



An Roinn Tithíochta,
Rialtais Áitiúil agus Oidhreacht
Department of Housing,
Local Government and Heritage

Expert Advice Grant

Vacant Above the Shop Conversions and
Conversion of former Commercial / Public
Use buildings to Residential Units

Scheme Outline

March 2026

Expert Advice Grant for Vacant Above the Shop¹ Conversions and Conversion of former commercial / public use buildings to residential units

The Expert Advice Grant provides funding of up to €5,000 (the total grant sought cannot exceed 67% of the overall cost inclusive of VAT) towards having an appropriately qualified professional provide expert advice to the owner of;

- A building with a commercial element and vacant above the shop space who may avail of the Vacant Above the Shop Grant to convert / refurbish the vacant space into residential unit/s, with the commercial element remaining.
- A former vacant commercial / public use building who may avail of the Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant Conversion of former Commercial Building / public use building to convert the entire building into more than one residential unit².

Only one Expert Advice grant can be applied for per building.

Applications can only be made by named individuals who own the building for which the advice grant is being applied, or who are actively engaged in purchasing the building. Where there is more than one owner of the building, all owners must be included on the application form.

The Expert Advice Grant is not currently available to registered companies, developers, undertakings etc.

Objective of the Expert Advice Grant

The aim of the Expert Advice Grant is to support the provision of expert advice to enhance the building owner's awareness and understanding of:

- The residential potential of vacant space in their building and what would be involved in bringing the vacant space outside of the commercial element into residential use, including the building standards, planning, legal and other requirements to be met, or
- The residential potential of a former commercial building, where a change of use is being considered, with the entire building being converted into residential use and two or more residential units being created.

By supporting the cost of getting expert advice at an early stage, the Expert Advice Grant helps such owners to make an informed choice and supports value for money in the completion of their projects.

¹ While the grant is referred to as the Vacant Above the Shop Grant, eligible properties are buildings that have a current commercial use which will remain and vacant space outside of the commercial element which can be converted for residential use in the same building.

² When the building is being converted into **one** residential unit, the standard Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant can be applied for, where scheme conditions are met.

Eligibility

The Expert Advice Grant is available to owners of buildings where there is vacant above the shop space and where the commercial element is remaining in use (shop, office, former public use) who are:

- Considering converting / refurbishing the vacant space outside of the commercial element into self-contained residential unit(s) and intending / considering applying for the Vacant Above the Shop Grant to support the conversion / refurbishment work to bring the vacant space in the building into residential use.

The grant is also available to owners of vacant and derelict former commercial / public use buildings who are;

- considering a change of use of the entire building from commercial to residential where more than one residential unit will be created and intending /considering applying for the Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant Conversion of Commercial / Public Use Building.

In both cases, it is not a requirement that the Grant subsequently be applied for.

Note - the Expert Advice Grant is not available where the entire commercial building is being converted into one residential unit.

Buildings that qualify

1. Vacant Above the Shop conversions / refurbishments - where commercial element is remaining in the building

- The building must have been built prior to 2008.
- The building must have a commercial element and above shop / vacant space outside of the commercial element or vacant former residential units.
- The above the shop space / former residential unit(s) must have been vacant for a period of at least 2 years prior to date of application.
- The commercial element of the building must be remaining. It is not a requirement that commercial element of the property has been / is vacant. It may currently be in use or vacant.

Proof of ownership of the building and proof of vacancy of the space outside of the commercial element will be required.

2. Former commercial / public use building – where entire building is being converted to two or more residential units

- The building must have been built prior to 2008.
- The class of use of the building must have been for commercial /public use purposes.
- The building must be vacant for 2 years or more at date of application.
- Two or more residential units must be intended / be capable of being created in the building.

Proof of ownership of the building and proof of vacancy will be required.

Owners of traditional constructed buildings in villages, towns and cities may wish to seek professional advice from a conservation accredited professional to understand the potential of these buildings. The link below provides useful information for traditional building owners:

[Traditional buildings](#)

Grant funding is available for professional advice for owners of protected structures and buildings contained within an Architectural Conservation Areas under the [Conservation Advice Scheme](#).

Ineligible Buildings

The categories of buildings listed below are not eligible for funding under the scheme. Please note that this list is not exhaustive:

- Buildings where the intended purpose is commercial only.
- Buildings where the intended purpose is a single residence.
- Buildings where works have already commenced /drawings and or plans already drawn up/planning permission or planning exemption lodged with planning authority.

Grant

The Expert Advice Grant provides up to €5,000 towards the cost of having an expert with appropriate expertise:

- visit the property,
- conduct a survey of existing building to include mapping of existing services,
- provide a plan /drawing outlining reuse proposal for the vacant space / building,
- prepare and document tailored advice for the property owner with regard to conversion / refurbishment of the property to create residential units. The advice should have regard to statutory requirements e.g. compliance with planning requirements, building regulations, fire safety requirements, protected structures etc. where applicable.

The grant does not cover costs associated with the detailed design and specification of new-build extensions.

The total grant sought cannot exceed 67% of the overall cost inclusive of VAT. Any costs above the maximum grant amount will be borne by the grant applicant.

If approved for the grant an Expert Advice Report template for completion by the chosen professional will be made available.

Who can carry out the Expert Advice Report?

A registered architect, registered surveyor, registered engineer, who are assigned certifiers with appropriate expertise must complete the expert advice report.

Note: To act as an Assigned Certifier in relation to Building Control the building professional must be registered as follows:

(1) Architects on register pursuant to Part 3 (Registration of Architects) of the

Building Control Act 2007

(2) Building Surveyors on register pursuant to Part 5 (Registration of Quantity

Surveyors) of the Building Control Act 2007

(3) Chartered Engineers on register pursuant to Section 7 of the Institution of Civil

Engineers of Ireland (Charter Amendment) Act 1969.

Property owners of protected structures or historic buildings located within Architectural Conservation Areas (ACA) can find suitably experienced and accredited conservation professionals at the links below:

Accredited Conservation Architects: <https://www.riai.ie/work-with-anarchitect/conservation-skills>

Accredited Conservation Surveyors: <https://scsi.ie/building-conservationaccreditation/>

Accredited Conservation Engineers:

<https://www.engineersireland.ie/Professionals/CommunitiesGroups/Engineering-Divisions/Structures-and-construction/ConservationAccreditation-Register-for-Engineer>

It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure they engage the services of the required professional.

How to Apply

To apply for the grant, owners of eligible buildings should:

- Fully complete the application form.
- Submit the application, along with required information to their local authority.

To consider your application, the local authority must receive your fully completed application form, along with required supporting documents. Incomplete applications and applications without the required supporting documentation cannot be processed by the local authority.

While applicants do not have to be currently resident in Ireland, they must have a Republic of Ireland bank account.

As in the case of the Vacant Property Refurbishment Scheme, the Expert Advice Grant is not available to registered companies, entities or developers. Applications can only be made by named individuals.

Documents required to support the application form:

The following documents **MUST** be provided in support of an application to the local authority:

1. Proof of ownership.
2. Evidence of vacancy.

3. Site location map.
4. Proof that the building was built before 2008.
5. Clear and current photograph(s) of the building. It is important that good-quality digital photographs (minimum of 8) are included which illustrate the building/buildings in question as this will inform the assessment of the application. Photographs should be clearly labelled with a short description of the content. Photographs should include a general view of the exterior (front and rear); related outbuildings; general view of site/context to provide an understanding of the wider setting etc.; interior details, such as current use of building and space, windows, doors, stairs, entrances. It is essential that these photographs are clear and of sufficient quality to allow an informed assessment of the building.
6. A quotation to include a cost breakdown from your professional. This should include the following: cost to provide report, as per provided template.
7. Proof of relevant qualifications of the selected professional, included as an assigned certifier.

Assessment Process Initial Screening:

All applications are screened first to ensure eligibility and completeness as follows:

- Is the building eligible?
- Is the application fully complete?
- Is the relevant supporting documentation attached to the application?

Important: Applications that do not meet the above requirements will be rejected on these grounds and will not be assessed further. Incomplete applications will not be accepted.

Approval and Notification

Applicants will be notified of the decision regarding their application using the contact details provided in the application form. If approved, a letter shall be issued by email to the applicant, outlining the level of funding approved, as well as the timeline for completion of the report and the terms and conditions of the award, including the requirement to complete and return a supplier set up, which will contain the applicant's bank account details (not those of the professional), to the local authority.

Once approved, the report shall be compiled by your chosen professional using the Expert Advice Report Template which is supplied.

The local authority will use the reports only for the purpose of approving the grant payment, in line with the Data Privacy Statement (see attached).

Payment Procedures

Prior to any payment being made by the applicant to the professional, the completed expert advice report as well as the invoice from the professional who completed the report should be sent for review and approval to your local authority. Once the report has been approved, the local authority will then arrange for payment of the approved grant amount to applicants.

Note: Owners who have received a determination under Section 482 of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 (as amended) (formerly Section 19 of the Finance Act 1982) and /or where the owner/occupier has received tax relief under the Home Renovation Incentive or the Living City Initiative, should inform the Revenue Commissioners of any funding received through this scheme.

Fire Guidance

With the exception of dwelling houses occupied as single dwellings, buildings are subject to the requirements of Part III of the Fire Services Acts, 1981 and 2003. Therefore, where proposals involve living accommodation over shop units, proposals must comply with the requirements of the Fire Services Acts.



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Croí Cónaithe Towns Fund