I live in a rural area. Directly next door to me is a beautiful traditional cottage, from Ordnance Survey maps it looks like it was there around 1840. It is owned by a major local land owner. The occupier died in 2006 and the property reverted back to the estate owned by the land owner as it was on a 99 year lease. It was in nice habitable condition, but it has remained unoccupied since 2006 and no maintenance carried out, hence the small kitchen roof at the back has caved in. The garden area front and back has been an overgrown mess all these years, with weeds and hedge at one time well over 8 feet high. This obscured my visibility when exiting my drive, but the land owner repeatedly refused to do anything about it.

Not only has it affected me, the overgrown nature of the place has halted the development of a house on a plot on the other side of the cottage. Due to lack of visibility, the owners who have full planning permission are not allowed to commence building until the visibility aspect is provided, something the land owner refuses to do. This has gone on since 2005 and the land owner nearly destroyed the previous owners who tried from 2005 to 2015 to commence their build. It was sold at auction couple in 2015. They thought as it had full planning there would be no problem, but the small print said 'planning conditions apply' (referring to the visibility.) This couple were evicted off their own site by the local Council who ordered them to remove their caravan, rendering them homeless.

I could write a book on what this land owner has done to the neighbourhood. This cottage could easily have been put back into operation, but the land owner refuses to do so. Over the years I have been in contact with Shelter, and the Empty Homes Officer at the local Council who have tried to get into dialogue with the land owner, to no avail.

I tried to get the local Council to make a Compulsory Purchase Order but they said they didn’t have the funds or inclination to do so.

I was later advised a journalist that there was a move to bring in a Compulsory Sales Order which would give owners time to put property back into use, and if they refused to do so, the property could be seized and put up for public auction by the council.

This would solve a lot of problems, especially in the area where I live where wealthy, titled landowners own multiple properties and choose to let then fall into disrepair rather than sell them. One major distillery in the area had their workmen cut through
the roof trusses to collapse the roofs so the cottages were uninhabitable rather than have someone living in them.

I have gone through hell with the land owner. Talk about the fox in charge of the henhouse. This isn't the only empty property they own, there are more in the area. They are not known for selling or improving his properties.

I am currently in the USA with my wife, and will be returning to the UK mid June of this year. If you would like any more information, please don't hesitate to ask. You could also contact Shelter, who could provide you with the full details of what has gone on.

It would also be interesting to see the comments by the land owner if they were questioned on these facts in the Scottish Parliament.

I would love to see the implementation of a CSO in Scotland, it would be a real boon to rural areas to see empty homes sold and put back into use once again, rather than hoarded by the 'Feudal' landed gentry.