

## Introduction

1. This is a brief report from the Executive to the Membership to provide an overview of progress since our last (Annual) General Meeting held in May 2010.
2. Formally, the period covered is 21 months, from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2010 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2012. This reflects the change in EHN's financial year that was agreed in 2011. (See point 23 below). However, for convenience the report brings Members up to date with developments through to the time of writing (July 2012).
3. Whilst the report is brief, members can follow EHN developments in much more detail by reading Executive Committee papers and other EHN documents loaded onto the website.
4. **Minutes** of one meeting can normally be read in the **Executive Papers** for the subsequent meeting. You will need to be logged in as a Full Member to read these documents.

## Key Documents

5. Many decisions are taken by the Executive through votes submitted by email. The record of these decisions can be found here:  
<http://www.ehnetwork.org.uk/library-item/ehn-executive-decisions-email-voting-record>
6. Papers going to the Executive have been combined into a single PDF file over the last few years. These papers include the approved minutes of the previous meeting. Links to the papers for the Executive meetings that have been held since the 2010 AGM and the end of 2012 are as follows:
  - <http://www.ehnetwork.org.uk/library-item/naepp-executive-papers-meeting-2010-06-21>
  - <http://www.ehnetwork.org.uk/library-item/ehn-executive-papers-meeting-2010-11-10>
  - <http://www.ehnetwork.org.uk/library-item/ehn-executive-papers-meeting-2011-06-15>
  - <http://www.ehnetwork.org.uk/library-item/ehn-executive-papers-meeting-2011-12-14>
7. The minutes of the final meeting of 2011 can be found in the papers for the July 2012 Executive:
  - <http://www.ehnetwork.org.uk/library-item/ehn-executive-papers-meeting-2012-07-18>

## Key events and initiatives

8. We changed our name from the **National Association of Empty Property Practitioners** to the **Empty Homes Network** in 2010, following a competition amongst our members to suggest the best name. We also acquired new branding (logos and logo-text) including that shown at the top of this report.
9. We changed our Constitution as part of the 2010 AGM and subsequently agreed further changes at a Special Meeting in 2011 where it was agreed to move to Biennial General Meetings and elections.

10. The last two years have been significant for empty homes work, with the Coalition Government assigning the issue a higher profile than any previous administration and providing some dedicated funding (albeit with many strings attached). We wrote to Andrew Stunell and Grant Shapps with our ideas, as a consequence of which we were invited to meet CLG officials. We were also subsequently invited to meetings and Round Table events where we have been able to present the EHN perspective on various government initiatives. Generally this has involved stressing the important role that can be played by local authorities and their practitioners and arguing for more flexible funding arrangements that would support the more innovative schemes developed by local authority and would be less tied to the delivery of affordable housing. We have continued to emphasise that our position does not derive from any lack of commitment to the provision of more affordable housing but from the fact that empty homes is an issue that needs to be accorded independent status and treated on its own merits.
11. Partly in response to the change of government we produced a shorter and modified policy document towards the end of 2010 entitled [Empty homes: national commitment, local action](#)
12. The EHN website has seen further developments, particularly in the last 8 months, when not only has its appearance been revamped but some key new features have been introduced including:
  - Blogs (and thanks to **Lynne Campbell** of South Lakeland DC for sticking her head above the parapet and being the first to maintain a regular blog)
  - Special Interest Groups that can have their own discussions and documents (and thanks to **Luke Taylor** of North Kesteven for being the first to take the facility into practice);
  - a Bookmarks feature so Members can flag favourite content; and
  - improved notification features that allow members to select the frequency with which they received notification emails for different types of content.
13. We've instituted a "Post-of-the-Month" award to offer recognition to all those who make the Network as vibrant as it is and hopefully encourage even greater participation and useful contributions.

## Membership

14. The latest figures below are as at the time of writing in July 2012. The last two years have seen a steady increase in our membership. The number of "active" accounts (=people) on the website rose from 306 in February 2010 to 443 in July 2012. Only a handful of these are thought not to be genuinely active, although the number does include Students and some Internal Accounts. The membership position at the beginning of July 2012 was as follows.

	<b>2012</b>	<b>2010</b>
Corporate	247	172
Collective	63	20
Honorary Life Member	2	2
Individual	10	4
Associate	104	97
Subscriber	0	2
EHN Internal	10	6
Student	7	3
<b>Total of above</b>	<b>443</b>	<b>306</b>
Total of records	443	
Discrepancy	0	

15. This looks quite healthy but it remains the case that a significant number of local authorities are not represented and are therefore out of the loop - not receiving newsletters or notifications and possibly unaware of our existence. We aspire to have a representative from every local authority belonging to the Empty Homes Network: currently the number of local authority members is around 200.
16. There are also quite a few authorities where not all the people engaged in empty homes work are members. We hope that colleagues who are members will encourage co-workers to join.
17. The number of paying members now stands at just under 200 but this number can be expected to drop to about 175 when we have taken into account the non-payers from the 2012 invoice run.
18. We are pleased to see a continuing growth in the number of **Collective Members**. Since 2010 **Kent, SE London, SW London and West London** have all taken up the option, generating considerable savings for their members. Regrettably the Lincolnshire Partnership's Collective Membership came to an end following the cessation of government funding for the project but the Lincolnshire authorities continue to belong individually.
19. We are also pleased to see a small but growing number of not-for-profit and commercial organisations joining EHN.
20. On the other hand, the **Subscriber** option has not taken off. This involves granting access to the information library (and notifications and newsletters) and is available to non-practitioners, or to practitioners who cannot persuade their authorities to pay for something called "membership". In fact we have no subscribers left following the recent invoice run. We think the idea still has merit and with an expected increase in information resources for our Paying Members, we'll seek to promote it further.

## Conferences

21. We've been involved in organising three national conferences since our 2010 Annual Report. The second of these was run jointly with Empty Homes in 2011; the 2010 and 2012 Conferences were organised exclusively by EHN in Birmingham. All 3 conferences were well-attended and seem to have been considered a success by those attending.
22. Our 2012 Birmingham event was attended by just over 100 people (including speakers) which compares well with our 2010 Conference which attracted almost identical numbers (though fewer of them were speakers) but was held before the cuts really started to bite. The 2012 Conference received an overall rating of **4.35** out of 5, compared with **4.39** for 2010.

23. We were pleased and honoured that Andrew Stunell attended and made an important funding announcement.

## Finance

24. We've changed our financial year to run January to December instead of April to March as this gives us a clearer idea of our finances at the time when we do our annual budget-setting.
25. The December 2011 Executive agreed a new scale of Membership fees for 2012. The standard rate is now £95 though we have introduced a reduced rate of £55 for small voluntary organisations and an enhanced rate of £135 for housing associations. This has been the first increase since the organisation was established in 2002 and for most members does no more than keep pace with inflation over the period. Collective membership rates have increased broadly pro rata.
26. Sue Haigh is no longer Treasurer as of Autumn 2011: she has been replaced by Nicola Suckley who, like Sue, comes from Exeter City Council. This makes it easier to liaise with David Gibbens - who continues to handle the administration and day-to-day book-keeping and is also based in Exeter.
27. The Year-end position at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2012 is shown at Annex A. Total cash was £8,406 but there were outstanding transactions amounting to £1173 from 2011 so it would be more realistic to think of the balance as being just over £7,000 . Nevertheless, the balance at the start of 2012 gave us a reasonable cushion over our agreed reserve of £5,000 and should allow us to continue improvements to the website and invest in further learning resources for our members.

## The Executive

28. The Executive has retained its vigour and continues to attract some representatives from outside bodies to its meeting. Most notable of these has been Jamie Saddler, Political Adviser to Andrew Stunell; but we have also been pleased to welcome representatives from self-help-housing.org, Shelter, Camelot and of course the charity Empty Homes. Representatives from CIH and National Housing Federation are attending the July 2012 Executive.
29. To facilitate attendance by these outside organisations we have now settled on London as the best place to meet. Meetings are held later in the day than hitherto (12.00 noon) so as to make it easier for those travelling long distances to attend.
30. We've become very grateful to **Camelot Property Management** for hosting our Executive Meetings in their Boardroom.
31. This Biennial Report follows in the wake of the 2012 elections to the Executive. The elected Members of the outgoing Executive were as follows

### *Officers:*

- **Chair:** Darryl Lawrence (Rochdale Housing Initiative)
- **Treasurer:** Nicola Suckley (Exeter City Council)
- **Secretary:** David Gibbens (peer2peer services)
- **Vice-Chair:** Matthew Smtth (Birmingham City Council)
- **Assistant Secretary:** None

### *Other Elected or Co-opted Executive Members:*

- **Carson Millican**, East London Regeneration Partnership

32. This marks the end of Darryl's first stint as Chair. The Executive, on behalf of the Members, would like to express our thanks to him for all his hard work over the

last two years, a period which has seen an unparalleled degree of development for the Network.

33. The elected Members of the incoming Executive are as follows.

**Officers:**

- **Chair:** Matthew Smith (Birmingham City Council)
- **Vice-Chair:** Nick Pritchard-Gordon (Reading Borough Council)
- **Treasurer:** Nicola Suckley (Exeter City Council)
- **Secretary:** David Gibbens (peer2peer services)
- **Assistant Secretary:** None

**Other Elected or Co-opted Executive Members:**

- **Carson Millican**, East London Regeneration Partnership
- **Darryl Lawrence**, Rochdale Housing Initiative
- **Andrew Grim**, Empty Homes Solutions LLP

34. As well as elected Members and Officer, the Executive comprises forum representatives. These are not elected but attend *ex officio*, being nominated by their forum or invited by the Executive.

- **Berkshire Empty Property Group:** Nick Pritchard-Gordon (see above)
- **Cumbria Empty Homes Forum:** Lynne Campbell, South Lakeland District Council
- **East Midlands Empty Property Forum:** Sue Li, Amber Valley Borough Council
- **Greater Manchester Empty Homes Forum:** Vacant
- **Hampshire and Isle of Wight Empty Homes Forum:** Keith Gunner, Southampton City Council
- **Herts, Beds and Bucks Empty Homes Forum:** Vacant: Nick Pritchard Gordon attending and reporting back
- **Kent No Use Empty Initiative,** Andrew Lavender (consultant/Kent County Council)
- **Lancashire Empty Homes Partnership:** Alex Starritt, Preston City Council
- **Merseyside Empty Homes Partnership:** Greg Cooper, Wirral MBC
- **North East Empty Homes Forum:** Susan Cousins Durham County Council and Alan Armstrong, South Tyneside Council
- **South East London Housing Partnership:** Steve Habgood, LB of Bromley
- **South West Empty Homes Forum:** Nicola Suckley, David Gibbens (see above)
- **Surrey and Hampshire Improvement Partnership (Empty Property Group):** Mike Rotter, Runnymede DC
- **Sussex Empty Homes Forum:** No fixed rep - Emma Kumar, Brighton and Hove City Council (contact only)
- **Wales:** Rhys Horan, Wrexham Council
- **West London Housing Partnership:** Richard Clark, RB of Kensington and Chelsea
- **West Midlands Empty Property Officer Group:** Matthew Smith, Birmingham City Council
- **Yorkshire and Humberside Empty Homes Forum:** Neil Dunk, Sheffield City Council

Prepare by David Gibbens, Secretary, for the EHN Executive.  
Approved by the Executive 18<sup>th</sup> July 2012

## Annex A - Year-end 31<sup>st</sup> December 2011

**Budget to 31st December 2011**  
(NB from 1st April 2011)

from 1st April 2011\*

\* excludes one purchase cleared 2nd April

# FINAL

	Original		Actual	
<b>Starting Balances</b>				
<b>Petty cash</b>		39		39
Current		4919		4919
Savings		4040		4040
		<b>8998</b>		<b>8998</b>
Actual Current Acct balance	02Apr11	4919	31Dec11	4325
Actual Business Money Manager balance		4040		4042
Total including petty cash		<b>8998</b>		<b>8406</b>
<b>INCOME</b>				
<b>Membership Fees</b>				
Corporate at £75/Individual at £25	75	5625		8383
Collective at say £50 average	45	2250	41	2003
Subscribers at £75	3	225	1	75
Individual at £25	4	100	5	
Estimated gross income		8200	Actual	10460
less Support Services charges at 75%	Est	-6150	Est	-7845
			Actual	-7871
<b>Net Membership Income 10-11</b>	Est	<b>2050</b>	Actual	<b>2589</b>
<b>Conference</b>				
Net income from RHI (50% of surplus)		2200		1553
income direct		1000		2200
Less expenses		-600		-526
Less payment to DLG		-1600		-2227
Conference net income		<b>1000</b>		<b>1000</b>
Advertising		500		
Empty Homes Training at 5% of gross income		750		509
Publications at 25% of gross income		500		
Miscellaneous - savings account interest				2
<b>Net trading and other Income - all sources</b>		<b>4800</b>		<b>4099</b>
<b>Sponsorship</b>				
<b>Starting balance plus income</b>		<b>13798</b>		<b>13097</b>

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**EXPENDITURE**

<b>Outstanding from 2010-11</b>			
Website improvements		670	670
Colour printer annual charge 12 months		225	225
Printing page charge	2175	14	14
<b>Total</b>		<b>908</b>	<b>908</b>
<b>Projected 2011-12</b>			
Contingencies, including software, hardware etc		500	0
Ian Forster Logo			25
Incentives to members		600	0
3-year subscription to Inside Housing		332	332
1-year subscription to 24dash.com - website		151	151
Further website improvements and support say		4000	2594
peer2peer exec expenses		1500	680
Colour printer annual charge		225	0
Printing page charge	1552	10	0
Printng charge (avg 7p per side)	600	42	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>7360</b>	<b>3783</b>
<b>Projected/Actual Expenditure</b>		<b>8268</b>	<b>4691</b>
<b>Projected Balance 31st December 2011</b>		<b>5530</b>	<b>Actual: 8406</b>
<b>Less petty cash (total in bank)</b>		5490	8367

**Basis for Calculating Membership Fee Commission**

75% across the board  
Check against bank:

**Notes**

Total actual expenditure	15315.42	£0.00
Total actual income	14722.07	