

Better Energy Home Grants

Sustainable Energy Authority Ireland (SEAI) provides Better Energy Home grants to help homeowners and landlords reduce their energy costs and emissions by providing grants towards insulation, heating control and solar thermal improvements on homes occupied and built before 2006. Further details on grants payments, and qualifying works are available from the SEAI website at www.seai.ie

Exempted Development

New planning regulations have been introduced recently which allow change of use, and related works, of certain vacant commercial premises, including “over the shop” type spaces, into residential use without the need to obtain planning permission. If you own a vacant commercial/over the shop premises and are interested in knowing more you should contact the Vacant Homes Officer in your local authority.

Compulsory Purchase

Local authorities would prefer to work informally with owners to bring vacant homes back to use. However, formal powers are also available to local authorities through compulsory purchase orders (CPO). Local authorities can take action through the CPO process where all other options have been exhausted and where the local authority consider action is required in the common good.

Bringing Back Homes - Manual for the Reuse of Existing Buildings

This manual has been developed to support and facilitate the reuse of older/vacant buildings in our towns and cities for residential use. In order to encourage reuse and increase the number of viable, liveable properties, the manual provides clarity to industry, local authorities, members of the public and property owners on the application of the current regulatory requirements to common existing building types and guidance on how best to facilitate their reuse. The manual can be located at <http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/home-ownership/vacant-homes/vacant-homes>

Who should I contact?

The summary of schemes and incentives is by no means exhaustive and other more specific grants and schemes may be available to you depending on the type and location of your vacant property. If you wish to discuss your options further you should contact the Vacant Homes Officer in your local authority.

A full list of Vacant Homes Officers and their contact details is available at the Department of Housing, Planning & Local Government website at www.housing.gov.ie

Alternatively you can contact the Vacant Homes Unit at vhu@housing.gov.ie

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Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Vacant Homes

Realising the
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Are you an owner of a Vacant Property?

When you own a vacant home it can be difficult to work out the options that are open to you to bring it back to use. This leaflet aims to bring together information on Government schemes and initiatives that are available to owners of vacant properties. Local authorities have Vacant Homes Officers (VHOs) who are there to give advice, assistance and can work with you every step of the way in bringing your property back to use.

Benefits in bringing a vacant home back to use

- > Increase the capital value of your property
- > Long term investment potential of a properly maintained dwelling
- > Increased sales potential
- > Property secured from vandalism/anti-social behaviour
- > Provision of homes to those in need of housing
- > Reduce pressure for new housing developments
- > Removes blight in local community

What are my options?

Repair & Lease Scheme

The Repair & Lease Scheme (RLS) is intended for owners of vacant homes who cannot afford, or access, the finance required to bring vacant properties up to the standard required for rental.

Owners of houses/apartments or bedsits that have been vacant for a year or more and which need repairs to bring the property to the required standard for rented properties can express an interest in the scheme with their local authority. If a property requires repairs, a local authority or Approved Housing Body (AHB) will pay for repair work upfront to a max of €40,000 or (€50,000 in the case of former bedsits). In return the property must be made available for social housing for a period of at least 5 years under a direct lease or a Rental Availability Agreement (RAA).

Buy & Renew Scheme

The Buy and Renew Scheme is a companion to the Repair and Lease Scheme, as it provides the option for suitable properties to be purchased rather than leased by a local authority.

In essence you would be selling your home to the local authority. A particular focus of the scheme is on older vacant homes to help tackle the problem of dereliction and improve the appearance of the community.

Long Term Leasing

The Long Term Leasing Initiative may be an option for you if you own a house or apartment that is vacant and in good condition. Leasing your property under this scheme takes the uncertainty out of being a landlord for terms of 10-20 years. It is also financially viable with a guaranteed rental income of 80% of the market rent each month.

Some of the benefits to the owner of this option are;

- > No management of tenants
- > No rent or arrears collections
- > No day-to-day maintenance of the property
- > No advertising or administration fees

Housing Assistance Payment

Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) is a form of social housing support provided to those who qualify for assistance and have long-term housing need. Under the scheme, payments are made on behalf of tenants directly to the landlord subject to maximum rent limits. Benefits of HAP as an owner of a property are:

- > Direct electronic payment monthly
- > 100% tax relief on mortgage interest, as an expense against rental income.

Note: Homeless HAP is similar to HAP but differs in that it provides discretion to exceed the HAP rent limits for homeless households.

Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS)

The RAS scheme is an initiative to cater for people who are in receipt of rent supplement and living in the private rented sector for 18 months or more. Local authorities enter into direct contracts with landlords for their properties for medium to long term periods. Some of the benefits to owners are:

- > Prompt payments directly from the local authority for the duration of the RAS contract.
- > Landlords can get paid if the property is vacant between tenancies
- > 100% tax relief on mortgage interest, as an expense against rental income.

