

Half a million houses are lying empty, Guardian research...

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I still think this is shocking:

Charities are demanding an urgent rethink of government [housing](#) policy after a Guardian investigation found that almost half a million homes are lying empty in the UK — enough to put a roof over the heads of a quarter of the families on council house waiting lists.

The startling picture of neglect — we estimate that more than 450,000 properties have been empty for at least six months — at a time when there is an acute housing shortage was pieced together using information gathered from local councils under the Freedom of Information Act.

It was the basis of a TUC tax demand last year, little noticed then but which could raise significant tax (£5 billion a year) or which would change behaviour or both on this issue:

The TUC wants to see a tough approach in a bid to help those waiting for homes — it has argued for severe financial penalties to be imposed on owners of empty properties, such as council tax bills at five times the standard rate.

Of course I'm biased in saying I think the TUC got this right - I advise the TUC - but I think the conclusion is hard to challenge.

Although I'm sure some will.