

# *Harrogate* BOROUGH COUNCIL **Media Release**

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pr.1024. Grants available under empty property initiative.doc

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**\*photo opportunity – see below**

## **EMPTY PROPERTIES CAN MAKE GOOD AFFORDABLE HOMES with the help of a grant from Harrogate Borough Council**

As the district's latest affordable homes project is officially opened in Starbeck, housing chiefs are urging owners of empty properties to apply for funding to help bring their properties back into use.

Under the Empty Property Initiative, funding is available for conversion and renovation of disused properties, which have been empty for six months or more.

Recent successful schemes have included the transformation of derelict shops in Ripon into refurbished shops and residential units, and disused storage space over another shop has been turned into two flats.

Current schemes include the conversion of a former residential-home on the High Street, Starbeck into five flats in partnership with Harrogate Families Housing Association. The property was generously donated by the Trustees of the \*Camwall Project. This development will be officially opened by the Mayor of the Borough of Harrogate (Councillor Mrs Margaret-Ann de Courcey-Bayley) on Wednesday, 28 July".

Councillor Jean Butterfield, Cabinet Member for Housing, said: "We are desperate for good quality affordable homes in our district. Since the initiative was launched in the late 1990s, the council has provided funding of nearly £1m, which has brought disused property back into use and has provided over 80 new affordable homes.

"Empty property can be drain on owners in trying to keep up with repairs. And where this doesn't happen they can often blight our towns and villages. I would urge anyone who might be interested in the initiative to contact us. They could get a grant of up to £24,000 per unit in order to convert or bring their property up to standard. Their commitment in return is to lease the property to one of the council's housing association partners for a minimum five-year term.

"The result is that derelict and under-used property is renovated and improved and that people in housing need are able to find high-quality affordable accommodation."

**PHOTO OPPORTUNITY:** 3.00 pm Wednesday, 28 July 2004 official opening of five new flats at 77 The High Street, Starbeck.

**NOTE TO EDITORS:** The Camwall Project was a charity established by a former vicar and members of the congregation of St Andrews Church in Starbeck. The residential home was one of their housing projects and closed in 2000 as the committee could not see how to comply with the new care standards when they came into effect.

**FURTHER INFORMATION:** Councillor Jean Butterfield is available for comment on 01423 770381. Further technical information is available from Jenny Jacobs, Housing Needs Officer on 01423 556892.