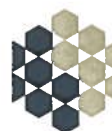


**From the Office of the
Minister of Finance & Personnel**



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Your reference:

Our reference: AQT 972/11-15
GM/314/2014

6 May 2014

Dear

Bronwyn

In the course of my response to your Topical Question of 1 April (AQT 972/11-15) I agreed to provide Members with details of the number of vacant domestic properties in Northern Ireland.

The table at Annex A gives the number of occupied and vacant domestic dwellings in Northern Ireland at 31 March 2014, broken down by district council.

You also asked what discussions had been held between my Department and others, including DSD, about the potential to use these vacant properties to address housing shortages in Dungannon and other areas.

Land & Property Services continue to work closely with DSD to address the issue. For example, the attached leaflet highlighting empty homes as a wasted resource was issued with all rates bills in April 2014 on behalf of DSD. In addition, my Department introduced the rating of empty homes, not only to assist with wider policy objectives on improving housing affordability and availability, but also to encourage owners to make productive use of property, either by selling or renting it.

A copy of this letter will be deposited in the Assembly library for the information of Members.

Yours sincerely

SIMON HAMILTON MLA

Annex A

Domestic Dwellings in Northern Ireland as at 31 March 2014				
District Council	Occupied	Vacant	Total	Vacancy Rate (%)
Antrim	20,854	517	21,371	2.4
Ards	34,058	988	35,046	2.8
Armagh	22,650	1,007	23,657	4.3
Ballymena	26,120	719	26,839	2.7
Ballymoney	11,899	371	12,270	3.0
Banbridge	19,134	856	19,990	4.3
Belfast	128,956	5,103	134,059	3.8
Carrickfergus	17,119	426	17,545	2.4
Castlereagh	29,467	654	30,121	2.2
Coleraine	27,723	1,285	29,008	4.4
Cookstown	13,405	744	14,149	5.3
Craigavon	38,512	1,358	39,870	3.4
Derry	42,813	1,059	43,872	2.4
Down	28,014	1,248	29,262	4.3
Dungannon and South Tyrone	21,157	1,392	22,549	6.2
Fermanagh	25,335	2,144	27,479	7.8
Larne	14,457	520	14,977	3.5
Limavady	12,594	644	13,238	4.9
Lisburn	48,561	1,422	49,983	2.8
Magherafelt	15,587	603	16,190	3.7
Moyle	8,010	444	8,454	5.3
Newry & Mourne	36,381	2,062	38,443	5.4
Newtownabbey	36,261	661	36,922	1.8
North Down	34,966	895	35,861	2.5
Omagh	19,447	1,508	20,955	7.2
Strabane	15,631	751	16,382	4.6
Northern Ireland	749,111	29,381	778,492	3.8

Note: From 1st October 2011, vacant domestic property rating liability changed from zero to full liability, with the exception of a number of prescribed exclusions. There is no requirement on, or incentive for, homeowners to inform LPS that their property is vacant or otherwise. The figures provided cover properties that LPS knows were vacant. There may be other properties, for which rates were collected, which were vacant that LPS was not aware of.