Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant: Croí Cónaithe Towns Fund Scheme

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Prepared by the Department of
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Introduction

Housing for All, the Government's Housing Plan, recognises the opportunity to reimagine and transform our cities and towns and increase residential development in tandem with an emphasis on amenities and quality of life. Addressing vacancy and dereliction is a key part of this response, set out in the context of Pathway 4 on 'Addressing Vacancy and the Efficient Use of our Existing Stock'.

Objectives of the Croí Cónaithe Towns Fund

Many areas of cities, towns, villages and rural parts of the country face the blight of vacant properties, which, if brought back into use, could add real vibrancy and provide new accommodation in those areas. The Croí Cónaithe Towns Fund is a key initiative which underpins these policy objectives set out in Pathway 4 of *Housing for All*.

There are two schemes under the Croí Cónaithe Towns Fund which are delivered by local authorities. The **Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant** provides people with a grant to support the refurbishment of vacant properties, while under the **Ready to Build Scheme**, local authorities make serviced sites available in towns and villages at a discounted rate to individuals who want to build their own home.[1]

The Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant

The Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant was launched on 14 July 2022 and benefits those who wish to turn a formerly vacant house or building into their principal private residence or make it available to rent.

A maximum of two grants are available to applicant(s). Only one grant will be available for a vacant property being made available for rent.

The grant applies to eligible vacant properties in cities, towns, villages and rural parts of the country that have been vacant for 2 years or more prior to application.

[1] The Ready to Build Scheme was launched on 21 September 2022. Under the Scheme, local authorities will make serviced sites available in towns and villages at a discount on the market value, to individual purchasers for the building of their home which will be their principal private residence. It is intended that the local authority will develop existing site(s) in their control or purchase site(s) and make them available for development by providing services and access to the site(s) concerned. The level of discount to the individual will depend on the level of servicing cost incurred by the local authority before the sale of the site with discounts up to a maximum of €30,000. The amount of such discount will be reflected in the sale price of the site to the purchaser.

Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant Levels

From 1 May 2023, a grant of up to a maximum of **€50,000**[2] is available for the refurbishment of vacant properties for occupation as a principal private residence, and for properties which will be made available for rent, including the conversion of properties which have not been used as residential heretofore[3], subject to appropriate planning permission being in place. This is subject to upper limits for the types of work, specified below, having regard to a reasonable cost assessment by the local authority. The grant is inclusive of the VAT cost of the works.

Where the refurbishment costs are expected to exceed the standard grant of up to **€50,000**, a maximum top-up grant amount of up to **€20,000** is available where the property is confirmed by the applicant(s) to be derelict (i.e. structurally unsound and dangerous) or if the property is already on the local authority's Derelict Sites Register, bringing the total grant available for a derelict property up to a maximum of **€70,000**. In the case of a top-up grant in respect of a derelict property not on the Derelict Sites Register, an independent report prepared by an appropriately qualified professional is required to be submitted along with the application, confirming, to the satisfaction of the local authority, that the property is derelict.

From 1 July 2023, additional support under the Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant is available to support the refurbishment of vacant and derelict properties located on the islands to help bring them back into use.

The maximum rate of the Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant payable is up to 20% higher for eligible vacant and derelict properties on qualifying islands.

A list of the qualifying islands where this additional funding is available can be accessed using the following link: https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/31da3-populated-off-shore-islands/

This brings the maximum grant rates for refurbishing properties on islands up to €60,000 for the refurbishment of vacant properties and up to €84,000 where the property is confirmed to be derelict. The maximum cost limits for the individual works categories are also increased by 20%.

Those applying for the grant are required to indicate on the application form if they are applying in respect of a property that will become their principal private residence or a property that will be made available for rent. This must be indicated at the outset as different conditions apply depending on the application type.

Applicants that have indicated that they are applying for the grant in respect of a property that will become their principal private residence are also required to indicate on the application form if they have / intend to apply for the Local Authority Purchase and Renovation Loan (LAPR) or the renovation-only LAPR.

Those applying for the grant are also required to indicate on the application form if they are applying for the Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant alone or the Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant including the Derelict Property top-up Grant.

[2] From 14th July 2022 to 30th April 2023, a grant of up to €30,000 was available for the refurbishment of a vacant property while a grant of up to €50,000 was available for the refurbishment of a derelict property.

[3] This refers to buildings previously used for commercial or public use.

The level of grant payable is contingent on the works approved by the local authority and is paid on completion of the works and based on evidence such as appropriately detailed invoice(s) / receipts following a final inspection by the local authority.

An SEAI Better Energy Home Scheme Grant[4] may be available in combination with this grant. However, works covered by SEAI Better Energy Homes Scheme will not also be provided for under the Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant. The local authority must satisfy themselves that proposed works are not claimed for under any other grant.

In respect of rental properties, all landlords are required by law to comply with the standards for rental housing and ensure that their properties are fully compliant with fire safety and minimum standards regulations for rental properties. See Housing (Standards for Rented Houses) Regulations 2019, https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2019/si/137/made/en/print. As part of the declaration to be signed in the application form, applicants must agree to meet and comply with these standards.

The grant is available to individuals or households for which the property will be their principal private residence or applicants who will make the property available to rent on the private market. It is not available to registered companies, developers, undertakings etc. Applications can only be made by named individuals who own the property for which the grant is being applied for or who are actively engaged in purchasing the property.

How the Scheme Works

Eligible Properties

Properties considered for inclusion must be built up to and including 2007[5] and evidence of this is required to support grant application.

Proof of Vacancy

The property must be vacant for two years or more at the time of **grant application**. Proof of vacancy is required to support grant applications.

Confirmation of vacancy can be validated and verified by the use of, for example, utility bills, which can help determine vacancy periods (e.g. continuous and consistent low or zero electricity usage or disconnection for a period of two years) or such other proofs as are available, to the satisfaction of the local authority. **Confirmation of vacancy must be validated and verified by the local authority prior to grant approval.**

Please note that an applicant(s) cannot leave a property unreasonably and purposely vacant for the purpose of qualifying for the grant.

[4] SEAI Grants include Attic Insulation up to €1,700, Cavity Wall Insulation up to €1,700, Internal Insulation up to €4,500, External Wall Insulation up to €8,000, Heat Pump Systems up to €6,500, Solar PV up to €2,400. Further details are available on the SEAI website: www.seai.ie.

[5] Prior to 1st May 2023 only properties build prior to 1993 were eligible for the grant.

Proof of Dereliction

For a property to be deemed derelict (i.e. structurally unsound and dangerous), the applicant(s) must confirm this by submitting an independent report prepared by an appropriately qualified professional along with the application form. The property can also be deemed derelict if it is on the local authority's Derelict Sites Register.

Proof of Ownership

Proof of ownership is required to support the grant application.

Where the applicant(s) does not yet own the property, for which the grant is being sought, a local authority may give approval in principle to the grant application where the applicant is able to provide evidence of active negotiations to purchase the property e.g. confirmation of engagement from the estate agent or owner of the property.

Where the applicant(s) is applying for the Local Authority Purchase and Renovation Loan (LAPR), evidence that the LAPR application has passed the stage 1 assessment will be accepted as evidence of active negotiations to purchase the property. This is required to support the grant application form.

Approval in principle shall not be confirmed as approval in full until ownership has transferred to the applicant(s). No grant drawdown may take place until such ownership has been confirmed to the satisfaction of the local authority.

Evidence of ownership for the grant payment, which the relevant local authority may consider, is outlined in the table below.

Ownership requirements for grant payment	Examples of proof that may be submitted
The owner must be an individual who owns the dwelling (whether jointly or not) and the local authority must satisfy itself as to the ownership prior to approval of the grant.	• Title deed[6] or similar legal instrument proving ownership of the property; • evidence of payment of Local Property Tax (LPT); • mortgage statement dated within the last 12 months.

The relevant owner(s) is required to reside in the dwelling as his or her principal private residence or to make the dwelling available for rent on completion of the qualifying works to the dwelling.

[6] A title deed can be obtained from Land Direct, Tailte Éireann (www.landdirect.ie)

Where the applicant(s) is going to use the property as their principal private residence, a declaration (on the application form) that the individual(s) intends to reside in the dwelling on completion of the qualifying works to the dwelling must be provided to the local authority. Clawback conditions will apply where the applicant(s) ceases to reside in the dwelling as a principal private residence in the ten-year period from the payment of the grant.

Where the applicant(s) is going to make the dwelling available for rent, a declaration (on the application form) must be provided to the local authority that upon completion of the qualifying works to the dwelling, the property will be made available to rent and that a tenancy will be registered with the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) prior to drawdown of the grant. Clawback conditions will apply if the property is not available to rent within the ten-year period from the payment of the grant.

The refurbishment of a vacant property for occupation may involve development that requires planning permission. Where appropriate, the applicant(s) must submit evidence of planning permission for the development / works proposed or a declaration of exemption under the Planning Acts.

A local authority may give approval in principle to a grant application where the applicant(s) is required to obtain planning permission for the development / works involved. In these circumstances, the applicant(s) shall provide details of their current planning application to accompany their grant application. Any grant approval in principle shall not be confirmed as approval in full until a final decision has issued in respect of the planning application by the planning authority.

Applicants under the scheme will be required to submit evidence that planning permission has been attained prior to final grant approval. In cases where a question arises in relation to whether a proposed development needs planning permission or is an exempted development, applicants under the scheme will be required to submit a declaration of exemption under Section 5, of the Planning and Development Act 2000. This question may arise in particular, in the case of a change of use, properties that have been vacant for a long period of time, and properties that are in a substantial state of disrepair and / or require substantial works.

Types of Work Covered

The following categories of works (listed on the next page) are eligible for grant assistance, subject to a reasonable cost assessment by the local authority and to any limits for specific works as set out in the table below. The works proposed must be approved in advance, following inspection by the local authority of the subject property.

With effect from 1st December 2024 under the work category 'Services' (No. 6 in the table displayed below) the grant will not fund the installation of a stand-alone boiler powered by fossil fuels for heating.[7]

This does not preclude an applicant covering the cost of a stand-alone fossil fuelled boiler themselves, as part of the overall refurbishment works to the property.

Refurbishment requirements for each property will differ depending on the type / size / condition of the existing building. The cost threshold levels set out below are based on a typical two storey, 3 bed semi-detached house[8].

[7] To meet requirements in Article 17(15) of the European Performance of Buildings Directive (EU/2024/1275).
[8] In respect of islands, the maximum cost limits for the individual works categories are increased by 20%.

No.	Works Category	Maximum Cap on specific elements (incl. VAT) *based on a two storey 3b semi-d*
1	**Demolitions* / Strip-out / Site Clearance** (including removal of hazardous materials)	Max €50,000 for Vacant Property Grant only Max €70,000 incl. Derelict Top-Up Grant
2	**Substructure works** (including works to foundations; rising walls; beds/slabs; damp-proofing; underpinning)	Max €50,000 for Vacant Property Grant only. Max €70,000 incl. Derelict Top-Up Grant
3	**Superstructure works** (including works to internal/external walls; chimneys; upper floors; stairs; roof structure; other structural timbers)	Max €50,000 for Vacant Property Grant only. Max €70,000 incl. Derelict Top-Up Grant
4	**Completions** (including works associated with external doors and windows; internal doors and associated frames, architraves and ironmongery; balustrades; skirtings; rooflights; fascias/soffits; rainwater goods)	
4a	external completions (incl. doors, windows, cills)	€21,000
4b	internal completions (incl. doors, frames, architraves, ironmongery)	€7,000
4c	skirtings	€3,500
4d	fascias, soffits, rainwater goods	€4,200
4e	roof completions (incl. flashings, fascias, soffits, gutters, downpipes)	€14,000
5	**Finishes** (including finishes to external / internal walls; ceiling finishes; tiling/waterproof finishes to wet areas; roof finishes)	
5a	tiling/waterproof finishes to wet areas	€2,800
5b	painting and decorating	€10,500.00
5c	roof finishes	€14,000.00
6	**Services** (including plumbing; heating[9]; ventilation; power; lighting; telecommunications; smoke/CO2 detection)	Max €50,000 for Vacant Property Grant only. Max €70,000 incl. Derelict Top-Up Grant
7	**Fittings** (including kitchen units; sanitary/bathroom fittings)	
7a	kitchen units	€7,700
7b	Sanitary ware / bathroom fittings	€2,800

[9] Where funding is being sought for the installation of a boiler, details of the boiler type will be required by the local authority.

8	**External Works** (necessary external / site works carried out within the curtilage of the site)	€7,000.00
9	**Extension** either within the ambit of exempt development under planning regulations, or as part of a planning application, if required, as part of a wider refurbishment	Max €50,000 for Vacant Property Grant only. Max €70,000 incl. Derelict Top-Up Grant
10	**Professional services associated with work**s (fees/surveys)	10% + VAT of the nett construction cost or €14k, whichever is the lesser

*While demolition and extension works can form part of an application for the Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant, such works must be part of a wider refurbishment of the existing dwelling in keeping with the objectives of the scheme

Grant Conditions

Subject to the above, the following additional conditions will apply:

Grant applications to refurbish a principal private residence

- Applicants may only apply for a maximum of two grants under this scheme - where one property will become their principal private residence and the second will be in respect of a property made available for rent. **Only one grant will be payable in respect of a property for rent**;
- Applicants must provide evidence of tax compliance, with tax clearance from Revenue;
- Local Property Tax to be in order where applicable;
- Applicants must agree to the clawback conditions;
- Applicants must provide evidence such as appropriately detailed invoice(s) / receipts for the works undertaken;
- Once a grant application receives approval, applicants must complete works applied for within a period of 13 months[10].

Grant applications to refurbish a property that will be available to rent

- Applicants may only apply for a maximum of two grants under this scheme - where one property will become their principal private residence and the second will be in respect of a property made available for rent. **Only one grant will be payable in respect of a property for rent**;
- Applicants must provide evidence of tax compliance, with tax clearance from Revenue;
- Local Property Tax to be in order where applicable;
- Applicants must agree to the clawback conditions;
- Applicants must provide vouched expenditure for the works undertaken;
- A signed affidavit confirming that the grant has not been applied for previously for rental purposes;

[10] In exceptional circumstances, at their discretion, the local authority may grant an extension to the 13-month approval period.

- Once a grant application receives approval, applicants must complete works applied for within a period of 13 months[11].

Applicants may only avail of a maximum of two grants, once in respect of a principal private residence and one in respect of a property to be made available for rent. **Only one grant will be payable in respect of a property for rent**. Local authorities will ensure adequate checks of addresses in this regard.

For rental properties, proof of registration of the tenancy with the RTB must be provided to the local authority before drawdown of the grant. Evidence of annual registration of tenancy with the RTB must be submitted to the local authority which awarded the grant for a period of ten years following receipt of the grant (see Clawback provisions below). Checks will be carried out by local authorities to confirm this.

In respect of rental properties, all landlords are required by law to comply with the standards for rental housing and should ensure their properties are fully compliant with fire safety and minimum standards regulations for rental properties.

See https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2019/si/137/made/en/print

Applicants benefitting from this grant may also be eligible for retrofit grants under the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) Better Energy Homes Scheme Grant. In the case of retrofit grants, the local authority will not make the Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant available for the same work.

Local authorities will ensure that the works have not been grant aided via any other scheme and applicants are required to provide any information as may be requested by a local authority regarding any other grant aiding of works applied for.

[11] In exceptional circumstances, at their discretion, the local authority may grant an extension to the 13-month approval period.

Clawback

It is required that the applicant(s) will live in or make available to rent the qualifying property for a period of at least five years from the date of payment of the grant. If at any time the applicant(s) sell the property, or it ceases to be their principal private residence, or the property is no longer available to rent within ten years from payment of the grant, the applicant(s) must reimburse the local authority an element of the full value of the grant, as follows:



In the event of a fall in the value of the property, the full monetary amount, subject to the percentage clawback above will be repayable to the local authority.

Evidence of annual registration of tenancy with the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) must be submitted to the local authority annually for a period of ten years after payment of the grant (if the grant application is made in respect of a rental property).

An agreement (comprising of the signed application form, signed letter of approval and signed charge document) must be concluded between the local authority and the applicant(s) which contains the clawback agreement, including a charge on the property, which shall be binding on the applicant(s) upon drawdown.

Letter of approval / Letter of approval in principle

A letter of approval will issue to an applicant(s) whose application is successful and will include the approved grant amount. Approval is granted from the date of issue of the letter and is valid for a period of 13 months. The applicant(s) is required to sign and return the letter in order to confirm that they understand the terms and conditions applicable to the grant. This signed letter in addition to the application form, forms part of the agreement between the applicant(s) and the local authority.

The charge document referred to above, must be signed and returned to the local authority, after completion of the works applied for and prior to the issuing of the grant payment.

The signed application form, signed letter of approval and the signed charge document, form the agreement between the applicant(s) and the local authority.

Operations and Management of the Fund

The operation of the Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant is delegated to local authorities who administer the scheme.

Steps for assessment and approval of the grant:

The applicant(s) local authority will:

- check the application form to ensure it is fully completed, the declaration in the application form has been signed and that the required supporting documents have been submitted;
- assess the application in line with the conditions of the scheme as set out in this scheme outline;
- where the application is in order and required supporting documentation is provided, arrange for suitable technical staff to visit the property to make sure it is possible to do the work and assess the projected costs of the planned works in the application form;
- write to the applicant(s) to let them know if the application has been successful and the amount of grant funding approved or that they have received approval in principle.

Prior to the grant being paid:

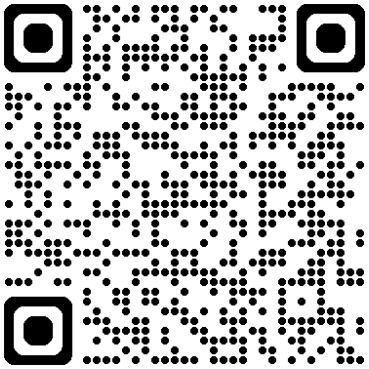
- in cases where approval in principle was granted, proof of ownership must be provided **before** the grant can be paid;
- in respect of a property that is being made available to rent, evidence that the applicant(s) has registered the tenancy with the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) is required;
- the local authority will require applicant(s) to submit evidence such as appropriately detailed invoice(s) / receipts for the completed works;
- the local authority will conduct a final property visit to review that the work has been completed in-line with grant application;
- the local authority will provide an agreement to be signed by applicant(s) which contains the clawback agreement including a charge on the property;
- the local authority will require applicant(s) bank account details of where the grant is to be paid and also applicant(s) tax clearance from Revenue for any grant payment being paid over €10,000;
- if the applicant(s) has successfully availed of the Local Authority Purchase and Renovation Loan (LAPR) or the renovation-only LAPR, the terms of that scheme require that the applicant(s) sign a Vacant Property Refurbishment Payment Authority letter. Therefore, the grant payment will be made to the section of the local authority that manages the Local Authority Purchase and Renovation loan.
- once the local authority is satisfied, the grant will be paid.

Appeals process for grant applications not approved;

If the local authority does not approve a grant application, the applicant(s) can appeal the decision. The applicant(s) must write to their local authority within three weeks of the date of the original decision, and clearly explain on what grounds they are appealing. A local authority official who was not involved with the original assessment will then assess this appeal and contact the applicant(s) with the result. This could take up to six weeks.

Further questions in relation to the grant scheme;

For any further questions on the grant please contact the Vacant Homes Officer in your local authority. Please scan the following QR code for a list of all Vacant Homes Officers and their contact details.



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