

NEW PLAN OF ACTION ADDRESSES VACANT HOUSING PROBLEMS

A new Vacant Homes Action Plan has been published, in addition to the launch of a new €150m Urban Regional and Development Fund (URDF) for local authorities to tackle vacancy and dereliction to support the plan, to build on ongoing work to tackle vacancy and dereliction and bringing vacant properties into re-use for housing.

The Vacant Homes Action Plan outlines progress in implementing actions relating to vacancy and efficient use of existing stock contained in Housing for All, the Government’s housing plan to 2030. Among the measures contained in the plan are:

- A €150m fund for vacancy related projects: A call for proposals from local authorities for funding to acquire a vacant or derelict property or site (residential or commercial) and associated works, required to de-risk or improve the site so that it is more attractive for re-use or sale. The fund will then be replenished from the proceeds received from sale or use of a site, allowing a local authority to establish a rolling programme to tackle long-term vacancy and dereliction without borrowing or the associated financial risk. The Government’s ‘Housing for All’ strategy committed to incorporating activation of vacant properties as key criteria in the URDF.



Pictured at the launch of the Vacant Homes Action Plan (l-r): Kieran O’Donnell, Minister of State with responsibility for Planning and Local Government, Darragh O’Brien, Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, and Senator Mary Fitzpatrick.

- Guidance on CPOs by local authorities, with an initial focus on derelict properties.
- Roll-out of a data collection project across all local authorities to capture the number of vacant and derelict properties.
- Support and development of the full-time role of the Vacant Homes Officer across local authorities to be continued.

Launching the Vacant Homes Action Plan and new URDF call for proposals, Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Darragh O’Brien said that the plan outlines the real progress the Government is making in addressing vacancy and details the upcoming measures that will bring even more vacant properties back into use.

The new €150m URDF call for proposals will help local authorities transform vacant and derelict buildings and sites to revitalise and regenerate our cities and large towns and deliver more housing.

ADVERTISING CAMPAIGN

Minister of State with responsibility for Planning and Local Government, Kieran O’Donnell TD, added: “Our department has begun a new six-week advertising campaign on supports for converting vacant property into homes. A range of supports exist for people who want to sell, lease or buy a vacant property.

“People can also convert certain vacant commercial properties into up to nine residential units without planning permission. I would encourage people visit gov.ie/vacancy to read more.”

GOVERNMENT ACCOMMODATES MEASURES TO TACKLE VACANT HOMES

The suite of measures introduced across Government to tackle vacancy over the past 12 months and detailed in the action plan includes:

- ‘Town Centre First - A Policy Approach for Irish Towns’, launched on 4 February 2022, is a major new policy that aims to tackle vacancy, combat dereliction and breathe new life into town centres.
- The Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant, funded by the Croí Cónaithe Towns Fund, was launched on 14 July 2022 for eligible vacant properties in towns and villages. On 15 November 2022, the grant was extended to include vacant properties in cities and all rural areas. A grant of up to €30,000 is available for the refurbishment of vacant properties for occupation as a principal private residence. Where a property is derelict, a top up grant of €20,000 is available, bringing the total grant available for a derelict property to €50,000.
- The Ready to Build Scheme, funded by the Croí Cónaithe Towns Fund, was launched on 21 September 2022. Under the scheme, local authorities provide serviced sites in towns and villages at discounted rates for individuals who wish to build their own home.