

the opportunities and constraints in returning long term empty housing to beneficial occupation. Many local authorities in Wales are also taking steps as part of their strategic housing function to identify and encourage the reuse of long-term vacancies.

9.3 However, local authorities also need a range of powers to deal with long-term empty dwellings and the proposal in the Bill to give local authorities in Wales the discretion to increase council tax levies to 150% on residential properties unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for at least 12 months might be a valuable additional tool to tackle the issue of long-term vacant housing. It would be important to monitor the use and impact of such powers and the extent to which their use acts as a disincentive to owners leaving property empty long term, as well as the amount of revenue raised through setting a higher council tax levy. There may then be a case for giving further discretion to allow local authorities to increase the levy on the owners of long-term vacant housing still further over time, where individual dwellings remain empty for several years.

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