



City Hall Greens

**Sian Berry AM
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To the Rt Hon Michael Gove, MP
Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
2 Marsham Street,
London SW1P 4DF

Sent via email to: correspondence@levellingup.gov.uk

15 November 2022

Dear Mr Gove,

Recommendations in Dead Spaces report

I am writing to bring to your attention my report, London's Dead Spaces: Bringing them Back to Life.¹ This research exposes the huge range of empty publicly owned buildings and facilities across London. I found that 25 London councils own 442 sites which are currently out of normal use. Most of these are simply left unused, leaving gaps in their communities for an average of four years at a time.

Londoners told me they are acutely aware of the community spaces and buildings in their local area, describing them as 'dead spaces'. This term clearly reflects the strong feelings people have when they see this kind of wasted opportunity on their doorsteps. Meanwhile, across London – and the rest of the UK – hundreds of community groups are crying out for easier ways to take over empty buildings.

I believe that as policy makers we have a clear opportunity now to empower local people, social enterprises and charities to take over these spaces. I have already written to the Mayor of London with my proposals, and I would also like to see the Government take action.

I have several recommendations applicable at a national level, which can be found on page 9 of the report, with suggestions for legislation that the Government could bring in to:

- make it easier for local authorities to use compulsory purchase powers,
- introduce a true community right to buy at reasonable cost, as exists in Scotland,
- enable more use of orders to bring privately owned space back into use,
- bring in 'meanwhile use' as a planning use class to take the bureaucracy out of temporary changes of use for community benefit.

¹ London's Dead Spaces: Bringing them Back to Life, June 2022
https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2022_06_dead_spaces_sian_berry_am_final.pdf

Please could you respond to these recommendations? I would also be happy to discuss them with you further.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sian Berry', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Sian Berry
Green Party Member of the London Assembly