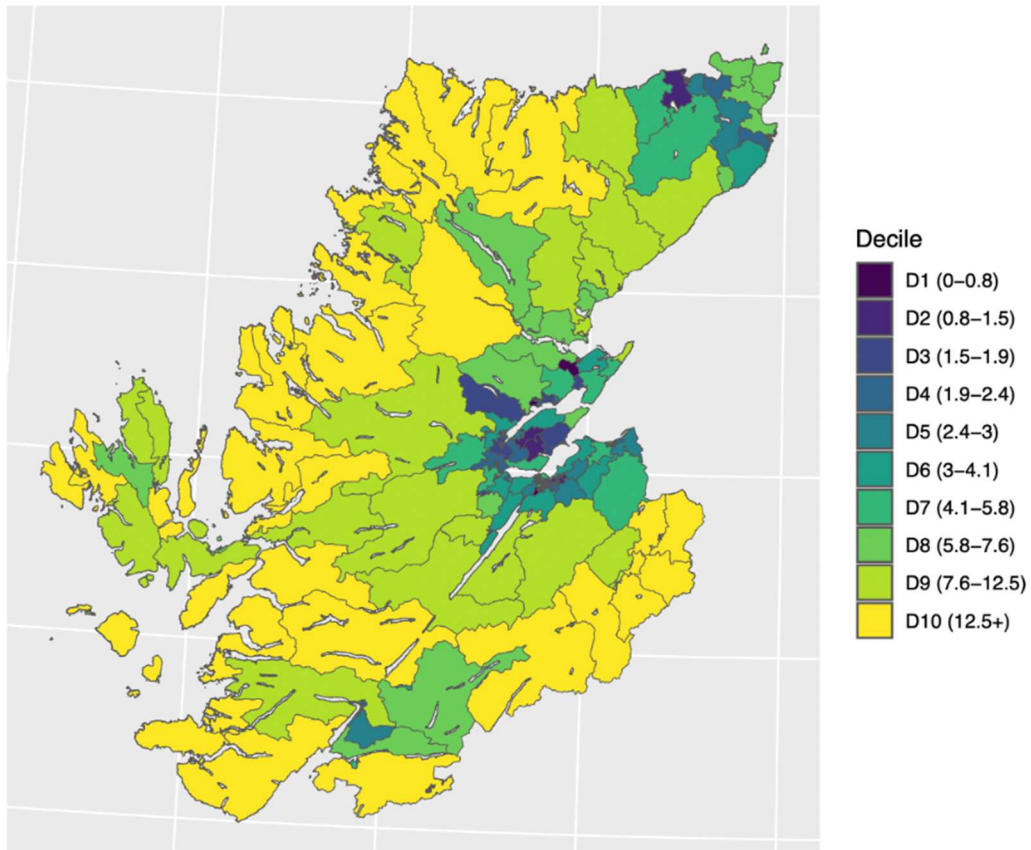


Figure 5: Low-use dwellings as a percentage of all dwellings for each LSOA in Highland, Scotland

The highest decile in Highland, Scotland represents LSOAs with over 12.5% low-use homes. Highland also has a high overall proportion of LSOAs in the top decile.

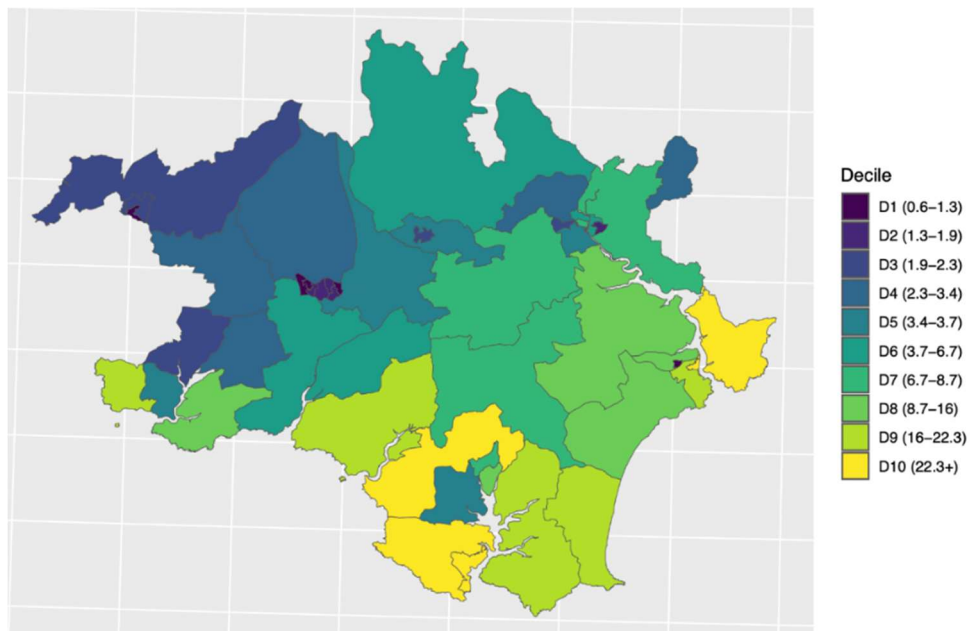


Figure 6: Low-use dwellings as a percentage of all dwellings for each LSOA in South Hams, England

The highest decile in South Hams, England represents LSOAs with over 22% low-use homes. You can also see the much higher concentration of low-use properties on the coast.

The next set of maps have been calibrated to show the top decile nationally, and therefore highlight areas with 5.7% or more low-use properties. We have suggested 5% as a useful threshold to trigger policy intervention, laid out in section 6. This also allows for more meaningful comparison between local authority areas.

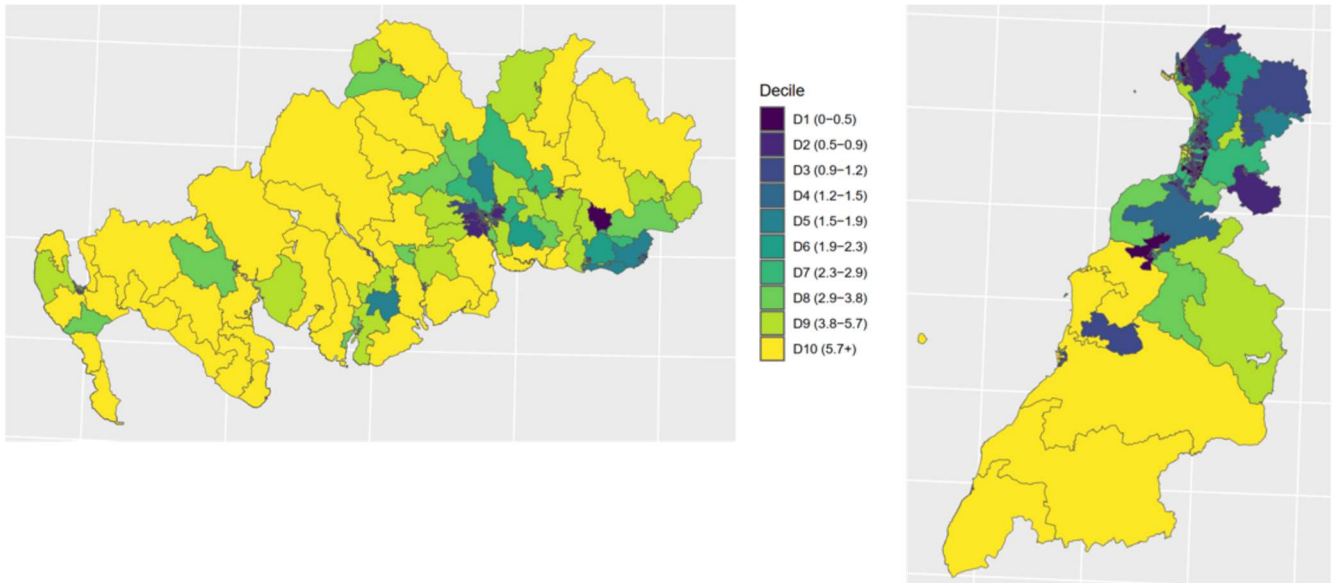


Figure 7: Low-use dwellings as a percentage of all dwellings for each LSOA in Dumfries & Galloway and South Ayrshire, Scotland

Dumfries & Galloway and South Ayrshire are bordering local authorities with quite different overall levels of low-use properties. Dumfries and Galloway has a more uniform and extensive distribution of areas with high numbers of LUPs, whilst South Ayrshire has much higher levels in the south and lower in the urban north.

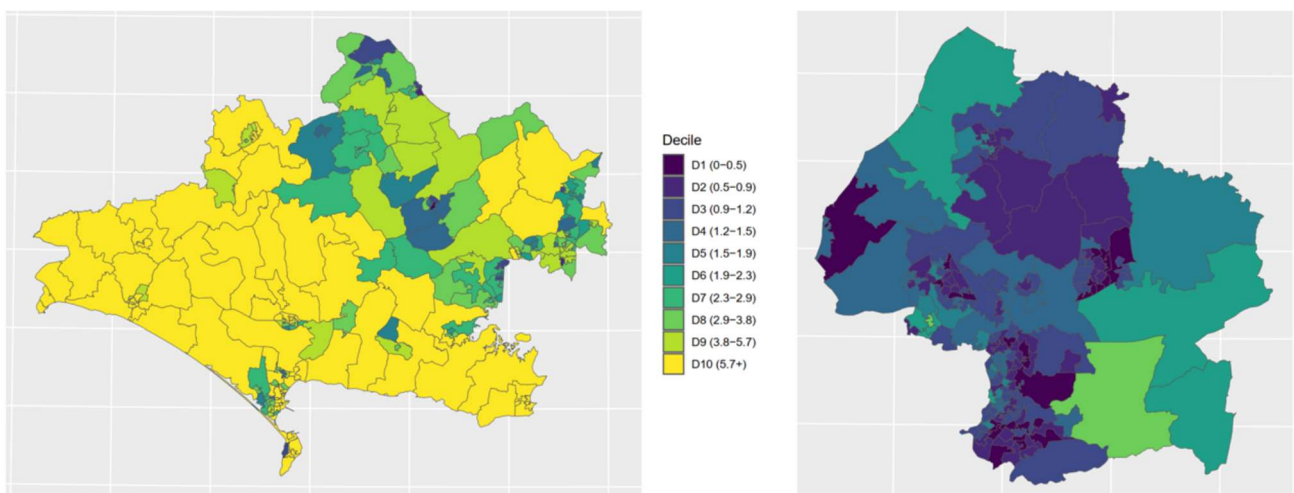


Figure 8: Low-use dwellings as a percentage of all dwellings for each LSOA in Dorset and South Gloucestershire, England

Dorset and South Gloucestershire represent two coastal but contrasting areas in the South West of England. Dorset has many LSOAs with high proportions of LUPs while South

Gloucestershire does not. The maps illustrate how Dorset may require more urgent interventions given the many LSOAs with more than 5.7% LUPs.

We also identified LSOAs that constitute 'ghost enclaves', where at least 25% of properties are low-use. The below map of the UK highlights in blue local authorities which contain 'ghost enclave' LSOAs. The full dataset identifying ghost enclave LSOAs is available on the online repository.

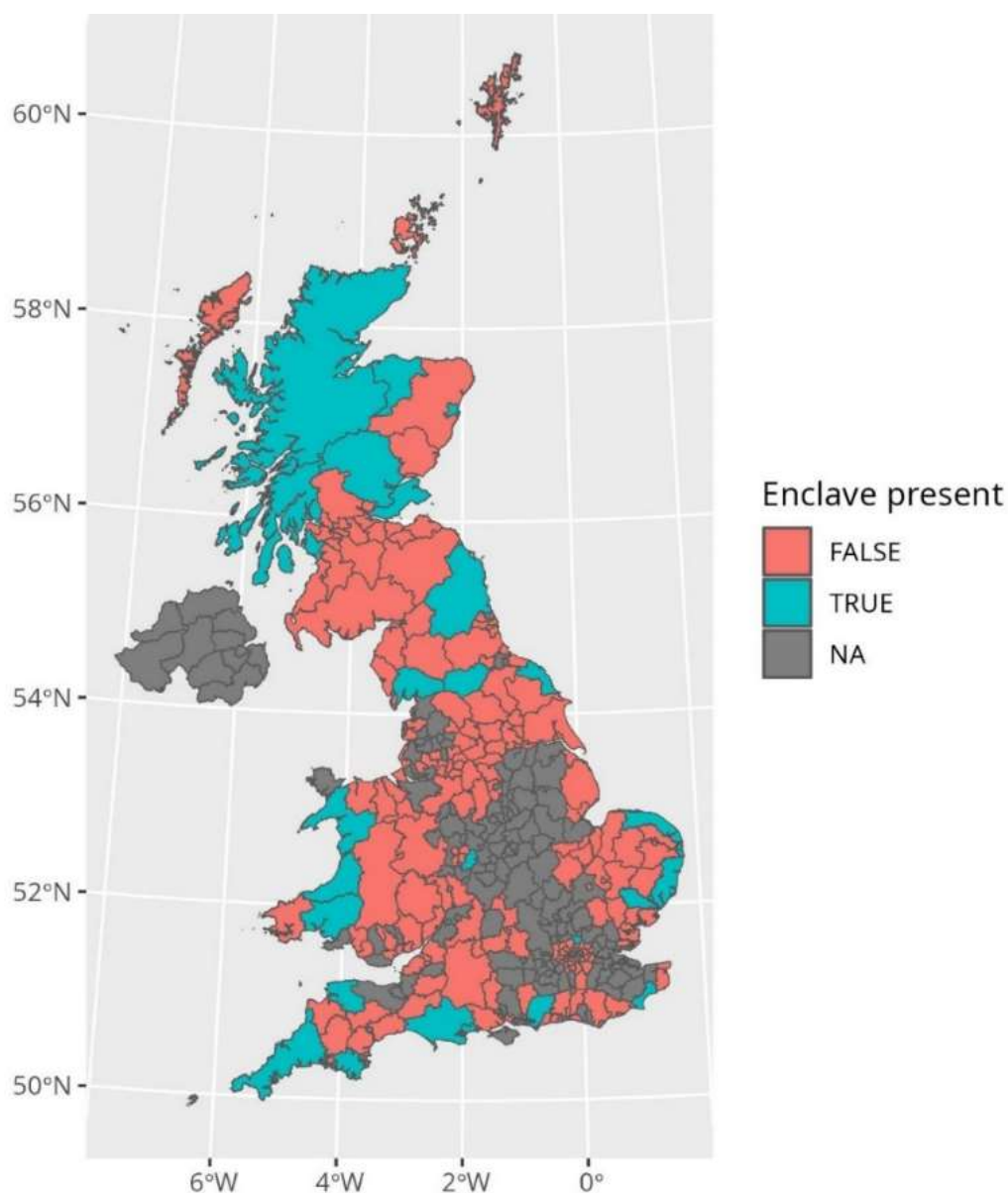


Figure 9: Local authorities containing 'ghost enclaves' (LSOA areas with 25%+ low-use property)

3.3 Relating house prices to low-use property

We used a statistical analysis to compare data on low-use properties in each local authority district with house price data for each area (See appendix A for details). This showed that of the 205 local authorities we have data for, 42% had no significant difference in price between LUPs and fully occupied homes, while a third (34%) had significantly higher prices for LUPs and a quarter (23%) had prices for LUPs that were significantly lower (we map these types of areas below). For areas where LUPs were more expensive, these were more often coastal local authorities with higher levels of tourism, where LUPs are more likely to be in the category of second home or short-term let. While we cannot assume a causal relationship, we can infer that areas with a higher price ratio of LUPs to other homes indicates a higher demand for underused property.

England and Wales had a broadly similar profile relative to the average, but Scotland had a lower fraction of high-value LUPs with only 19% of LUPs in this category, and a much higher fraction with no significant difference at 50%. Part of the explanation for this difference may be that the Scottish dataset has complete country coverage so does not suffer from any selection bias (that is, local authorities in England and Wales chose whether or not to return data). Scotland also uses a single consistent method of reporting which England and Wales do not. Table 3 shows the most extreme low and high local authorities for each country in terms of price ratios between LUPs and all other residential dwellings; this shows where the percentage difference in price between LUPs and homes is most extreme. For example, in Fife the value of LUPs was 1.35 times the value of other dwellings, whereas in Hartlepool, LUPs were only 0.75 the value of other residential homes.

Local authority	Country	Percent low use	Price ratio	Type
Hartlepool	England	4%	0.75	low
Barrow-in-Furness	England	5%	0.87	low
Aberdeen City	Scotland	6%	0.90	low
Renfrewshire	Scotland	1%	0.90	low
Newport	Wales	1%	0.95	low
Cardiff	Wales	3%	0.96	low
Westminster	England	4%	1.37	high
South Hams	England	10%	1.25	high
Fife	Scotland	3%	1.35	high
North Ayrshire	Scotland	4%	1.29	high
Gwynedd	Wales	11%	1.18	high
Carmarthenshire	Wales	4%	1.06	high

Table 3: Ratio of prices at low and high extremes at local authority level.

The following maps reveal the geospatial diversity of low-use properties in Great Britain and the differences between the countries. England is the most extreme with both the highest and lowest overall differences between LUPs and homes, whilst Wales has the least extreme differences between LUPs and other homes. Across the maps there is a visible correlation

between higher price ratios and rural but especially coastal areas. For example, South Hams in England is the local authority where the price ratio of LUPs to homes is highest (after Westminster in London).

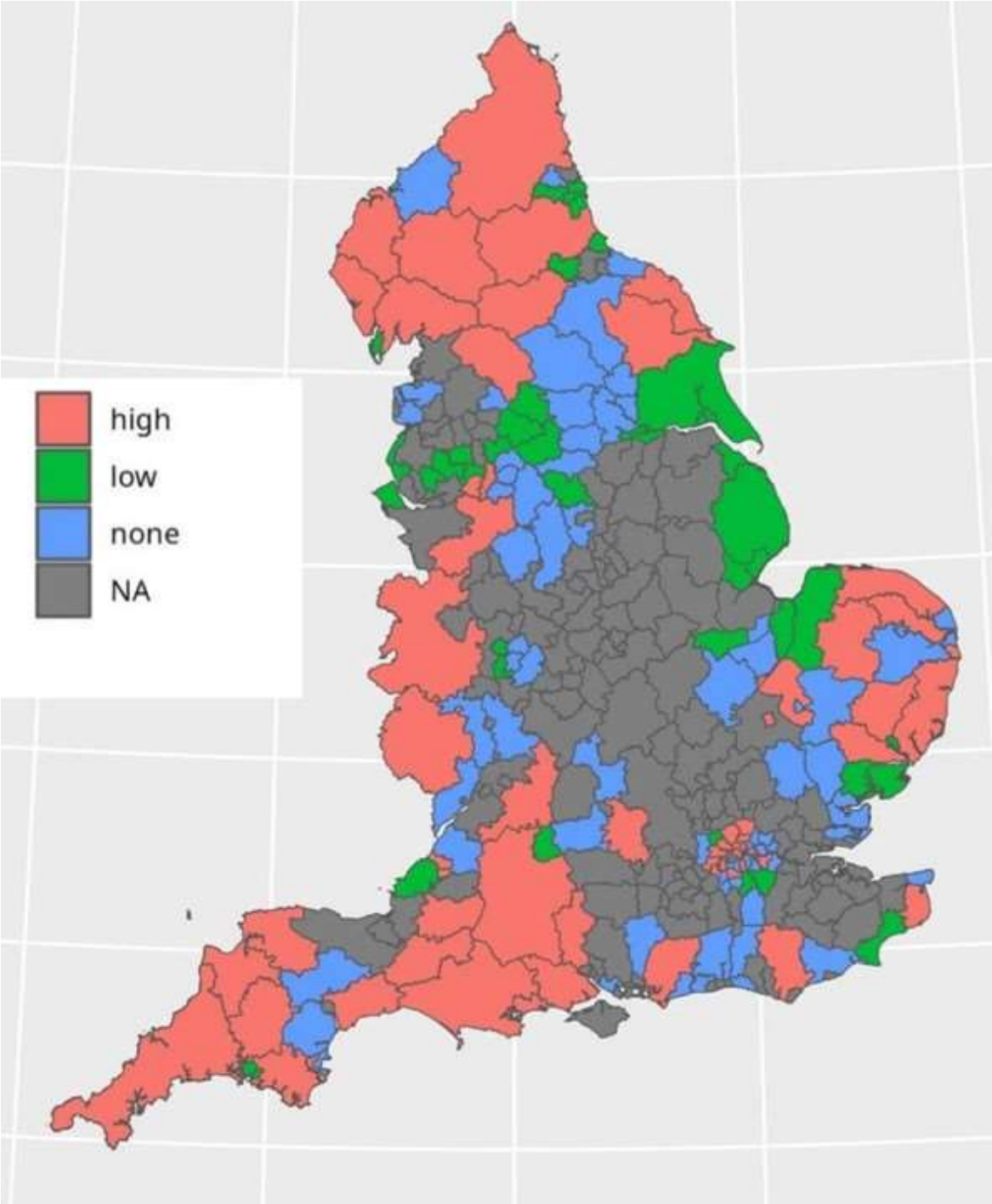


Figure 10: England, showing local authorities where low-use properties have a higher or lower value than other properties ('none' indicates no significant difference in price)

In Scotland, urban Aberdeen on the east coast and suburban Renfrewshire on the west coast have the proportionally most low-value LUPs whilst east coast rural Fife and west coast/rural North Ayrshire have the largest price ratio difference between LUPs and homes. Note that in

Scotland there is no data for the Shetland Islands or the Outer Hebrides, due to issues with the pricing data.

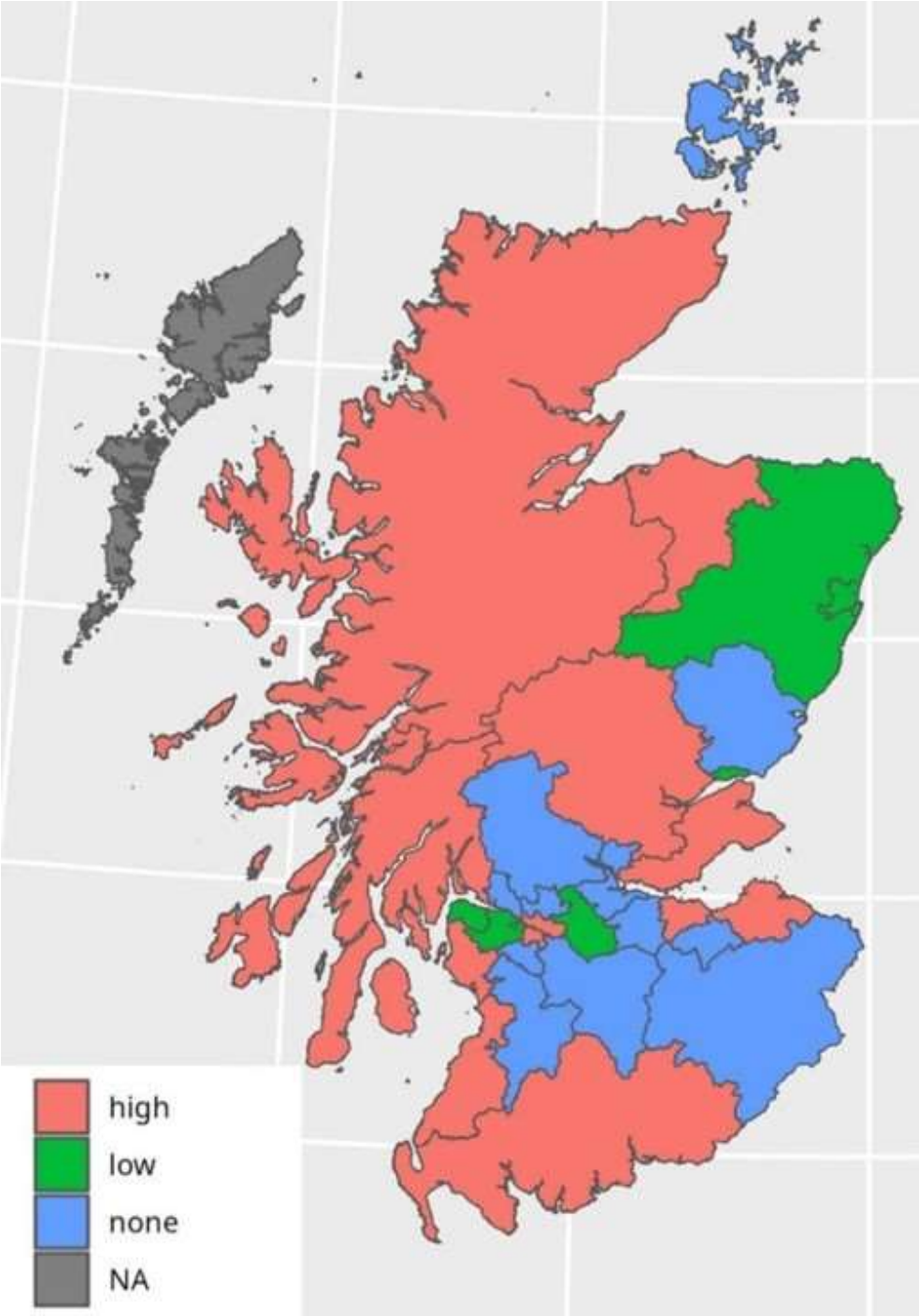


Figure 11: Scotland, showing local authorities where low-use properties have a higher or lower value than other properties ('none' indicates no significant difference in price)

Finally in Wales (figure 12), neighbouring coastal urban Cardiff and Newport both have homes in general that are substantially less expensive than LUPs, whilst Carmarthenshire on the south coast and coastal Gwynedd in the northwest have the most proportionately expensive LUPs.

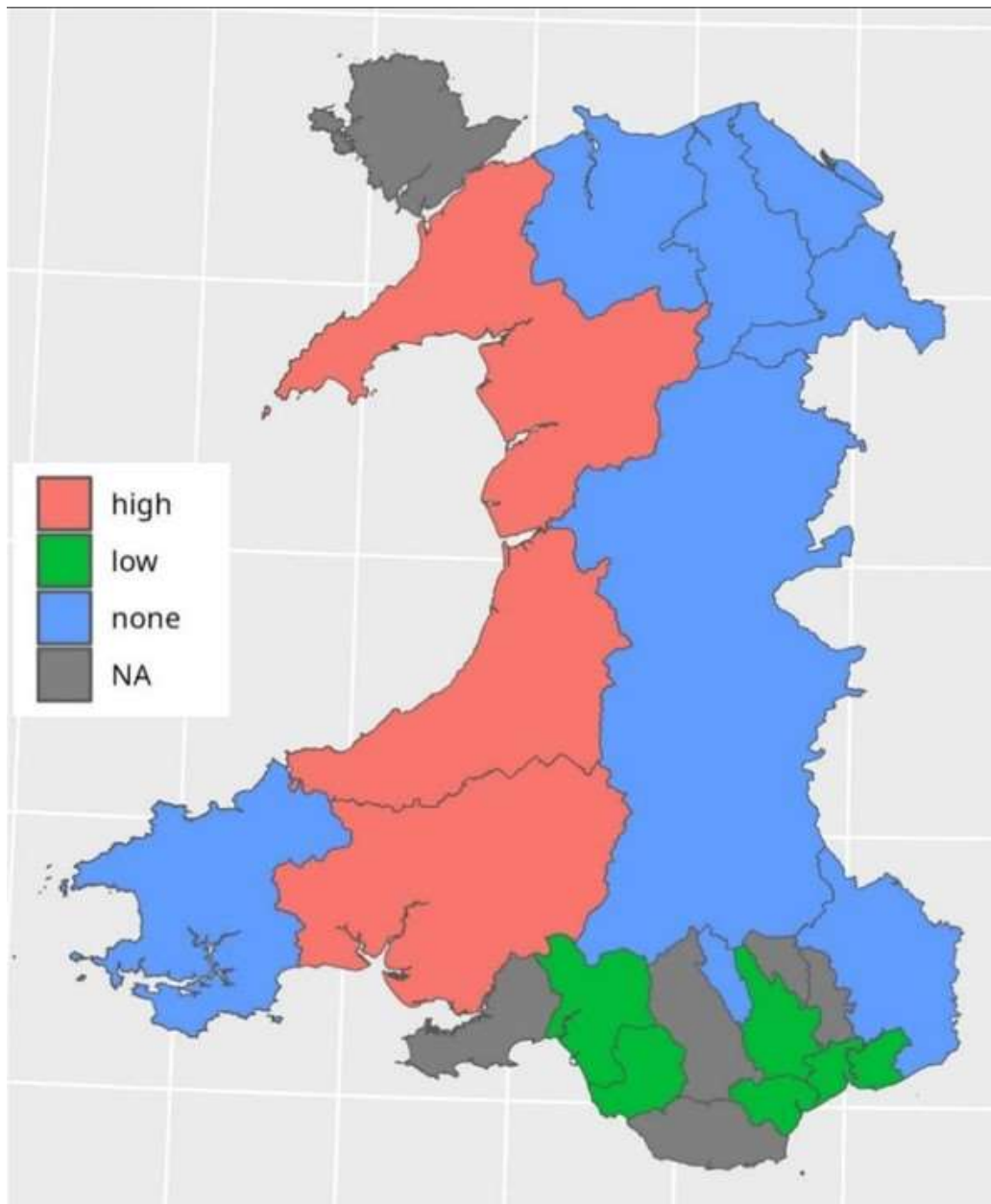


Figure 12: Wales, showing local authorities where low-use properties have a higher or lower value than other properties ('none' indicates no significant difference in price)

The maps presented in this section can be used by policymakers to identify local authorities and LSOAs with high proportions and concentrations of low-use properties. The maps based on pricing ratios can also be used to identify areas with particularly high demand for low-use properties, which may indicate the need for measures to reduce demand (following Bourne, 2019). Before turning to policy implications, however, we present our findings from the qualitative portion of our research.

4. Drivers and impacts of low-use homes in rural and coastal communities

This section provides an overview of the key drivers and impacts of low-use properties in rural and coastal areas, drawing from our qualitative interview data. Guided by our quantitative data, we conducted 58 interviews with 66 total participants in various impacted rural and coastal areas across Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and England. Participants included housing and planning officials, policy experts, campaigners, residents, local and national-level councillors and politicians, trade body representatives and estate agents. (For further details on qualitative methods, see appendix A.)

It can be difficult to isolate the main drivers and impacts of low-use homes when set alongside wider long-term trends such as increasing housing costs and depopulation of some areas, and major issues varied across the UK's four nations. Still, there were some common themes that emerged. For example, most interviewees felt there was a clear connection between low-use homes taking properties off the market which was significantly contributing to housing issues and the loss of a base of permanent residents. In addition, questions of community viability and sustainability were frequently raised by our participants.

4.1 Drivers

The proliferation of low-use properties can be related to several key factors. The rise of second and empty homes has often been related to change at the regional scale, to housing policy and wider questions of inequality and mobility. For example, the decline of traditional industries, population loss in rural and coastal areas, an ageing and increasingly affluent population of homeowners are all related factors. The decline of industry and employment opportunities in some areas has meant the departure of permanent residents, while an increase in the purchase of second homes has contributed to the presence of low-use properties. The proliferation of second homes in rural and coastal areas is a significant form of low-use in these areas, often interrelated with the rise of the short-term lettings market.

While this project did not interrogate the motivations of second home buyers specifically, interviewees did weigh in on the broader economic dynamics that they perceived to be contributing to low-use properties. The main image provided was that of buyers from wealthier parts of the UK looking to buy second properties in picturesque coastal and rural areas. For example, buyers from around London purchasing properties on the south coast of England, or buyers from the Manchester area purchasing properties in the northwest and west of Wales.

This has meant second homes that sit empty during the winter months or for longer periods, while others may enter the holiday let market. The unequal purchasing power between ‘local’ residents and ‘incomers’ was deeply felt in some areas:

“Someone could sell a house in the southeast, for say £1 million, because that’s not unusual. You can come to Cornwall, you can buy the same kind of house for about £250,000. You pay off your mortgage, you’re perhaps in your mid-fifties, early fifties, maybe younger than that. You pay off your mortgage and you’ve got a nice big cushion of money there [...] of course, that £250,000, £300,000, is way beyond the price that local people could afford. The median wage is around £24,000, £26,000.” (Policy expert, England)

This point is supported by recent census data showing the location of holiday homes and the origins of their users.⁴ For example, second homeowners in the west of Wales seem to originate primarily from around Manchester, Liverpool and Birmingham, whereas in the southeast or west coast of England, owners are clustered primarily around Greater London. However, local residents also play a part in the short-term and holiday lettings markets. For example, one interviewee in the Scottish Islands pointed out that residents had long rented out second properties to tourists for additional income. In some cases this entails the conversion of buildings to holiday accommodation.

Our participants often suggested that the Covid-19 pandemic was a key turning point in the rise of second homes and the purchase of homes as investments to let on platforms as short-term holiday lets. With the ability to travel overseas curtailed, many bought second homes to have a ‘staycation’ option for holidays, or to take advantage of the increase in holidaymakers looking for holiday lets in the country. Interviewees in coastal Wales and South West England reported that the property market heated up after the onset of the pandemic. They also observed that many people moved or spent longer periods of time in their second homes with the ability to work from home; though this also tapered off when the pandemic ended and the sale of some of these homes was reported. There is also indication that the ‘staycation boom’ has slowed due to bad weather, the cost of living crisis and a surplus of holiday lets in many areas.⁵

Some towns have seen an influx of retirees while increases in the number of second homes were also reported, with some buying properties to maintain a place to retire to in the future which might be let out in the meantime or used as a second home. In cases where young people have moved away from an area, they sometimes inherit property which may then serve as a

⁴<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/articles/morethan1in10addressesusedasholidayhomesinsomeareasofenglandandwales/2023-06-20>

⁵<https://www.theguardian.com/money/2024/apr/07/britains-staycation-boom-may-be-over-as-bookings-dry-up>

second home or remain empty. One planner outlined how the drivers of low-use properties have varied in different parts of Scotland:

“There's places like [coastal village] where it's a nice village environment, it's a popular holiday destination and people have second homes because it's a nice environment and property values actually are inflated in those places. That's probably the same for the islands as well [...] I think most islands would say that their property values are higher where there's a higher proportion of second homes. As I say, there are some places [...] where, because the demand for housing has been a bit lower, property values are cheaper, so people have houses there as second homes for that reason, to some extent because they can't sell them so they look to go somewhere else, so they're stuck with them. That links into the long-term empty in terms of places falling into disrepair and then the cost of repairs being more than the value of the flat.” (Planner, Scotland)

Legal disputes over property, or the lack of funds to refurbish homes in disrepair are also reasons why inherited properties might sit empty. For long-term empties in particular, soaring building costs due to the rising cost of materials as well as the shortage of workers in rural and coastal areas, has made it difficult to bring empty homes up to a decent standard to be sold or rented. This is especially true in Scotland where many empty and second homes are dispersed in remote areas, and may be subject to harsh weather conditions.

In areas with a booming second home market, developers have often contributed by building new housing that is intended for the second home or investment markets, rather than for owner-occupiers or the private rented sector. This was particularly pointed out as an issue on the Causeway Coast of Northern Ireland, and on the south coast of England, where one local councillor pointed out there were viable sites for housing development, but these were going to the second home market:

“...down in [seaside English town], they still have sites with development, like a big school has just closed, but the developers just want to put up fancy second home apartments” (Local councillor, England)

Wider policies and asset dynamics

The wider context to these apparently local changes in housing markets is important to understand. Widening asset and wealth inequalities in the UK can be linked to high levels of disposable wealth among the upper-middle and upper classes, which has led to a greater ability to purchase both primary and secondary properties. This derives from longstanding UK policy to increase reliance on private assets over public goods (Adkins, Cooper and Konings 2020). Privately owned housing is thus viewed as an integral part of the social safety net. These factors were reflected in our interviews, with several participants referring to second homes as

‘pension plans’. The use of property as a pension plan has been partially enabled by the rise of Airbnb and by various policies introduced to make investing in holiday lets more attractive, such as mortgage interest rate relief for holiday lets in England.⁶ A local councillor in Wales summarised how wealth inequalities and the view of housing as an investment has exacerbated the presence of second homes and empty properties:

“So, if you’re selling a property in London, or you’re selling a property in Manchester and you’re coming to move to live here and you’re selling a £300,000 house and the rest. You can buy a house for £150,000 and then you’ve got the capital left to spend and a bit of a retirement fund there. But that’s the mismatch of—we have relatively high prices but in the UK context, it’s quite low prices. I think that’s the perfect storm of why we have so many second homes and long-term empties. People are sitting on them, thinking houses—it’s a good investment.” (Local councillor, Wales)

Another participant in the east coast of England pointed out that they have long had second homeowners who planned to retire in his area and that he considers them part of the community. However, more recently numbers have escalated with the ‘housing-as-investment’ model:

“We’ve had second homes here for years. We’ve always done fine. Quite a lot of the buyers have second homes and then they come and retire here. Most of them get involved in the local community and they’re welcome. About five and a bit years ago, we started getting people just buying up second homes for an investment because they were going up 6% per annum, which was a lot more than you would get if you put your money in a savings account. Some of them were actually empty a lot of the time. That’s no good for our economy and it does rub locals’ nose in it when they can’t get anywhere to live and you see all these empty houses with nobody in them.” (Local councillor, east coast of England)

⁶ https://www.taxwatchuk.org/furnished_holiday_lets/

4.2 Impacts

4.2.1 Housing affordability and accessibility

In nearly every locality covered by interviews, participants viewed low-use homes as having a direct relationship with the affordability and accessibility of housing for low and middle-income people. In areas of high second homeownership, most key actors we spoke to felt that the growth in second homes had, in some way, contributed to rising house prices. This link was explained in a number of ways. First, long-time residents on often lower local wages linked to seasonal tourism were unable to compete with wealthier in-moving buyers possessing substantially greater purchasing power, in desirable areas such as Cornwall and coastal Wales. A resident of a Northern Irish coastal town described the near impossibility of families finding an affordable home in the town, and how local families are often 'outbid' by investors offering cash:

“You're competing against, not just first-time buyers, but second time buyers. You're not competing like for like, you're competing against property developers, investment buyers, cash buyers as well. It's not an easy market to buy into. There really won't be anything in the town for first-time buyers...”
(Local resident, Northern Ireland)

Second, the growth in second homes and increasing conversion of long-term rentals to short-term lets was seen by many we spoke to as an important factor in substantially reducing the supply of potential homes from localities. Short-term lets, often bought by speculative investors, were seen to be greatly reducing the availability of housing in the private rented sector which, in some areas, barely existed as a functioning system. These changes have led to the displacement of local residents who, while not necessarily evicted from their homes, have found themselves unable to afford a house in a town where they had family or a local connection. Similarly interviewees related how young people who left to attend university were then not able to afford to move back, and many reported residents being obliged to move to neighbouring areas to access lower housing costs:

“But they're now finding that they can make four thousand pound in four weeks, in the summer period, just by, by Airbnb. [...] Now, it's a thousand pound a month, for rent, because landlords are saying, well you know, if you don't pay this to me, we'll just put it on Airbnb and they'll get the same return for, for less work. [...] So that's pushed rents up, exponentially, which means, now, people can't buy property and they can't rent, in their own community. So tie that into a weak local economy, low wages and young people, primarily, are moving away.” (Politician, Wales)

The lack of affordable homes to buy and rent is a UK-wide problem and cannot be attributed solely to higher numbers of second and empty homes. As some participants noted, a certain number of second homes and short-term lets may be desirable to underwrite local tourist

economies. However, above a certain threshold, any additional home converted to a second home or short-term let directly subtracts from the supply of homes that could be used by a long-term resident.

“Very well-off people were building second homes, holiday homes here on the shores of the lake in the 1700s, 1800s. That has always been a thing as well. But it's just the scale of it. A few second homes, of course, isn't that big a deal. It's part of the tourism economy. It's equally part of the mix. But when we're starting to get communities where 40%, 50%, 60% of the houses are empty because they're second homes a lot of the time, or they're holiday lets, that is when it really does start to become a real problem.” (Campaigner, England)

In rural and coastal areas with high numbers of second homes or where entire town centres appeared to house only transient residents, this was particularly felt to be the case. When new open market housing has been built in these areas, much of this has gone directly to cash-rich buyers and investors. This illustrates that it is not possible to ‘build our way out’ of the problem; rather it is necessary to reserve homes for local residents and for those on low incomes. (We turn to these ideas in sections 5 and 6).

4.2.2 Local economy and services

Our interviewees also brought up how the rise in low-use properties has also had significant impacts on the availability and sustainability of local economies and services. The economies of most of the coastal and rural towns included in the study rely mainly on tourism and this is a major source of employment. In these locales, the reduced availability and affordability of housing was identified as a key factor in making it much more difficult for those working in this sector to find stable accommodation. This situation is further impacted by the seasonality of tourism, even more acute in places where the main tourist season may only span the spring and summer. Often this means that employers cannot afford to pay staff throughout the year, and staff may be ‘drafted in’ during the summer months, living in temporary accommodation or arriving by public transport. Hospitality businesses, such as pubs and restaurants, are consequently often understaffed, even in peak tourism months when second homeowners and other holidaymakers would provide a substantial clientele. Numerous participants reported pubs, local shops, and other businesses being forced to close because of staff shortages or the absence of customers during the off-season as local resident populations dwindled.

Similarly, participants noted the difficulty in recruitment of key workers for services such as the NHS, schools, and fire services, which has led to a decline in these facilities. This is especially an issue in remote towns, where commuting from a larger hub is not always possible. The lack of staff to keep services going is also pertinent given the changing demographics of many rural and coastal areas, with higher numbers of retirees as younger families move away. Elderly people in these areas are finding they cannot easily access care services due to the lack of staff.

In one coastal Scottish town with high numbers of holiday homes and retirees, interviewees relayed how there is a desperate need for a care home in the area, and that in fact one has been built with part of it ready to open. However, the facility has had to remain closed due to the lack of staff.

“...that tension is very evident in some places, and this is not just about people on the frontline, like councillors, I mean this is the ordinary population, who cannot get a GP appointment or can't get some kind of public service because they're short-staffed and it's well known, locally, that the reason they're short-staffed is because they can't attract people and the reason they can't attract people is because people can't afford to live there.” (Campaigner, Scotland)

Our interviewees in coastal and rural areas across the UK expressed significant concern for local schools, offering regular examples of their closure or under-enrolment which threatened the same outcome. With young families increasingly unable to access affordable housing in the area, the social infrastructure and sustainability of rural and coastal communities may continue to be eroded in the future. Some participants were concerned that the reduction in resources for local schools due to under-enrolment would in turn make it further unlikely that families with children would move to the area, reducing the sustainability of the community.

The expansion of an affluent population in rural and coastal areas was often linked to changes that impacted on the long-term resident population, often creating further price pressures. These changes have helped to drive a new consumption landscape of upmarket shops, boutiques, restaurants and other services geared to high-income temporary residents or holidaymakers. In some places these mismatches were particularly significant, such as in northwest Wales where there are high proportions of low-use homes:

“...shops in [coastal town], they're high-end shops, they're not shops which serve the local population. The school has also closed. I think because last December it was down to being six pupils or something. And it's quite a large village in comparison to lots of villages. So, you know you don't have the facilities to support the local communities.” (Planner, Wales)

There was frequently the impression that the decrease in permanent residents in many communities contributed to a kind of downward spiral in which a reduction in services in turn made the place a less desirable place to live and work for permanent residents. One participant warned that this has implications for regional economic development, for example in rural Scotland where there is a huge potential for growth in renewable energy but very few suitable homes for engineers or others to come and work in the industry:

“You've got a hugely skewed demographic balance, you've got a very low tax take and you're losing those significant services that actually make the region a good place to live, work and invest. So, the availability of housing is absolutely central to all of those things. The more you take existing housing

stock, to become either short-term lets or second homes, the more you're impacting on that potential." (Policy expert and campaigner, Scotland)

Low-use homes are part of a complex set of transitions resulting in the loss of permanent residents and reduction in local services. Many rural and coastal areas have long suffered depopulation trends (some of these also linked to the tourist and homeowner economies that have risen since the 1970s), especially in remote rural areas. The decline in traditional industries is also implicated in these changes. In addition, some argued that second homeowners and holidaymakers do contribute to local economies, especially through tourism which is vital in the absence of other industries. One planner in Northern Ireland made the case for second homeowners who visit their second homes more frequently:

"...this notion that it's a very small window and people are here infrequently, isn't necessarily supported and the restaurants and coffee shops [on the coast], would say that they benefit from having that second homeownership in the local community, and then conversely, the fall out, or the benefit of that is those facilities are available to local residents. [The facilities] may not be there if there wasn't a second home in the settlement. (Planner, Northern Ireland)

A campaigner in Scotland on the other hand argued that short-term lets contribute far more to the economy than second homes:

"We've got to say that there's an upside as well, you know, people coming for holidays but it's a, it's a question of efficiency and that's where, in a sense, holiday [second] homes are more problematic than commercial short-term lets because commercial short-term lets have been with us for a long time—self-catering—and they're typically fully booked up through the summer season and that's part of the tourism economy, you know. (Campaigner, Scotland)

Unfortunately there is little research to demonstrate the expenditure of second homeowners and their impact on local economies (Powel et al., 2021). Of course, homes left empty for a large portion of the year would contribute very little to local economies with it not being clear whether local shops and services would be used even by more frequent second home users and by users of short-term lets. Properties visited fairly frequently (for example, each weekend), or rented out occasionally to tourists, would contribute more. At the same time, participants in several locations observed that holidaymakers often stock up at large supermarkets before arriving at their destination, and doubted how much money they spend in local shops. And when they do spend money, it tends to be in higher-end restaurants and shops that do not necessarily serve the wider community. Second home or short-term let owners may also employ local cleaners and other workers for property upkeep, though this tends to be on a low-paid, precarious basis. The interaction of second and empty homes with local economies is a topic where further research is needed; however, the issue clearly interacts with the long-term viability of rural and coastal communities.

4.2.3 Sense of place and community cohesion

Related to the decline in services and facilities was a more general feeling that communities are being ‘hollowed out’ as places become increasingly geared towards second homeowners and short-term visitors. Especially in areas affected by seasonal tourism, some residents described the transformation of their localities into ‘ghost towns’ in the winter months, with empty properties evidenced by the lack of lights on at night, mail piling up, and bins not collected. This was linked to a broader sense of a ‘loss of community’ as neighbours are transient or non-existent, contributing to feelings of loneliness and isolation, especially among elderly residents. As one councillor of an English seaside town described:

“People [of the town] are leaving of their own volition and saying, “Well, it just isn’t a community. There’s not enough people here anymore”. You walk down the street, and you don’t see anybody anymore. You don’t go to pubs because they’re all filled with tourists at the weekends and there’s nobody there during the week. Once people stop going to the pubs, then everyone stops going to the pubs, don’t they? That’s what a lot of these communities are based on.” (Local councillor, England)

On the north coast of Northern Ireland, an estate agent relayed how most homes they sold went almost entirely to second homes and holiday lets, as local residents could not afford them, and how the agency’s business from long-term rentals has severely reduced in recent years. This has led to a clear surplus of a particular kind of housing:

“In terms of the physicality of buildings, you only have to drive around. There’s far too many apartments. The danger of that is that in three- or four-years’ time, we’re going to have high vacancy rates. Everybody buying an apartment isn’t going to live in [the town], they’re buying it for a holiday home. So if they’re buying it for a holiday home, they’re only going to use it probably ten, twelve weeks a year. [The remaining] 40 weeks of the year, what happens? So, that’s a danger. (Estate agent, Northern Ireland)

Some expressed a sense that their town had become entirely geared towards tourists and second homeowners:

“It’s starting to feel almost like a Centre Parcs type set up, where whatever day of the week it is, everyone comes in and they spend a week there on holiday, and then they all dash out again [...] It starts to feel almost like a bit of a theme park, like it’s all just there for tourists. It’s not actually an environment anymore. It’s not a working community anymore. It doesn’t have that same feel.” (Campaigner, England)

This loss of a sense of community overlapped with fears around the loss of local languages such as Welsh and Scottish Gaelic. In Wales, there is an overlap of Welsh-speaking communities with increasingly popular second home and holiday areas. Similarly in Scotland, many traditionally Gaelic-speaking areas are also areas with high numbers of empty and second homes, such as

in the Highlands. While the reasons for the loss of languages are certainly complex, some participants emphasised a link between the increase in second homeowners, the loss of permanent residents and the break-up of Celtic language communities. As one person stated, it's "the impact of young people having to move out and taking the language with them" (Wales, #25 local councillor). Perhaps the most difficult dimension to measure, this loss of community and sense of place was also one of the most emotive in speaking about the impact of low-use homes.

REVIEW

In sum, while low-use homes are not the only factor impacting the sustainability of rural and coastal communities, they were seen by the participants in our fieldwork as playing a significant role. A certain number of second homes and holiday lets may support local economies in the absence of non-touristic industries, but beyond a certain point, low-use homes may make it more difficult to live and work in particular areas. And while it may be possible to have a 'successful' tourist town with primarily transient residents, the downward spiral of losing residents, services, even language and culture, could paradoxically strip places of many of the attributes that made them attractive places to spend time to begin with. On a wider scale, low-use homes reflect and reinforce long-standing inequalities, as those with the means are enabled to buy additional properties to increase their asset wealth and even extract additional income through rents, which may sit in their bank accounts and/or return to their 'home' jurisdiction.

5. Existing policies and initiatives across the four nations

This section outlines the major measures and policies addressing low-use homes in each country, as well as how key actors evaluated and discussed these in our interviews. The strong position of many was that there has been a complete lack of regulation of second homes and short-term lets and that this has led to an untenable situation in many places. A central issue is the degree to which an emphasis on supply approaches might be effective (construction of new, affordable housing) when compared with approaches actively seeking to shape the incentives and regulations around empty and second homes (helping to decrease demand for homes that become low-use). The context of devolution has shaped what has been possible in each country: while in Northern Ireland very few of the following measures have been attempted (and would be difficult given the repeated suspensions of the Northern Ireland Assembly), in Scotland and Wales devolution has enabled significant policy innovation and more assertive approaches to low-use properties.

See full table below.

Table 4: Existing policy approaches and planning measures in the four nations

	England	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland
Tax	<p>Council taxⁱ Empty homes: councils can charge a premium of up to 100% for dwellings that have been empty between 1 and 5 years (as of 2024), up to 200% for empties between 5 and 10 years and up to 300% for more than 10 years (since 2021)</p> <p>From April 2024 councils may choose to charge a 100% premium on second homes, with actual charges coming into effect in April 2025</p> <p>(Previously, a 0-100% discount could be applied to second homes and homes empty for longer than 6 months; councils can still choose to offer discounts but since 2013 this has mostly not been offered)</p> <p>Business rates for holiday letsⁱⁱ Evidence required that property is available for 140 days and is let for at least 70 days of the year (evidence of 70 days required since April 2023) to qualify for business rates (meaning not obliged to pay council tax)</p> <p>Most self-catering properties liable for business rates also qualify for small business rates relief, which applies to businesses with a rateable below £15,000</p>	<p>Council tax^v Councils can charge up to 300% premium on second homes and long-term empties (April 2023) (previously 100%)</p> <p>As of April 2024, 18 local authorities are charging a long-term empty property premium, 17 of those are also charging a second home premium</p> <p>Premiums charged for second homes range from 50% (Carmarthenshire & Wrexham) to 200% (Pembrokeshire), and for empty properties between 50% (Carmarthenshire & Rhondda Cynon Taf) and 300% (Pembrokeshire, Monmouthshire & Cardiff)</p> <p>Business rates Properties must be available to let for at least 252 days and actually let for at least 182 days in any 12-month period to qualify (previously 140/70 days) (April 2023)</p> <p>Most self-catering properties liable for business rates also qualify for small business rates relief, which applies to businesses below a certain rateable value^{vi}</p>	<p>Council tax^{ix} Councils may apply 50% discount on second homes and long-term empties</p> <p>Councils may charge double council tax on long-term empties (12 months+)</p> <p>Councils may charge double council tax on second homes (if 2023 legislation approved by parliament) (in effect April 2024)</p> <p>Business rates: Properties available to let for 140 days/year are liable for business rates, not council tax</p> <p>Evidence required that property is let for at least 70 days (from April 2022)</p> <p>If rateable value of properties is below a certain threshold, properties are eligible for business rates relief, i.e. no council tax or business rate is paid^x</p> <p>Land and Buildings Transactions Tax^{xi} Second and buy to let properties in Scotland are subject to an Additional Dwelling Supplement – varies according to property value</p>	<p>Rates system (no council tax): Discounts and Exemptions: only unfurnished properties receive 100% empty homes discount</p> <p>Business rate relief: Article 21 of The Rates (NI) order offers landlords who pay the rates on all properties in their portfolio a 10% discount: Personal and holiday/second homes cannot be included on the schedule</p> <p>Stamp duty land tax Additional properties normally require 3% on top of regular SDLT rates</p>

	<p>Stamp duty land taxⁱⁱⁱ Additional properties require higher rates as of September 2022</p> <p>Note the 2024 budget announced that the Holiday Lettings tax regime would be abolished to bring short-term lets in line with long-term lets, and Capital Gains Tax would be reduced for certain properties to encourage disposal of second homes.^{iv}</p>	<p>Land Transaction Tax (SDLT equivalent)^{vii} In December 2020 the Welsh Government applied a 1% increase in Stamp Duty on second homes – varies according to property values.</p> <p>Visitor levy ('tourism tax'): Proposals for councils to be able to introduce visitor levies^{viii}</p>		
	England	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland
Planning use classes and licensing	<p>Use classes:^{xii} New legislation will create a use class for short-term lets. Existing STLs will be automatically reclassified and will not require planning permission.</p> <p>The government would also introduce permitted development rights to allow properties to be changed to a short-term let. Local authorities would be able to remove these rights to require planning permission if they deem necessary.</p> <p>Registration scheme A new national mandatory register of short-term lets is to be created to provide local authorities with information about STLs in the area.</p>	<p>Use classes 3 new use classes introduced in 2022: a primary home, a second home and short-term holiday accommodation. LAs may restrict 'permitted development rights' to require planning permission for change of use (using 'article 4 direction')</p> <p>Licensing Proposal in 2023 to introduce a statutory licensing scheme for all visitor accommodation, including short-term holiday lets, making it a requirement to obtain a license.</p> <p>All visitor accommodation providers will first need to register during a 'registration phase' which will be followed by licensing phases.^{xiii}</p>	<p>Licensing for STLs nationwide (Oct 2023):^{xiv} License now required for STLs</p> <p>Planning control areas In addition to above, councils can designate these so that STLs need planning permission as well as a license in order to let out whole accommodation (change of use from residential to STL)</p>	<p>No use class or licensing system in place.</p> <p>Causeway Coast and Glens Council wrote letter to Department for Infrastructure recommending a change of use legislation. However guidance has also been to wait for local development plans to be in place.^{xv}</p>

	England	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland
Empty homes programmes	<p>Empty Dwelling Management Orders:^{xvi} Councils can take over management of certain residential properties to bring them back into use if 1) they have been empty for more than 2 years and 2) they are ‘magnets’ for vandalism, anti-social behaviour etc</p> <p>Treated as ‘last resort’ and has been used very sparingly</p> <p>Empty Homes Programme 2011 – 2015</p> <p>Empty Homes Loan Fund (2013-2014) – abolished due to low take-up</p>	<p>Empty Dwelling Management Orders</p> <p>Empty homes grant scheme:^{xvii} Grants up to £25,000 to renovate empty houses for owners or prospective owners to use as primary residence</p> <p>Transforming Towns Loan scheme:^{xviii} Can be used by Registered Social Landlords to provide social/affordable housing from empty properties.</p>	<p>Various empty homes programmes: Empty homes ‘matchmaker’ schemes:^{xix} introduce empty homeowners who want to rent out properties to people on housing waiting lists</p> <p>Govt funds Scottish Empty Homes Partnership hosted by Shelter Scotland^{xx}</p> <p>Most council areas have an empty homes officer and some have a dedicated empty homes strategy</p> <p>Matching key workers to empty homes pilot scheme^{xxi}</p> <p>Ongoing government audit of privately-owned empty homes (expected completion end 2023)^{xxii}</p> <p>Housing to 2040 Strategy includes numerous measures to tackle empty homes^{xxiii}</p>	<p>Empty Homes Strategy was in place from 2013 to 2018, including an Empty Homes Unit that was set up in 2014, however this ceased operating in 2018 due to budget constraints.^{xxiv}</p> <p>No Empty Dwelling Management Orders</p>
Compulsory acquisition	<p>Compulsory purchase order:^{xxv} Allows a public authority to acquire land without the consent of the owner, in the public interest. Landowners are compensated.</p>	<p>Compulsory purchase order: Allows a public authority to acquire land without the consent of the owner, in the public interest. Landowners are compensated.</p>	<p>Compulsory purchase order:^{xxvi} Councils have compulsory purchase power which must pass ‘public interest test’ (see Glasgow council buying up empty properties)</p> <p>Glasgow City Council has been using CPOs to tackle long-term empties^{xxvii}</p>	<p>Vesting orders (compulsory acquisition)^{xxviii} Housing Executive used in 2016 to transfer block of flats in disrepair to a HA which delivered 18 social housing units.^{xxix}</p>

	England	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland
Principal residence & local occupancy restrictions	<p>Principal residence policies:^{xxx} New-build properties can only be occupied as sole/principal residences (in place in St Ives since 2016 and various other LAs, especially in national parks)</p> <p>Local occupancy clauses Developers can only sell/rent new housing to people with connection to local area or who reside in area, defined in various ways</p> <p>Principal residence and local occupancy clauses can be included in local/neighbourhood plans and can be implemented with planning conditions (when granting planning permission) or through planning obligations (section 106). See footnote for example of such clauses in England^{xxxi}</p>	<p>Local authorities may implement local occupancy restrictions where there is clear evidence they are needed to meet housing need.</p>	<p>Scottish government has stated it does not generally support local occupancy or primary residence restrictions, though a local occupancy requirement was previously in place in Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park.^{xxxii}</p>	<p>Occupancy restrictions can be written into local development plans if deemed necessary.</p>
Other			<p>Rural and Islands housing action plan^{xxxiii} with numerous measures including continuing the Rural and Islands Housing Fund, which supports community-led housing in rural and island communities^{xxxiv}</p> <p>Affordable Housing Supply Programme:^{xxxv} Scottish govt can provide funding to councils and HAs to purchase existing properties and bring them back into use as affordable housing</p> <p>Land reform bill in the works – encouraging diversification of land ownership, could encourage community land ownership with implications for housing</p>	

NB: Please note that references for this table appear at the very end of the report

5.1 Council tax premiums

Council tax premiums for empty homes, and more recently for second homes, have been introduced in Wales, England and Scotland as an intended disincentive to second homeownership and to encourage the sale of empty properties (see table 4 for details). In Scotland and England the maximum second homes premium 200% of council tax whereas in Wales this may be up to 300%, as with very long-term empty homes.

Most interviewees agreed that council tax premiums on empty and second homes could be part of a suite of measures to address low-use properties, but that these would not be sufficient on their own. Some interviewees felt that council tax premiums could help to encourage owners to put properties back on the market (echoing recent England government action to reduce the higher rate of capital gains tax) and that more broadly, a second homes premium on council tax would contribute to changing societal perceptions of second homes, bringing fiscal policy into line with what many identified as the distinctly moral questions raised by second homes. Council tax premiums can provide increased revenues for councils to address housing issues, though these revenues would need to be ringfenced for this purpose (such revenues are not currently required to be ringfenced).

Some interviewees were sceptical about whether additional taxation would be enough to disincentivize the purchase of second homes:

“The people that we’re talking about that are purchasing these properties, you don’t just purchase a £450,000 house that you’re not going to live in if you can’t afford an extra £1,000 a year. I don’t see that as being an actual disincentive to people purchasing them.” (Politician, Northern Ireland)

A key issue raised by many was the need to close the ‘business rates loophole’. Previously, in England and Scotland, it was possible to qualify for business rates instead of council tax if properties were advertised as short-term lets for at least 140 days out of the year. (In Wales, properties also had to be let for at least 70 days.) Then, if the rateable value of such businesses fell below a certain threshold these properties would qualify for small business rates relief, meaning that property owners could avoid paying tax altogether. As of recently, England and Scotland have attempted to address this by requiring that owners not only advertise properties for 140 nights, but also provide evidence that homes are actually being let for a minimum of 70 nights.⁷ In Wales properties must be advertised for 252 nights and let for at least 182 to qualify for business rates. It has been estimated that 96% of short-term lets just in England qualify for 100% rate relief.⁸

⁷<https://www.gov.uk/introduction-to-business-rates/self-catering-and-holiday-let-accommodation>

⁸<https://www.itv.com/news/westcountry/2021-03-23/government-to-close-second-homes-tax-loophole>

One interviewee pointed out that depending on why homes are left empty, raising tax could be a counterintuitive measure. For example, if someone has inherited a home in bad condition in a very remote area, where builders are scarce and expensive to access, a high premium could be seen as punitive, and the extra cost may even prevent owners from doing necessary works to make the property usable again. However, other interviewees noted that such cases could be addressed by local empty homes programmes offering funding to support refurbishment and bring them back into use, though these are generally used for long-term and more challenging empty homes contexts (see section 5.6). Several interviewees stressed that revenues from extra council tax should be ringfenced and allocated towards housing initiatives within the same local authority to tackle homelessness, provide affordable housing or bring long-term empties back into use.

5.2 Planning use classes

Planning use classes refer to the legal framework used to designate how a property may be used; for example, a home, retail unit, restaurant or hotel. Wales has recently introduced additional use classes, one for holiday lets and another for second homes, in an effort to address the issue of low-use properties. The introduction of these new use classes means that local authorities may require planning permission if owners wish to change the use of a property, for example from a primary residence to a short-term let.

In interviews the designation of use classes was generally viewed as a potentially very powerful tool to help regulate the overall number of second homes and short-term lets in local authority districts or smaller designated areas, and to ensure adequate numbers of primary residences. Such an approach would make it more difficult to switch from a primary residence to a second home or holiday let and allow councils to regulate the numbers of low-use properties if this number is approaching an unsustainable level (such as more than 5% as suggested below). How such planning uses could work was explained by an interviewee in Scotland:

“...in places with a large housing shortage and a lot of holiday homes councils could have a policy of no holiday homes, if they wanted, or no more than 5% and changes of use would have to be applied for. If they were not granted, and if you owned a local property and you wanted to sell it to someone from London, as a holiday home, but it didn't have a consent for change of use, fine, you're perfectly free to still sell it to them but they know that they can't use it for a holiday home and, if they start using it, there might be enforcement action or they alternatively drop out the market and you're going to have to sell it to someone locally and reduce the prices, which is a good thing. I think it's got a big role to play and should have a much, much bigger role. I think it sits firmly in the mainstream of planning history - planning history is about, if you read the long title for the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act, it is

about the allocation of land for different purposes. That's what it's about." (Politician, Scotland)

"You can't change a business premises into a home, so why should you be able to change a home into a business premises?" (Campaigner, south coast, England)

Some potential downsides and complications of planning use classes were also raised. For example, some change of use may happen under what are known as permitted development rights (PDRs) i.e. proposals for development or changes of use specified in law under which planning permission is not needed. Under current regulations in England and Wales, in order to have control over change of use applications, councils would need to make the case for the removal of PDRs. Thus PDRs place the onus of effort on the council to make and apply policy. The UK government is currently consulting on extending permitted development rights, e.g. so agricultural buildings such as barns can be converted into housing without permission, which may lead to more short-term lets.

Some of our interviewees warned that a use class approach in the planning system is fairly rigid so that once an owner has planning permission it would be difficult to change a short-term let property back to primary residence, for example. For this reason some argued that a system of licensing was a more adaptable option. Finally, we should also note that any planning changes may illicit a wave of action before changes come into force, with properties being flipped from one use class to another before legislation comes through to avoid needing to go through the planning permission process:

"My personal view is that the planning system side of it is going to be less effective. Because what you risk there is really making second homes something of a premium product whereby you know if you have an established lawful use as a second home, that almost adds a premium to its value and it may also incentivise people to flip properties to second home in advance of those rules coming into effect so it could actually have the opposite effect to what you want it to have [...] the occupancy of dwellings can shift all of the time, that's very, very difficult to do at a point in time and then constantly review." (Planner, national park, England)

Still, many emphasised that planning controls would be imperative to achieve a balance of permanent residences and other types of properties.

5.3 Licensing for short-term lets

A licensing scheme would require property owners to apply for a licence before they can rent their properties out as short-term lets or holiday lets (for example on Airbnb) and provide evidence that they are meeting required health and safety standards. Such a scheme would enable councils to have a better sense of how residential properties are being used and, critically, to limit the number of licences granted if the number of short-term lets in an area is deemed too high. Councils would be able to

revoke or refuse the renewal of licences and so be able to respond to the changing numbers of holiday lets each year.

For many of the key actors we spoke to, a licensing scheme is the bare minimum measure needed to begin to have better oversight and regulation of the short-term let market, and follows the path of many other cities globally (e.g. Vancouver, Paris, New York, Berlin, Lisbon, Barcelona). Such a scheme would help to ensure that holiday lets meet health and safety standards as other businesses are required to do, and discourage additional primary residences from being ‘flipped’ to short-term lets:

“The thing is [the holiday let market] it’s totally unregulated. So in terms of knowing where these properties are, ensuring that they would be the same level on health and safety, a statutory licensing system would be really beneficial because you would catch them all within that data.” (Planner, Wales)

However, some have questioned whether licensing would actually increase the number of low-use properties as additional restrictions might motivate second homeowners to leave their properties empty rather than renting them out as short-term lets (where they would be getting more ‘use’). In addition, if used in conjunction with planning use class measures, the interaction between the two frameworks would need to be unpicked. The general assumption seems to be that planning permission would have to be granted for a property to become a short-term let before a licence could be applied for. But one interviewee questioned what would happen if planning permission was granted but then a licence refused, which could leave properties in limbo (and empty) as approved holiday lets that are not allowed to operate.

5.4 Registration schemes

A national, mandatory registration scheme for short-term lets is soon to be introduced in England.⁹ The registration scheme was viewed as a sensible measure by most interviewees in order to begin to regulate the explosion of short-term lets in many areas. While falling short of licensing and planning measures to allow local authorities some level of control over the proliferation of short-term lets, a registration scheme may, at the very least, begin to address the complete lack of data on numbers of short-term lets in many local authority areas. Some interviewees advocated a broader landlord or property register showing the primary use of each property, which would be able to more easily identify primary and low-use homes.

⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/delivering-a-registration-scheme-for-short-term-lets>

5.5 Primary residence policies and local occupancy restrictions

Another approach to preserving and increasing primary residences is to place a clause on properties indicating that they may only be sold to buyers intending to use them as primary residences, or to let them out as long-term tenancies. So far this has been implemented in St Ives in Cornwall and several other areas (see table 4), and only for new-build properties. This is normally implemented through the planning system with permissions given for new property that will be sold or let according to these restrictions.

Some of our interviewees warned that, if such policies are only used to target newly built homes, this could create a two-tier or even segregated pricing system in towns where new-builds are mainly found on the outskirts. This would mean primary residences are relegated to the edges of towns while town centres with historic housing remain reserved for tourists and second homeowners, and prices in the centre remain inflated. However, others argued that placing the clause on new-builds is a means of helping to ensure that some portion of housing is reserved for a resident population. They also pointed out that in some cases, newly built housing has been sold to second home buyers or investors, highlighting the need to reserve at least some housing for permanent residents.

A related measure entails requiring new-build housing to be sold to primary occupants who have some kind of 'local connection' to the area, which may be defined in different ways. Arguing for local occupancy restriction one interviewee suggested:

“...they need to put clauses onto these houses so that it is for actual people from the area because...I know it sounds all 'local, local, local', and I don't begrudge anyone wanting to move into the area, you know, it's a beautiful place, but I do think that people that have grown up here, lived here all their lives, shouldn't be pushed out of an area [...] So when people that don't understand say: 'Well, why don't you just move to so and so?' It's like, well, it's not the same, it's very isolating and not fair on children that have grown up in an environment like it as well.” (Campaigner, south coast, England)

While there was some interest among our participants in the potential of such a measure to guard against residents being pushed out, there was also some concern that a 'local connection' may be difficult to define and enforce consistently, and that such policies may even be discriminatory towards those wishing to move to an area. In Northern Ireland, some participants were concerned such policies could reinforce historic segregation patterns.

5.6 Empty homes programmes

Empty homes programmes include a variety of measures for bringing long-term empty properties back into use. For example, funding schemes may help owners refurbish properties to be sold or let, and

‘matchmaker’ schemes match prospective tenants or buyers with empty homes. In interviews there was optimism for such empty homes measures to help bring long-term empties back into use, though also a recognition that there has been meagre funding allocated to this. Scotland has arguably been leading the way on empty homes schemes and funding, so it will be instructive to follow what emerges from the Scottish context (see table 4).

Some participants critiqued the fact that empty homes measures usually do not specify how homes are ultimately used, and that a refurbished home may be sold or rented at a premium, or may end up as a second home or short-term let. To address this, some suggested that empty homes be designated for social housing or primary residences. One interviewee suggested that rather than giving grants to owners to then sell properties, interest-free loans and grants could be given to first-time buyers to purchase and refurbish a property (affordably) that they intend to live in. Such a scheme has been introduced in Wales which provides grants to prospective and current owner-occupiers to refurbish an empty property in which they are then required to live for a minimum of 5 years.¹⁰ In addition, Scotland is experimenting with a new programme to match key workers with empty or unused properties. This would address the lack of housing and shortage of health and social care workers in parts of Scotland by approaching and incentivising property owners to let housing to key workers at an affordable rate.¹¹

5.7 Responding to local housing need

While not a measure to address low-use homes directly, most interviewees stressed the need to build social housing to respond to local housing need from low- to middle-income families, in addition to any measures to address low-use homes. It was stressed that simply ‘building more’ housing is not enough, as in some areas where new market-rate housing has been built, this has gone towards second homes and short-term lets. In addition, some reported that developers often build large-scale housing (3-5 bedrooms) to suit their bottom line, rather than 1-2 bedroom homes that are in much higher demand in many areas. Therefore, truly affordable and social housing must be built, along with addressing section 106 viability loopholes that allow developers to shirk their responsibility to build affordable housing.

Still, participants emphasised that simply building more affordable housing will not solve the issue on its own. Rather than tourism and long-term housing being viewed as completely separate markets, housing needs to be addressed holistically. A local councillor in Scotland referred to a ‘never-ending battle’ in some areas whereby even when social housing is being built, nearly the same amount of

¹⁰<https://www.gov.wales/apply-empty-homes-grant>

¹¹<https://www.nhshighland.scot.nhs.uk/news/2023/05/ground-breaking-new-partnership-to-target-empty-homes-for-remote-essential-worker-housing/>

private housing is being lost to short-term lets and second homes. As a planner in the English national parks described it:

“It’s apparent that we’re trying to put water in the top of the bath by releasing more land for housing, working on rural exception sites, permitting barn conversions and infill development, but at the same time, the plug’s out and the water is pouring out of the bottom because the existing stock is becoming Airbnbs, it’s becoming holiday lets, it’s being bought as second homes and we have no planning control over that.”
(Planner, national park, England)

6. Ways forward: Proposals for policy and practice

What policies and initiatives are needed to address the challenge of low-use properties in rural and coastal areas? In this section we set out a series of direct policy suggestions that work alongside the quantitative data as well as key issues identified in interviews. While most of our participants agreed that there is no silver bullet measure to tackle the adverse impacts of high levels of low-use properties, it was recognised that a combination of existing measures and new approaches are needed. This will also depend largely on each nation's policy and regulatory frameworks around planning, housing, tourism and related areas. While local authorities in Wales, England and Scotland have recently been granted additional powers, in Northern Ireland many measures would first require national legislation which is only possible as of recently with the restoration of the Stormont government.

We note that the following proposals are not necessarily equally implementable across the board, and will require an assessment of how various planning frameworks and tax regimes interact. In addition, most of these suggestions would require a substantial increase to the capacity and resources of local authorities in order to implement and enforce measures. We recommend an overall greater devolution of power and financial decision-making to local authorities, another prevalent theme in our interviews.

Finally, we suggest that 5% of properties in low-use properties to be a useful and viable threshold to trigger a series of interventions. Using LSOA-level data offers the option of more localised targeting at a scale that is similar to a Neighbourhood Planning, or Conservation Area level—scales at which planning constraints already operate in related areas of local planning policy. 5% or above places a LSOA in the top decile nationally, and may be a more effective point for intervention (rather than waiting until 10 or 20%, when the proliferation of low-use home is much more difficult to address). Data set out previously in section 3 could be used to identify local authorities and LSOAs with 5% or more low-use properties.

6.1 Fairer taxation regimes

Council tax premiums

Given relatively low rates of local taxation in the UK, it is unlikely that the England proposal to double council tax poses a substantial disincentive to ownership. This is especially true where the option of letting the home enables an exemption from the council tax second homes premium and a lucrative additional income source. However, the Welsh policy of an up to 300% premium may be more successful as a disincentive in areas with a high concentration of second homes, and as discussed earlier

the extra revenues may be ringfenced by local councils to address various housing objectives, such as the measures suggested in this section.

At the same time, council tax premiums must be considered in tandem with non-domestic rates criteria. This is because a high enough council tax premium would likely incentivise owners to avoid this tax by renting out their property and qualifying for non-domestic rates, and then also small business rates relief. Therefore, any council tax premium applied must be accompanied by more stringent criteria for business rates classification. In Wales for example, the power to charge higher council tax was introduced along with higher thresholds to qualify for non-domestic rates (see table 4).

Increased stamp duty on second home purchases

We highlight the potential of introducing higher stamp duty rates or transaction taxes on additional property to disincentivise the purchase of second homes. Current additional stamp duty rates (which went up on second home purchases in 2016 and rose again in 2022) are clearly not a sufficient disincentive and far higher rates would be required were this to be intended as a real disincentive to purchase.

Our view is that a local stamp duty tax should also be linked to a wider and major taxation reform, allowing local councils to retain stamp duty revenues—thus offering an incentive to maintain a healthy local housing market and rebalancing a significant aspect of the economic funding balance between local and national governments (and proposed by London’s Mayor in 2013).¹² Local councils would thus have the power to implement and vary stamp duty rates. The tax could be used as a fundraiser for local housing projects, targeted to affordable housing subsidies and investments, such as partnerships with local ‘permanently’ affordable housing providers such as community land trusts in England or community landowners in Scotland.

Eliminating tax incentives for holiday lets

We welcome the England government’s recent announcement of the end of the Furnished Holiday Lettings Tax Regime.¹³ This regime allowed 157,000 holiday let owners to write off costs including mortgage costs and outlay on maintenance and equipment including white goods, against tax liabilities in relation to income from qualifying short-term lets which were treated as businesses. These

¹²<https://www.london.gov.uk/who-we-are/what-london-assembly-does/questions-mayor/find-an-answer/stamp-duty-proposals>

¹³<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/spring-budget-2024/spring-budget-2024-html>

incentives are set to be revoked in April 2025. Fiscal incentives for holiday lets should be removed across the four nations.

6.2 Using planning classifications to prevent change of use away from primary residential homes

The use of new planning classifications is important to prevent future movement of housing into the second home and/or short let market. We recommend:

- That all national legislatures designate separate use classes for primary residences, second homes and short-term lets, as in Wales;
- That national legislation reverses the automatic granting of permitted development rights allowing homes to be moved out of primary residential use (in England and Wales). Councils across the UK should have the option to ‘opt out’ of requiring planning permission for such a change, rather than having to justify ‘opting in’ as is currently the case. Permitted development rights should only favour movement from short-term or second homes to primary residential use;
- That local authorities require planning permission for any change of use that takes a home out of primary residential use; planning permission should also be required for whole-home short-term lets (not just those newly proposed).

6.3 Licensing to regulate short-term lets and improve health and safety

Local authorities should require all short-term lets (whether whole homes, or rooms in a home), to obtain a licence. This would enable local councils to enforce health and safety regulations and crucially, it would enable them to impose restrictions on overall numbers of holiday lets and help to protect the stock of primary residences. While councils could choose to focus enforcement efforts on more impacted areas, requiring licences across the board would prevent localised boundary effects such as short-term lets becoming more concentrated in less regulated areas. As in Barcelona, we would propose tight numerical limits on whole-home short-let licences, determined by local housing stock impact assessments. When Barcelona introduced this policy it banned any new whole-home short lets unless existing stock had already returned to residential use to ‘free up’ licences.

We suggest that licensing schemes should be compulsory, even for properties that are short-term let for up to 90 nights, so that health and safety standards can be checked. New rules in England state it is possible to let one’s own residence for 90 nights before having to apply for planning permission. The experience of London is that many people go over the 90 days and evade policing. Techniques to evade

platform-based limits include rotating a let across multiple platforms, the multiple letting of identical units, and changes of landlord and property names and descriptions to evade tax enforcement by platforms. This is why a licensing scheme should include all lets, even where they fall under the 90-day limit, particularly given concerns about safety and the need to avoid any grey areas around the existence of such lettings. For this reason we also recommend lowering the limit to 30 days for one's primary residence, as 90 days is a significant portion of the year and may too easily be shifted away from primary residential while evading detection - this is effectively 45 weekends and thus sufficiently lucrative to drive rentals and homes into the short-term lettings market, as we see in London.

Resources are needed for local authorities to help with this and the licensing system should be self-funded through the annual cost of having a licence. Registration costs should be set at a level that provides enough to maintain a decent inspection and compliance regime which is particularly important for whole-home lets. Compliance could be improved if platforms, including Airbnb, were legally forced to pass on both usage and host data in the same way that now operates for platforms like eBay which shares data with HMRC.

A related issue becomes whether the letting of rooms within a home in primary residential use is covered by the same regulatory regime or not. If part of the aim of regulation is visitor safety and overall transparency (in relation to taxation of additional income and subletting of rental property, including social housing) then the answer is that it should be. This would also have the benefit of removing a grey area which could potentially become an illicit whole-home letting loophole. But it is clear that the notion of host in residence—the original supposed Airbnb 'offer'—is very different from the prevalent 'whole home' letting model which now dominates the platform and most short lettings in areas of high demand, with obvious impact on housing supply.

6.4 Engaging corporate lender responsibility

We have shown that it is possible to use council tax data to identify small (LSOA) areas with 5% or indeed any specified level of low-use homes. Such data could be used by responsible lenders to prevent lending on additional homes and mortgages sought for holiday lets and investment properties. Leeds Building Society has already announced a trial ban on holiday let mortgages for parts of North Yorkshire and North Norfolk that were seen to be 'saturated' by holiday lets and second homes by the local councils and communities.¹⁴ A further possibility is to use such policies to help steer investment to, at a minimum, long-term rental properties.

¹⁴<https://www.theguardian.com/money/2024/feb/24/trial-ban-holiday-let-mortgages-tourist-destinations-leeds-building-society>

We note that there may be a risk that the prevention of lending within a locality might lead to demand being moved to adjacent areas and creating cost pressures and social impacts. The answer to this would be for councils to undertake assessments of the relevant geography of demand and to target LSOA areas together where necessary to help prevent the displacement of demand into relevant nearby localities.

6.5 Improving data on home ownership and usage

Comprehensive register of short-term lets

Comprehensive national registration of short lets, as has recently been promised in England,¹⁵ is critical. This should be backed by data sharing between platforms and statutory authorities with responsibility for administering the register. We would propose investigative access or data-sharing with those public authorities utilising the register for verification, whereas general data on numbers and proportions of short-term lets could be made publicly available. Registration differs from licensing in being something that all short-term lettings should appear on, whereas licensing implies the capacity of a local authority to deny or permit short lettings in a particular area.

For registration to be meaningful it would need to be locally verifiable, as this will inform councils' policy choices under both current and future policy directions. This is why registration should cover all whole-home lets, including those within the current 90-day limit (or a lower, 30-day limit as we propose) on letting one's primary residence. Otherwise it becomes near impossible to verify when a let goes beyond this limit, or relies on the good will and internal verification procedures of platforms, which many find ways to get around.¹⁶

UK-wide register of property ownership and usage

It is a perplexing accident of legal and taxation policy history that we do not link property ownership, usage and occupation to personal taxation in the UK. Doing so even at a basic level would enormously improve policy development and implementation, assessments of housing utilisation, and taxation enforcement. All property already has a Unique Property Reference Number (UPRN),¹⁷ and all individuals are locally and individually taxed through a residential address, unless assets are held through a company (in which case a registered company address is available, with the usual provisos

¹⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/delivering-a-registration-scheme-for-short-term-lets>

¹⁶ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-47305575>

¹⁷ For Great Britain see: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/open-standards-for-government/identifying-property-and-street-information>

For Northern Ireland see: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/pointer>

regarding overseas ownership and trusts). Linking these UPRNs to new innovations such as the proposed register of short lets would be an excellent starting point. However, the ultimate goal would be a transparent accessible UPRN-linked record of property ownership and usage, which would make compliance with a range of local and national policies far easier. Such a register would enable a thorough assessment of the scale and concentration of low-use homes so that local or national actors could take prompt action when necessary.

This register need not be wholly public but should be accessible to relevant local and national public servants. There is also a strong argument for all aspects, bar personal address data, to be public, certainly at the level of determining property usage, so that local communities can better understand how homes are being used in their neighbourhoods to guide campaigns and actions.

The lack of data in Northern Ireland was cited by interviewees there as a major obstacle in assessing and addressing the issue of low-use homes. The Northern Irish government may wish to include second homes and unoccupied dwellings in its census or to establish a systematic way of measuring second homes, vacant dwellings and short-term lets, which may feed into the proposed UPRN-linked register.

6.6 Making more homes available for affordable housing

As many of our interviewees stated, there is a desperate need for more rent controlled and/or social housing to meet local housing needs. Many rural and coastal areas have a high demand for truly affordable homes, though the economics of purchase and construction may differ from urban areas. More social housing needs to be built and/or made available by bringing low-use homes back into use.

One way to address this would be reinstate and/or build on the Empty Homes programmes overviewed in section 5.6 and table 4, to specifically target long-term vacant properties that could be brought back into use as social-rented or affordable homes. England and Northern Ireland could re-launch their Empty Homes Programmes with resources for each council to have a dedicated strategy and Empty Homes team, as in Scotland. This could also include grant schemes to re-furbish empty properties for owner-occupiers, as in Wales. Other strategies could include enhanced compulsory purchase powers and a more effective framework for Empty Dwelling Management Orders, which would allow councils to let empty homes to tenants without taking ownership, as recommended by Action on Empty Homes.¹⁸ Shelter, Crisis and the Local Government Association all have recent reports with detailed proposals for bringing empty homes back into use (Bloomer et al., 2024; Crisis 2023; LGA 2023).

¹⁸ <https://www.actiononemptyhomes.org/government-investment>

Another idea is to offer a capital gains tax relief to encourage owners to sell into social use. The recent budget announced that the higher rate of capital gains tax on residential properties would be reduced by 4%, with the hope that this will incentivise disposals of second homes and buy-to-let properties to make more properties available for those seeking a permanent residence.¹⁹ Capital gains could be reduced to zero when owners sell to a local authority or housing association. This could facilitate the conversion of low-use homes into social homes.

Governments could, if they wished, limit local authorities' granting of planning permission for private housebuilding until targets for reducing housing need and increased access to social housing are met. This, of course, would be a very different policy environment to the present, where central Government policy is almost the reverse and prioritises building arguably 'at all costs'. In this sense, current policy which enables housing development to be geared to investment needs and building to the 'top' of local market conditions will continue to fail local communities where their incomes and equity are substantially lower than incoming investors.

The other critical factor is that any increased supply of affordable housing must remain affordable and rent-controlled and requires protection from erosion through Right to Buy, which should be formally abandoned in England and Northern Ireland as it has been in Scotland and Wales.

As mentioned in the previous section, local authorities need to assess housing stock holistically, taking measures to limit second homes and short-term lets where necessary, and directing resources towards actually affordable housing. This is also a more environmentally-friendly approach, as the strategy of only building new housing is one with an immense carbon footprint.

6.7 Addressing regional inequalities and boosting local economies

It is often said that the answer to hollowed-out tourist economies that do not operate all year round is to be found in more sustainable and diverse local economic development. The question is what policy at what level is best placed to offer impact in this area. Clearly local control of housing supply using the measures proposed above could help reverse negative impacts and, over time, rebuild a more varied local economy and demographic structure where relevant. Though what of the cases where too much has already been lost and settlements are little better than Airbnb seasonal dormitories with few non-tourist services and little year-round economic activity?

¹⁹<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/capital-gains-tax-changes-to-the-higher-rate-of-tax-on-residential-property-disposals/capital-gains-tax-rate-on-disposals-of-residential-property-from-6-april-2024#>

The German federal model, where national policy's regional economic impacts are required to be assessed and 'levelled' or compensated in the context of a constitutional commitment to reducing inequalities between regions, is perhaps a practical example at regional scale of how such policy could work over the medium to long-term. This is worthy of consideration when looking at the degree of autonomy a 'community' can reasonably use to exercise control over its economic destiny in the context of economic scale. In Cornwall, for example, a large area is controlled by one county council but most settlements have relatively small populations. This is a feature of many coastal and regional settlements of the type where short-term let and second home impacts are cited as particularly problematic. Scale will therefore be an important issue to consider in practical policy solutions that focus on economic development.

Regional policy remains essentially a blind spot, particularly in England, with a mish mash of complex local devolution deals offering very limited additional financial and other freedoms to local authorities at a time when many are under severe financial pressure and some of the largest such as Birmingham are effectively bankrupt. It is probable that greater local economic freedom and some additional local planning powers would, over time, allow the development of more sustainable and diverse local economies.

Appendix A: Methodological approach

i. Quantitative methods

The quantitative element of the project sought clear estimates of the scale of low-use properties (LUPs) in rural and coastal local authority districts (LADs) of the four constituent nations of the UK. We requested data on LUPs from English and Welsh local authorities under the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act; however, not all LADs returned data. We combined the results with data from Bourne (2019) and a publicly available dataset from ScotGOV boosting coverage of the UK to 205 LADs, or 59% of LADs and 64% of the population of England, Wales and Scotland, with Scotland achieving full coverage as a result of the public availability of the relevant data.

Two subsidiary elements of the quantitative focus of the project were identified. The first was an attempt at quantifying the relationship between the percentage of low-use property in a local authority and the value of the low use property in that district. Second, we sought to identify areas where low-use property was significantly more or less expensive than property occupied by a permanent resident. In other words, this could be considered a measure of the relative demand for properties that are under-used. Three key terms are used:

1. The sum total of all domestic properties are termed “properties”.
2. The subset of properties without a permanent resident are termed “low-use properties” or LUPs.
3. Properties with a permanent resident are referred to as “homes”.

On this basis the combined total of homes and LUPS is equal to the full number of properties in each local authority. Our approach was to use the FOI Act²⁰ to request data on council tax discounts from local authorities where these relate to properties that pay reduced council tax bills as a result of being furnished empty homes (including homes empty for longer than 6 months, second homes, and properties under renovation). These data were used to create a unique and detailed picture of housing use in England, Wales and Scotland. For reasons related to the specific context of Northern Ireland we were unable to extract this kind of data for that jurisdiction.

A low-use property is a property that is not registered as the primary residence of any individual. This definition comes with a caveat. We included only data that falls under council tax ‘discounts’ and not ‘exemptions’ from paying council tax. This is because council tax ‘exemptions’ cover situations that include student households, the recent death of the resident, incarceration of the resident, and so on.

²⁰<https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/advice-for-small-organisations/frequently-asked-questions/freedom-of-information/>

Council tax *discounts* are variably applied to applicants but include situations such as properties empty for longer than six months, because a home is a second home or where properties are under renovation. Thus the discounts class implies a degree of agency absent from the exemptions class, as the property owner is choosing not to fully occupy the property. For example, a second home qualifies as a low-use property since the absence of a permanent resident stems from the owner's deliberate choice. However, properties awaiting probate due to the owner's demise do not fall into the low-use category.

In this report, we do not distinguish between local and foreign buyers as this is not possible given our dataset. Both local and foreign owners may be 'out-of-town' (Favilukis and Van Nieuwerburgh, 2021), although local and foreign owners may experience varying motivations and occupy different positions on a spectrum of choosing between long-term commitment to a property/community and those with more commercial interest. Ultimately we were interested in the overall relationship between LUPs and affordability, independent of owner type so our concern with foreign investment here was low but may be germane to policy analysis.

It is important to note that, since April 2013, councils are no longer obliged to give a discount on council tax to LUPs. This may mean that registration of LUPs may have decreased so that the LUP numbers recorded by local authorities may not reflect their full extent. However, this does not affect whether we class a local authority as having high-value LUPs, as our definition depends on the distribution, not the absolute level.

Our analysis operates at three different geographical scales or units, the lower super output area (LSOA), the middle super output area (MSOA) and the local authority. These three geographic units and their boundaries are defined and specified by the Office of National Statistics for census data and other demographic analysis. An LSOA contains a minimum of 400 properties²¹ and is the smallest publishable geographical unit for which it is possible to obtain council tax data. LSOAs are themselves constructed of output areas (OA). OAs are constructed using adjacent postcodes to be as socially and demographically homogeneous as possible.²² This homogeneity extends to dwelling type and tenure and prevents splitting along an urban/rural boundary. Contiguous blocks of LSOAs form an MSOA. Some data such as local income statistics are only gathered at the MSOA level. The final geographic group, the local authority, is made up of one or more MSOAs. It is from local authorities that the FOI data was derived.

²¹<https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/2011census/2011censusdata/2011censususerguide/frequentlyaskedquestions>

²²<https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20160107193025/http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/geography/beginner-s-guide/census/output-area--oas-/index.html>

Low-use data for England and Wales were collected in three batches – i. Bourne (2019), ii. Bourne, Ingianni, and McKenzie (2023) (covering some London Boroughs) and iii. the current work, which spanned from August 2022 to March 2023. The process used remained consistent in all instances. We supplied an Excel file template into which local authorities could paste the details of relevant properties. The template was formatted to remove postcode data and replace it with the relevant LSOA scale for the location. This enabled councils to share data at this scale while also guaranteeing data protection. All Scottish data were sourced from a publicly available dataset from the National Records of Scotland in 2022, collected at the national level through a standardised process.

Collection and analysis of house price data

This report differs in the source of house price data from Bourne (2019) and Bourne et al (2023) which used official government pricing data from the Land Registry 2022.²³ This difference is because the Land Registry Price Paid dataset covers only England and Wales, whilst the Scottish data is collected and maintained by Registers of Scotland.²⁴ The data from England and Wales is freely available to the public, whilst the Scottish data requires a prohibitively expensive licence. To resolve this issue data from Zoopla data from the Urban Big Data Centre was used for all countries. The advantage of using this dataset is that although it is not always the official sales price of the property, it is consistent across the entire area of study.

This paper uses the same method of inferring property prices at local authority level as Bourne (2019); Bourne et al (2023). This method is shown in the equation below. The distribution of the mean price by property type is calculated as shown in:

$$\langle C \rangle_{m=i} = \frac{1}{z} \sum_j^z C_j P(C_j | m = i),$$

Where $\langle C \rangle_{m=i}$ is the mean price for property type m , C_j is the vector of possible prices for the j th property and $P(C_j | m = i)$ is the probability price distribution for C_j . The sum across all values of j is divided by the total number of properties z . Clearly $\langle C_j \rangle_{m=i}$ is simply the mean price of the MSOA of j . The equation thus produces mean results that are very similar to the mean of the mean MSOA price weighted by the distribution of homes. However, the equation is implemented as a form of stochastic ancestral sampling able to produce a bootstrapped significance test for the difference in price between LUPs and homes. In order to ensure that the statistical tests were robust the mean price of the LUPs and homes were sampled 501 times (and can be considered a form of Monte-Carlo analysis or bootstrap, see Efron and Tibshirani (1994)). The fraction of times that the LUPs were more expensive

²³<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/about-the-price-paid-data>

²⁴<https://www.ros.gov.uk/data-and-statistics/data-reports>

than the homes was then found. The price difference was considered statistically significant if the LUPs value was larger than 97.5% or smaller than 2.5% as this provides a standard 95% confidence interval.

ii. Qualitative methods

The second stage of our research entailed a qualitative methodology to understand the range of impacts of low-use homes in affected rural and coastal areas as well as the potentialities of various policy and planning responses. We conducted 58 interviews with 66 total participants across the UK's four nations. Interviewees included housing and planning officials, policy experts, campaigners, residents, local and national-level councillors and politicians, trade body representatives, and estate agents. Interviews were fairly evenly distributed across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, and included participants in various local authorities where low-use homes are prevalent in rural and coastal areas (guided by our quantitative data). Interviewees were also situated at/focussed on various scales including neighbourhood, local authority, national and supra-national (UK). Interviews were mainly conducted online but some were conducted in person, during four field visits to impacted areas in each country.

Qualitative data collection followed ethical procedures required by the University of Sheffield. Care has been taken to fully anonymise all participants. Given the small scale of many rural and coastal communities and the sensitivity of some topics we have also made efforts to ensure there are no clear geographical identifiers when referring to interview data.

Appendix B: Existing sources of data on low-use homes

This appendix summarises the major sources of existing data on low-use homes across the UK’s four nations.

Census 2021: Number of vacant and second homes²⁵ (released November 2023)	
Country	England and Wales
Description	<p>Combines census data and administrative data to break down unoccupied dwellings (was dwelling unoccupied on census day 2021?) into ‘truly vacant’ dwellings and second homes (that have no usual residents).</p> <p>The estimates “capture all second homes with no usual residents regardless of length of stay per year and location of the usual residence of individuals staying there (that is, covers non-UK residents)”.</p> <p>This INCLUDES second homes that may be rented out as short-term lets (as long as there is no ‘usual resident’).</p> <p>Percentage of unoccupied dwellings may be compared with 2011, but 2021 is the first breakdown between vacant and second homes.</p> <p>Data broken down by local authority.</p> <p>Note potential impact of pandemic on census 2021 data—possibly more unoccupied dwellings due to people moving back with family etc.</p>
Results	<p>England had 1.5 million unoccupied dwellings on census day 2021 (6.1% of all dwellings). Of these:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Truly vacant: 1,352,130 (89.7%) • Second homes: 154,970 (10.3%) <p>Wales had 120,450 unoccupied dwellings (8.2% of all dwellings). Of these:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Truly vacant: 102,875 (85.4%) • Second homes: 17,575 (14.6%) <p>Wales had a higher proportion of both vacant dwellings and second homes than England.</p> <p>London had the highest percentage of truly vacant dwellings (7.3%) out of all regions.</p>

²⁵<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/bulletins/numberofvacantandsecondhomesenglandandwales/census2021>

Census 2021: Holiday homes in England and Wales²⁶ (released June 2023)	
Country	England and Wales
Description	<p>Based on census data asking residents whether they have a second address where they stay for more than 30 days per year.</p> <p>Holiday homes accounted for 4.1% of second addresses²⁷ (other types of second address include a student's home address, addresses used by people working away from home, a partner's address, etc.)</p> <p>Data broken down to Middle layer Super Output Areas (MSOAs).</p> <p>Note this is likely to be an undercount of second homes because</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) only includes holiday homes of people who usually reside in England and Wales, i.e. foreign owners of holiday homes are not counted. 2) Would not include second addresses that are used for <i>less</i> than 30 days per year or not at all. <p>Note potential impact of pandemic on census 2021 data.</p>
Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ~70,000 second addresses were used as holiday homes, visited by more than 200,000 people in England and Wales in 2021. • High concentrations were found in coastal areas and near national parks. • Cornwall had the highest numbers of holiday homes (6,080) and people who use them. • South Hams and Gwynedd had highest proportions of holiday homes in relation to local supply. • In some smaller areas, holiday homes represent more than 1 in 10 addresses. • Various other metrics including rates of holiday home use, dwelling type, locations and where users come from.
Annual Council Taxbase statistics²⁸	
Country	England
Description	<p>Council taxbase statistics provide data about numbers of dwellings at local authority level. This includes dwellings liable for and exempt from council tax, as well as the number of properties receiving discounts or paying premiums.</p> <p>This therefore provides data on vacant dwellings (and serves as the basis for the live Table 615—see below), as well as second homes. The data also feeds into the dwelling stock estimates.²⁹</p> <p>It must be noted that since local authorities may measure empty and second homes differently and apply discounts and premiums differently, numbers may be undercounts. In addition, second home numbers rely on people self-declaring.</p>

²⁶ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/releases/holidayhomesinenglandandwales>

²⁷ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/articles/morethan1in10addressesusedasholidayhomesinsomeareasofenglandandwales/2023-06-20>

²⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/council-taxbase-statistics>

²⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/dwelling-stock-estimates-in-england-2022>

	<p>Table 615³⁰ covers vacant dwellings by local authority district, 2004 to 2022. Draws mainly from council tax data, and separates data into</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) All vacants: “empty properties as classified for council tax purposes and include all empty properties liable for council tax and properties that are empty but receive a council tax exemption” 2) All long-term vacants: “properties liable for council tax that have been empty for more than six months and that are not subject to Empty Homes Discount class D or empty due to specific flooding events” <p>Also includes data on local authority-owned vacants.</p>
Results	<p>Number of long-term vacants in England in 2022: 248,149 (Table 615)</p> <p>Number of dwellings classed as second homes on 2 October 2023 (separate figure from above): 263,318</p>
English housing survey	
Country	England
Description	A survey conducted by NatCen Social Research, using a sample of random addresses held by Royal Mail
	<p>Vacant dwellings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2022, there were 1.1 million vacant dwellings (5% of total dwellings) in England. This is a similar proportion to the last year of (pre COVID-19) data collection in 2019, also at 1.1 million and 5%.³¹ <p>Second homes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “In 2021-22, there were 809,000 second homes owned by households in England, an increase of 13% or just under 100,000 homes on 2010-11. However, the percentage of households with a second home was unchanged during this period, at 3%.”³²

³⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-dwelling-stock-including-vacants>

³¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/english-housing-survey-2022-to-2023-headline-report>

³² <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-housing-survey-2021-to-2022-second-homes-fact-sheet/english-housing-survey-2021-to-2022-second-homes-fact-sheet>

National Records of Scotland 2022 Household estimates ³³	
Country	Scotland
Description	<p>NRS household estimates are based on council tax data similarly to England’s council taxbase statistics. However, unlike in England these data are publicly available in Scotland and consistent across council areas, and therefore assumed to be more accurate.</p> <p>Note that second homes which are let for a total of 70 nights and are available to let for 140 nights are liable for nondomestic rates and not council tax, and therefore not included in these estimates.³⁴</p>
Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vacant dwellings: 90,700 • Second homes: 24,300 • Total number of dwellings: 2,699,400
Land and Property Services	
Country	Northern Ireland
Description	<p>Land and Property Services Statistics Branch publish quarterly information on vacant domestic properties in NI.³⁵ However, this is based on when ratepayers notify LPS that a property is vacant, which legislation does not require them to do, so properties are likely to be undercounted. At the same time, the number includes caravans, domestic garages, domestic stores and car parking spaces, which inflates the overall count.</p> <p>Note that Northern Ireland does not hold equivalent council tax data to England, Wales and Scotland as it does not grant discounts or charge premiums on empty or second homes. These are charged full tax ('rates'), except in special cases where empty homes are exempt from rates, e.g. due to death of the owner or flooding.³⁶</p> <p>There are also no systematic measurements of second homes in Northern Ireland. A question about second homes was last included in the 2001 census, which estimated 5,000 second homes in the country.</p>
Results	<p>Vacant domestic properties:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 179,294 properties reported vacant across Northern Ireland in 2023, out of 6,718,072 domestic properties (2.7% of all dwellings). (But note limitations above.)

³³<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/dwelling-stock-estimates-in-england-2022>

³⁴<https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files//statistics/household-estimates/2022/house-est-22-methodology.pdf>

³⁵<https://admin.opendatani.gov.uk/dataset/quarterly-property-vacancy-rates-by-district-council-and-sector>

³⁶<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/rating-empty-homes#toc-4>

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abrdn Financial Fairness Trust funds research, policy work and campaigning activities to tackle financial problems and improve living standards for people on low-to-middle incomes in the UK. It is an independent charitable trust registered in Scotland (SC040877).

FOOTNOTES TO TABLE 4:

ⁱ <https://www.gov.uk/council-tax/second-homes-and-empty-properties>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.gov.uk/introduction-to-business-rates/self-catering-and-holiday-let-accommodation>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/stamp-duty-land-tax-buying-an-additional-residential-property#who-the-higher-rates-apply-to>

^{iv} <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/spring-budget-2024/spring-budget-2024-html>

^v <https://www.gov.wales/new-tax-rules-second-homes>

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/apr/01/tougher-second-homes-regulations-come-into-force-in-wales>

^{vi} <https://businesswales.gov.wales/non-domestic-rates-small-business-rates-relief>

^{vii} <https://www.gov.wales/higher-rates-land-transaction-tax-guide>

^{viii} <https://www.gov.wales/a-visitor-levy-for-wales>

^{ix} <https://spice-spotlight.scot/2023/03/08/empty-homes-in-scotland-facts-figures-and-policy/>

<https://spice-spotlight.scot/2022/09/07/second-homes-in-scotland-facts-figures-and-policy/>

^x <https://www.mygov.scot/non-domestic-rates-relief/small-business-bonus-scheme>

^{xi} <https://revenue.scot/taxes/land-buildings-transaction-tax/additional-dwelling-supplement-ads>

^{xii} <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/short-term-lets-rules-to-protect-communities-and-keep-homes-available>

^{xiii} <https://www.gov.wales/registration-and-licensing-scheme-all-visitor-accommodation-wales>

^{xiv} <https://www.visitscotland.org/supporting-your-business/advice/short-term-lets-legislation>

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- xv [https://www.causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk/uploads/general/221123_PC_Item_8.3 -
_Correspondence to DfI Second Homes Short Term Let.pdf](https://www.causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk/uploads/general/221123_PC_Item_8.3_-_Correspondence_to_DfI_Second_Homes_Short_Term_Let.pdf)
- xvi <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn03012/>
- xvii <https://www.gov.wales/apply-empty-homes-grant>
- xviii <https://www.gov.wales/support-improve-town-centres>
- xix <https://emptyhomespartnership.scot/matchmaker/>
- xx <https://emptyhomespartnership.scot/>
- xxi <https://www.nhshighland.scot.nhs.uk/news/2023/05/ground-breaking-new-partnership-to-target-empty-homes-for-remote-essential-worker-housing/>
- xxii <https://www.gov.scot/publications/bringing-empty-homes-back-use-audit-privately-owned-empty-homes-scotland/documents/>
- xxiii <https://www.gov.scot/publications/housing-2040-2/documents/>
- xxiv <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-empty-homes-strategy-and-action-plan-2013-%E2%80%93-2018>
- xxv <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/compulsory-purchase-and-compensation-guide-1-procedure>
- xxvi <https://www.gov.scot/publications/compulsory-purchase-orders-introduction/>
- xxvii <https://emptyhomespartnership.scot/case-study-the-benefits-of-cpo-and-what-more-is-needed/>
- xxviii <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/compulsory-acquisition-landproperty-housing-association-schemes>
- xxix <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-empty-homes-strategy-and-action-plan-2013-%E2%80%93-2018>
- xxx <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/can-access-to-housing-be-restricted-to-local-people/>
- xxxi <https://democracy.brighton-hove.gov.uk/documents/s178287/Appendix>
- xxxii <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/can-access-to-housing-be-restricted-to-local-people/>
- xxxiii <https://www.gov.scot/publications/rural-islands-housing-action-plan/>
- xxxiv <https://www.gov.scot/policies/more-homes/rural-housing-fund/>
- xxxv <https://www.gov.scot/policies/more-homes/affordable-housing-supply/>