



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Pilot Conservation Advice Scheme for Vacant Traditional Farmhouses

Prepared by the Department of
Housing, Local Government and Heritage
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**An Roinn Tithíochta,
Rialtais Áitiúil agus Oidhreachta**
Department of Housing,
Local Government and Heritage



NATIONAL INVENTORY
of ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE

Pilot Conservation Advice Scheme for Vacant Traditional Farmhouses

The Department of Housing, Local Government, and Heritage is running a pilot scheme to provide grants for expert conservation advice to private owners of vacant farmhouses who are availing of or considering the Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant. 'Traditionally constructed' is taken, but not exclusively understood, to mean buildings constructed of stone or mud (or a combination of these materials) with lime and/or earth mortars. These buildings do not need to have to have statutory protection and therefore the scheme is not limited to Protected Structures or historic structures located within an Architectural Conservation Area.

What Kind of Buildings Qualify?

Traditional (also known as 'vernacular') farmhouses are a key part of our rural landscape and shared heritage. Sometimes described as 'cottages', these buildings generally comprise modest houses constructed using local materials and traditional techniques by 'ordinary' people using locally available materials such as thatch, stone, slate, earth, wattle and unsawn timber. Later on corrugated iron, despite its imported, industrial origin, was also used.

Vernacular buildings differ greatly from formal buildings, the latter being the work of professional builders and designers, using imported styles, and including most high-status houses, commercial and public buildings and social housing (including labourers cottages and gate lodges etc.).





The Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant

In July 2022 the Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant was launched to support bringing vacant and derelict properties back into use.

From 1 May 2023, a grant of up to a maximum of €50,000 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 a property which has not been used as residential heretofore.

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 to be derelict or where 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.

Properties must be vacant for two years or more and built up to and including 2007.

Objective of Pilot Conservation Advice Scheme

The aim of the 'Vacant Traditional Farmhouse Pilot Conservation Advice Scheme' is to provide expert advice which can enhance owners' awareness and understanding of the potential of their traditional farmhouses, and prompt enhanced long-term

investment in our architectural heritage. This grant scheme has been devised under two actions of **A Living Tradition**, the national strategy on built vernacular heritage. “Action 13: Promote vernacular-friendly repair and maintenance” and “Action 14: Present models of gentle rehabilitation”.

The **Pilot Conservation Advice Grant Scheme for Vacant Traditional Farmhouses** will provide a grant of up to **€7,500** (ex VAT) to cover the cost of having a conservation expert with proven and appropriate expertise to visit the property, conduct a survey, and compile tailored conservation advice for the property owner. The report will outline the condition of the building, suggest conservation repairs and improvements which would improve the building and enhance the building’s character, energy efficiency, integrity, and amenity. Note: Not all conservation professionals will have energy modelling skills so engagement of additional conservation expertise may form part of the report recommendations. The grant does not cover costs associated with the design and specification of new build additions.

The aim of the scheme is to help owners of traditionally constructed buildings to understand the heritage value and potential of these structures and to prompt them to consider investments which could enhance that value.

All applicants must be willing to complete a short questionnaire to assist with the evaluation of the scheme and provide a selection of before and after photographs.

Selection of Conservation Professional

Applicants must select an experienced conservation professional. **The selected conservation professional must have proven and appropriate conservation expertise.** Suitably experienced and accredited conservation professionals can be found here:

- Conservation Architects: <https://www.riai.ie/work-with-an-architect/conservation-skills>
- Conservation Surveyors: <https://scsi.ie/building-conservation-accreditation/>
- Conservation Engineers: <https://www.engineersireland.ie/Professionals/Communities->

[Groups/Engineering-Divisions/Structures-and-construction/Conservation-Accreditation-Register-for-Engineers](#)

Where the selected Conservation Professional does not have conservation accreditation please clearly outline the relevant conservation qualifications and demonstrated conservation experience of the chosen professional.

The assigned conservation professional as listed above should be able to act as an assigned certifier in relation to Building Control. (1) Architects on register pursuant to Part 3 (Registration of Architects) of the Building Control Act 2007 or (2) Building Surveyors on register pursuant to Part 5(Registration of Quantity Surveyors) of the Building Control Act 2007 or (3) Chartered Engineers on register pursuant to Section 7 of the Institution of Civil Engineers of Ireland (Charter Amendment) Act 1969.

The regulations specifically require the Assigned Certifier to be competent to inspect and certify the works.

Please note that the proven experience of the chosen conservation professional makes up part of the assessment process.

Application and Assessment Process

Building owners of vacant traditional farmhouses can apply directly to the Built Heritage Policy Unit, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

Applicants must complete and submit the attached application form to niah@housing.gov.ie using the subject line **Vacant Traditional Farmhouse Conservation Advice Grant Scheme**.

Alternatively, applicants may submit their application form by post to **Vacant Traditional Farmhouse Conservation Advice Grant Scheme**, Built Heritage Policy Unit, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, 1.06 Custom House, D01 W6X0.

Buildings for inclusion in the scheme will be assessed and selected on the following equally weighted assessment criteria:

- Building significance

- Building typology
- Demonstrated experience of chosen Conservation Professional

Photographs: It is important that good quality digital photographs (minimum of 5) are included which illustrate the building/buildings in question as this will inform the assessment of the application. The photographs should be clearly labelled with a brief description of their content. Photographs should include exterior (front and rear), site/context; significant interior, out-buildings etc.

Please note that the Department reserves the right to use any or all images to advertise or publicise the scheme.

Successful applicants will be selected and shall be notified using the contact details provided in the application form. Once approved, the report shall be compiled using the **Conservation Advice Report Template** (see attached). The Built Heritage Policy Unit will use the reports only for the purpose of approving the grant payment, in line with the Data Privacy Statement (see attached).

The Department will make grant payments directly to the conservation professional on receipt and approval of the required Conservation Advice Report and invoice. Building owners are not asked to make any upfront payments.



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