



From mountain to sea

Empty Homes/ Renovations Overview



This leaflet provides an overview of some of the things you need to think about when renovating an empty property, and the support and guidance that is available.

Identifying the work to be done

Depending on the condition of the property, you may need a professional to assess exactly what work you need to have carried out. You may also need to employ an architect or engineer to design and draw your proposals.

Planning permission & building warrants

If you are making physical alterations to the property, you should check with Aberdeenshire Council's Planning and Building Standards departments whether the works need permission. To find out if you need planning permission you can check on this link: [Check if you need planning permission - Aberdeenshire Council](#) To find out if a building warrant is required you can check here: [Check if you need a building warrant - Aberdeenshire Council](#) If you think the property may be a listed building, you can find out further info on what this means for you and check here: [Listed buildings - Aberdeenshire Council](#)

In circumstances where planning permission is required to bring an empty property back into use, Developer Obligations contributions may be required where the property has been vacant or abandoned for a period exceeding 5 years. In such cases you should contact Aberdeenshire Council's Developer Obligations team at developerobligations@aberdeenshire.gov.uk.

Costing the works and selecting contactors and other professionals

You should get at least three quotes for the works that you need to have carried out. This will give you a clear picture of the cost of the works identified and the opportunity to select the best contractor/s for you.

There are a number of ways to find contractors:

- You can search online or use the Yellow Pages
- You can use a website such as [Find a tradesperson: local trusted traders | Rated People](#) or Aberdeenshire Council's Trusted Trader scheme: [Trusted Trader scheme - Aberdeenshire Council](#)
- You can contact the relevant professional body for a list of people operating in your area.
Architects: RIAS [The Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland \(rias.org.uk\)](http://rias.org.uk)
Structural engineers: [The Institution of Structural Engineers – IStructE](#)
Chartered Surveyors (RICS): [Welcome to RICS](#)
- You can use recommendations from friends

Discounts, loans and grants

There may be some financial supports available to empty home owners who are refurbishing their property to bring it back to use. Some of these could bring a significant reduction in the cost of the works. The main discounts for works to empty properties are set out below:

VAT reductions – 2 years and 10 years empty (see leaflets on these for further info)

If your property has been empty for 2 years, any renovation or alteration works carried out will be eligible for a reduced VAT rate which is currently 5%. This represents a 15% saving of the total cost of VAT.

If your property has been empty for 10 years and you are renovating it for yourself or your family to live in, you can reclaim VAT paid from HMRC on completion. This equals 0% VAT.

Energy efficiency measures (See our Energy Efficiency Funding Leaflet for further info)

There are a number of loans and in some circumstances grants for the installation of energy-efficiency measures and renewable technologies, for example, full or part funding for loft insulation and installation of central heating. You can find more information at:

[Funding Finder - Home Energy Scotland HUB \(est.org.uk\)](http://est.org.uk)

Services and Discounts for Empty Home Owners

The Scottish Empty Homes Partnership and empty homes practitioners have established relationships with companies and services that could be of use to empty homes owners. See the separate information leaflet [Service and Merchants Discounts](#) with details of services which could be of use, including some discounted offers when referred through your empty homes officer.

What if I can't afford the work?

If you can't afford to carry out the work that is needed to bring the property back into use, you still have a number of options.

- The simplest solution may be to sell the property in its current condition. See our leaflets on [Selling your Empty Property](#) for more information.
- You could look for a loan to cover the cost of the works – perhaps releasing equity through remortgaging.
- You could consider a sweat equity arrangement where the 'tenant' pays no or low rent in exchange for making improvements to the property. You would be advised to seek independent legal advice first. See our leaflet on [Sweat Equity](#) for more information.

Contact Aberdeenshire Council if you have an empty home and would like further advice: emptyhomes@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

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