

From mountain to sea

# Empty Homes/ Renovations Overview



This leaflet provides an overview of the things you need to think about when renovating your 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 should have carried out.

## Planning permission & building warrants

If you are making physical alterations to the property, you should check with the Council's Planning and Building Standards departments whether the works need permission. If consent is required, Council officers can advise you on submitting your application.

You may need to employ an architect or engineer to design and draw your proposals.

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](mailto:developerobligations@aberdeenshire.gov.uk) or on 01467 537559.

## Costing the works

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

## Selecting contractors and other professionals

There are a number of ways to find contractors:

- You can search online or use the Yellow Pages
- You can use a quote request website such as [www.ratedpeople.com](http://www.ratedpeople.com)
- You can contact the relevant professional body for a list of people operating in your area.

**Architects:** RIAS [www.rias.org.uk](http://www.rias.org.uk)

**Structural engineers:** [www.istructe.org](http://www.istructe.org)

**Chartered Surveyors (RICS):** [www.rics.org](http://www.rics.org)

- You can use recommendations from a friend

## 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. It is worth investigating which of them will be available for your property, as they can 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

If your property has been empty for two 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 ten years and you are renovating it for yourself or your family to live in, the works benefit from zero-rated VAT.

### Energy efficiency measures

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 <http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/scotland/grants-loans> See our Energy Efficiency Funding Leaflet.

### 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 sheet 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 may be to sell the property in its current condition. [See our leaflet on selling your 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. [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](mailto:emptyhomes@aberdeenshire.gov.uk)

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