



**AST-POL-18-01**  
**Torus Empty Homes Maintenance Policy**  
**September 2021**

<b>0.</b>	<b>DOCUMENT CONTROL</b>		
<b>0.1</b>	<b>SUMMARY</b>		
	Empty Homes Standard		
<b>0.2</b>	<b>DOCUMENT INFORMATION</b>		
<b>Role</b>	<b>Name/Position</b>	<b>Date</b>	
<b>Author</b>	Kevin Clifford (Senior Maintenance Manager)	September 2021	
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<b>0.5</b>	<b>DISTRIBUTION</b>		
<b>Name / Department</b>	<b>Title</b>		
All Staff	Asset Management & Compliance Teams		
All Staff	Neighbourhoods & Customer Service Teams		
<b>0.6</b>	<b>ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS</b>		
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## 1. Introduction

Torus is committed to keeping its properties in a good condition and in doing so will meet both its statutory and contractual responsibilities. We aim to deliver cost effective services to meet residents' needs and look after the long-term maintenance and improvement of our properties.

Torus recognises the negative effect empty homes can have on a local community and the sustainability of the surrounding environment. Effective management of empty homes involves ensuring a balance between letting the property and ensuring the homes meet a minimum liveable standard is a key priority to Torus.

## 2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure the consistent quality of properties offered for letting by Torus, and that properties are of a clean and habitable standard to meet the needs of incoming tenants. It is intended that this be shared with prospective tenants on viewing a property so that they are aware of the standard at which we re-let properties and they can provide an element of quality control on the standard.

## 3. Scope

This policy applies to all future empty properties except where properties are identified for demolition or disposal.

## 4. Policy

**Lettable Standard-** all properties will meet British Standards generally and will comply with all relevant legislation. Any works required to achieve the Decent Homes Standard will be identified and carried out on all sustainable properties. The location of meters, stopcocks and wheel valves will be identified and noted, and information on these and the operation of any heating or other mechanical fixtures and fittings given out to the incoming tenant.

**Energy Performance Certificates-** a domestic energy assessment of the property will be completed where required and an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) will be lodged

**Asbestos Surveys-** all void properties will receive an asbestos survey and appropriate action taken. The survey information will be updated on the asbestos register along with detail of any subsequent asbestos removal and all tenants will be informed of any asbestos materials in their home

**Works After Re-let-** certain works can be undertaken after the property has been re-let and Torus's Voids Team and the appointed contractors will discuss this with the aim of minimising the overall vacancy period and to minimise the resulting rent loss.

**Handover/ Post Inspection-** in order to monitor and verify the quality of repairs being carried out Torus will post inspect 10% of all void works and HMS will post inspect 100% of all completed void works.

During the voids process the property will undergo a full electrical safety check to ensure a satisfactory EICR is issued. The property gas supply will be capped as soon as the property becomes void and a full turn on and test is conducted prior to the property being re-let. Copies of the valid LGSR and EICR will be provided to the new tenant as part of the tenancy pack.

Each new tenant moving into their home will be provided with a Tenancy Pack containing technical information on the property, appliance instructions and any relevant certification.

### **Chargeable Repair**

Torus must ensure that its resources for repairs and maintenance are maximised and therefore will recharge tenants for repairs that are not Torus's responsibility e.g. rubbish removal or if Torus has to carry out a repair to a property which has been caused by damage, either wilful or accidental and fittings in the property being left in an exceptionally poor state of decoration including garden clearances.

## **5. Minor Adaptations**

If, due to health or disability, tenants require minor alterations or adaptations, e.g., fitting grab rails in bathrooms, then Torus may be able to help. Torus will work with tenants and other agencies and advise if the work can be dealt with in-house or if not assist with trying to obtain external funding.

## **6. Customer Satisfaction/Feedback**

Torus takes any dissatisfaction with its repairs service or performance of its contractors seriously and would always welcome feedback. All complaints regarding a repair or the conduct of any contractors will be dealt with via Torus's complaints and compliments policy.

We welcome suggestions and complaints from people who use or provide our services. We believe that this can provide important lessons to help us ensure that the service is improved for everyone.

If you have something to say about Torus's policies and procedures or the information that is provided about them, please let us know in writing to:

**Torus  
The Observatory  
1 Old Haymarket  
Liverpool  
L1 6RA**

**Telephone: 0800 678 1894  
By e-mail to: [info@torus.co.uk](mailto:info@torus.co.uk)**

## Appendix A

### Minimum Lettable Standard

<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>TYPE OF WORK</u>
<b>General</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All properties will be checked to ensure they are free from infestation such as rodents, fleas, bed bugs and other pests. If such a problem is identified eradication will take place before the property is let</li> <li>• All rooms will be inspected and checked to ensure that all internal doors, architraves, skirting, loft hatch, airing cupboards and pantry shelves and bath panels are present and in good order</li> <li>• Walls and ceilings will be checked for signs of dampness. Any evidence of dampness will be investigated, the cause diagnosed and rectified by appropriate methods</li> <li>• All lofts spaces shall be insulated to ensure a minimum of 250mm loft insulation is obtained</li> </ul>
<b>Floors and Stairs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All floors (solid or timber) must be free from defects, safe and secure. Timber floors must be adequately supported and free from rot. Any floor coverings provided by Torus must be in good condition</li> <li>• Loose floorboards and sheeting will be re-fixed</li> <li>• Solid floors requiring repair will be re-screeded or re-asphalted</li> <li>• In kitchens and bathrooms any loose, missing or defective floor tiles will be renewed to match existing, where possible. Where a tile match is not possible consideration will be given to using tiles that would complement the existing ones by forming a pattern or a border</li> <li>• Floor tiles in living rooms, bedrooms and hallways will be checked for soundness and will be removed and screeded when damaged or defective</li> <li>• Ceramic floor tiles and laminate flooring that has been installed by the previous tenant will be left in place if complete and in good condition</li> <li>• All stair treads and risers will be checked to ensure they are safe and secure, defective components will be repaired or renewed</li> <li>• Staircase handrail/ balustrading will be checked to ensure they are secure. Where parts are missing, they will be replaced</li> </ul>
<b>Windows</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All windows will be inspected to ensure they are in working order and capable of being fully closed and latched. Broken or missing handles, stays fasteners, glass, putty will be renewed. Any failed double-glazed units will be replaced. Where necessary restrictors will be fitted above ground floor level or where accessible from a balcony, where they do not already exist</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When a window is beyond repair it will be replaced with double glazed units incorporating low e glass to a similar style to the original windows. All new windows should have multi locking systems. The exception to this requirement will be where properties are in conservation areas where advice from the local Planning Authority must be obtained before replacement takes place</li> <li>• All external doors must be fit for purpose, robust and provide adequate security, securely hung, able to open and close freely and have a useable letter box, spy hole and draught excluder.</li> <li>• All internal doors should be sound, free from any major defects, with adequate ironmongery. All kitchen doors should be a minimum of half hour fire rated doors with appropriate door closures</li> </ul>
<b>Locks and keys</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each front and rear door will be provided with a new lock including 3 keys per door</li> <li>• Communal doors to blocks of flats will be provided with 2 fobs (1 yellow primary fob and 1 green additional fob), or 2 keys for the older style doors.</li> <li>• Additional fobs can be purchased from Torus if required</li> <li>• Keys will also be supplied for letterboxes, outside stores and meter cupboards where applicable</li> <li>• Poorly fitted or inappropriate locking devices will be removed. Window locks will be fitted where appropriate- which overall will mean all windows except those designated as egress openings</li> </ul>
<b>Electrical</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Electrical systems will be fully tested, and an appropriate NICEIC certificate issued</li> <li>• Where practicable all single socket outlets will be replaced with a fuse spur and low-level socket for washer/fridge. Provide 4 x double sockets in the living room. 4 x double sockets in the kitchen 2 x low spurs/low level sockets. 2 x double sockets per bedroom. 1 x double socket in the hall or landing. All fittings and face plates to be clean and free from damage.</li> <li>• Light fittings will be a pendant, batten, bulkhead, or fluorescent type, depending on scope of work identified. Sealed light fitting units will be provided in kitchens and bathrooms as part of the improvement works</li> <li>• Previous tenants' electrical fittings will be left in place if they are in good, working order and they are safe and comply with the current electrical regulations</li> <li>• Smoke detectors are serviced or fitted where there were none previously</li> <li>• Non-standard and defective electrical appliances/fittings will be disconnected and removed</li> </ul>

<p><b>Gas appliances</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gas appliances will be serviced and tested and a current certificate (LGSR) issued to ensure that the system complies with all legislation</li> <li>• Ventilation levels should be checked, and action taken to correct any inadequacy</li> <li>• The gas supply is to be isolated by a Gas Safe registered gas engineer by the introduction of a lockable gas valve, where one is not already fitted</li> <li>• All gas carcass pipework will be checked</li> <li>• Gas cooker point in multi occupancy blocks of flats will be removed and pipework made safe. Electric cooker point will be installed in its place. <i>Multi occupancy buildings definition refers to residential properties where 'common areas' exist and are shared by more than one household, and includes maisonettes, and individual flats above shops.</i></li> <li>• Gas cooker point to all other non-multi occupancy properties should be capped off and made safe</li> <li>• All properties that have central heating installed will have any previously fixed gas fires removed and all openings made good</li> </ul>
<p><b>Solid fuel appliances</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Solid fuel fires and surrounds will be removed, and the openings made good as Torus do not support open flue appliances</li> </ul>



<p><b>Plumbing</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The complete plumbing installation should be tested, and defective fixtures repaired or replaced as appropriate. All fittings should be free from leaks, water hammer and discharging overflows</li> <li>• Domestic plumbing fittings must be checked include overflows, taps, waste pipes, traps, gullies, cisterns and storage tanks and any loose pipework fixed</li> <li>• Where fitted, hot water cylinder must be factory pre-insulated or have jacket fitted. All tanks and pipes in roof spaces should be lagged</li> <li>• A washing machine supply and outlet waste pipe should be provided in all kitchens where none already present- except in specialist accommodation where communal laundry facilities are available</li> <li>• The cold-water main stop tap should be checked and eased if necessary</li> </ul> <p><b>Legionella Treatments:</b></p> <p>Void properties will be assessed on a prioritised risk basis dependent on their total time unoccupied (i.e. 'keys-returned' to 'keys-out new tenant') and will be split as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Under 2-week void period (low risk)</li> <li>• 2-8-week void period (med risk)</li> <li>• Over 8-week void period (high risk)</li> </ul> <p>Torus will adopt a risk-based approach to the water safety management regimes implemented at void properties, the frequency of 'safe purging' and period of 'system drain-down' activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If property isn't drained down, a flushing regime is required after 2-week period</li> <li>• All properties over 8 weeks must be drained down</li> <li>• All designated 'non-management' void properties shall be drained down</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shower heads will be removed and disinfected or replaced as an extra precaution if in a poor or damaged condition</li> </ul>
<b>Bathrooms</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All sanitary fittings should be clean, damage-free, hygienic and serviceable with plugs and chains attached. They will be repaired or renewed as appropriate. All wastes and traps should be securely fitted and free from leaks</li> <li>• All W.C seats will be cleaned and disinfected. WC seats will be replaced if missing or damaged. The flushing mechanisms should be checked and in good working order</li> <li>• Removal of baths in sheltered, housing for older people and extra care schemes and replace with wet rooms.</li> <li>• Bathroom improvements will have fully tiled walls on 3 sides including around the bath and wash hand basin to accommodate the shower over the bath. Bathrooms that have not had improvements will as a minimum be brought up to the Torus Standard to include an over bath shower and wall tiling to suit.</li> </ul>
<b>Kitchens</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All kitchen units and worktops should be free from major defects, all drawers/doors open and close correctly and are clean. All handles and closures should be secure</li> <li>• Where units are beyond economical repair, they are to be replaced to comply with the Torus Standard</li> <li>• Do not remove pantry or built in cupboards, they count as useable cupboard space</li> <li>• All kitchens should have a minimum of five power sockets</li> <li>• Where Torus ceramic floor tiles are from discontinued lines and require repairs then every effort will be made to match up tiles with a complimentary matching pattern will be provided</li> <li>• Wall or floor tiles installed by the previous tenant will be left in place if they are safe and in a good condition</li> <li>• Sinks to be stain and damage free with plug and chain attached</li> <li>• Any existing extractor fans should be cleaned and serviced as part of the NICEIC electrical inspection</li> </ul>
<b>Bedrooms</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remove any bedroom fireplaces and make good to brickwork, plaster and floor. Ensure that ventilation is provided</li> </ul>
<b>Decoration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remove all polystyrene tiles from walls and ceilings in all rooms and ensure plaster finishes are left smooth</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure ceilings and walls are free from major defects and fit to receive decoration</li> <li>• Where decorations are disturbed as a result of works undertaken, such as electrical wiring, the wall is to be fully stripped of all paper and made fit to receive decoration</li> <li>• The property will be in reasonable decorative order or be capable of being readily decorated by the incoming tenant. Redecoration of flats in supported housing and sheltered schemes and the issue of decoration vouchers is detailed in the Decoration Allowance Policy</li> <li>• Existing artex is classed as decoration and if done to a professional standard will remain in place</li> <li>• Previous tenants wall boards, wall panelling, dado, picture rails and the like will be left in place if in a safe and good condition</li> </ul>
<b>Rubbish</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All rubbish, carpets, furniture etc is to be removed from the property including loft space, gardens and outbuildings. Any sharps to be collected and disposed of appropriately</li> <li>• Ensure that the property is hygienically clean and left in a presentable condition for the new tenant</li> </ul>
<b>Gardens</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that the garden is left free of rubbish and grass and shrubs are cut and pruned prior to letting</li> <li>• Check for any unsafe buildings such as sheds, outhouses and greenhouses and remove and make good the site of any defective buildings removed. Bases will be left in place if level and safe</li> <li>• All fencing and gates will be maintained on a like for like basis</li> <li>• Fishponds and sandpits will be filled in and made level</li> </ul>
<b>Communal lighting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All communal lighting to flats to be fully operational</li> </ul>
<b>Drains &amp; gullies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All drains, gullies etc. should be free running and clear of obstruction. Covers to be secure and not a trip hazard.</li> </ul>
<b>External</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roofs to be structurally sound, no missing or slipped tiles or slates, flashings secure and free from leaks</li> <li>• Fascias, bargeboards and soffits to be structurally sound, secure and clean</li> <li>• Chimneys to be structurally sound</li> <li>• Rainwater goods to be securely fixed, serviceable and free from leaks</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brickwork and rendered areas to be structurally sound, wind and watertight, free from major defects</li> <li>• Previous tenants' structural alterations such as wall openings, patio doors, door openings, etc., will be checked for compliance with Building Regulations and if in a safe and good condition will be left in place</li> <li>• Paths, steps, patios, handrails and ramps etc. to be structurally sound and safe and free from trip hazards. Boundaries to provide adequate and acceptable security, particularly in vulnerable situations (e.g. adjacent public highways, railways and canals etc.)</li> <li>• Unsafe structures to be removed / made safe</li> <li>• Sheds and greenhouses, if structurally safe will remain</li> </ul>
<b>Meter readings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gas, electric and water meters to be read, readings noted and recorded on the handover certificate</li> </ul>
<b>Adaptations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Properties with adaptations will be checked by the Housing Options Team and Access for suitability for disabled residents before removal of the adaptation. Where an adaptation is removed it will be stored and recycled if possible.</li> </ul>