

Presentation to OPR Councillor Training Webinar

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Derelict Sites and Vacant Homes Activation Programme Update

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Policy Context

Tackling vacancy & dereliction in Programme for Government 2025

- Extend the Vacant Property Refurbishment grant scheme to 2030
- Ensure that every local authority has an expanded vacant property team
- Streamline and update legislation governing compulsory purchase order (CPO) powers and derelict sites
- Ensure local authorities update, implement and enforce their derelict sites register.
- Create an 'Above the Shop' living refurbishment grant and other incentives



Policy Context

Tackling vacancy & dereliction in Programme for Government 2025

- Continue the Repair and Lease and Buy and Renew Schemes
- Resource the Town Centre First model and establish Town Regeneration Team in every local authority, bringing together Town Regeneration Officers, Vacant Homes Officers and other key staff.
- Increase the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF).
- Review the criteria for the Town and Village scheme.
- Expand the Building Acquisition Programme to enable local groups to repurpose vacant buildings for community use.



Programme
for Government
2025

Securing Ireland's Future

Other Policies and Plans guiding Activation of Derelict Sites and Vacant Homes

- Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028
- Mayoral Programme: More for Limerick 2024-2029
- Vacant Homes Action Plan
- Town Centre First – A Policy Approach for Irish Towns
- Our Rural Future - RRDF
- URDF Call 3 (Metro + NCW)
- Housing Agency – Guidance on acquiring properties compulsorily
- Croí Conaithe - Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant
- Housing for All: Pathway 4 - Addressing Vacancy and Efficient Use of Existing Stock

Definition of a Derelict Site

Section 3 of **The Derelict Sites Act, 1990 (as amended)**, defines a derelict site as any land which:

“detracts, or is likely to detract, to a material degree from the amenity, character or appearance of land in the neighbourhood of the land in question because of :-

- *the existence on the land in question of structures which are in a ruinous, derelict or dangerous condition, or*
- *the neglected, unsightly or objectionable condition of the land or of structures on it, or*
- *The presence, deposit or collection of litter, rubbish, debris or waste...*

Derelict Sites may be identified in the following ways:

- A complaint made by a member of the public, a local community group or through elected representatives,
- A vacant/derelict home is identified by the public through the website www.vacanthomes.ie ,
- Ongoing surveys of vacant homes and derelict sites completed by an Inspector / Authorised Person of Limerick City & County Council.

Responsibilities

The Derelict Sites Act, 1990 (as amended), states that it is the **duty of every owner and occupier** of land to take all reasonable steps to ensure that the land does not become or does not continue to be a derelict site.

The Act also states that it shall be the **duty of a local authority** to take all reasonable steps (including the exercise of any appropriate statutory powers) to ensure that any land situate in their functional area does not become or continue to be a derelict site.

Activation By Engagement

- LCCC approach is to first engage with owners/occupiers to resolve the dereliction
- Some owners will respond and engage with the Council to solve the dereliction
- Where the owner has not resolved the dereliction, as a last resort, the Council may consider the case for compulsory acquisition, but this is only an option for properties that are Derelict, as opposed to Vacant.

Derelict Sites Register

The Council must maintain a register known as the *Derelict Sites Register*.

When land is entered in the Register a market value is determined by the Council in order to charge a Derelict Sites Levy.

Derelict Sites Levy

The levy is effective from the 1st January of the next financial year and amounts to 7% of the determined market value. It is charged as long as the property is in a derelict state with details entered in the Derelict Sites Register.

Solving Dereliction

Some owners will engage with the Council to solve the dereliction and return the property to productive use without statutory notices being served. Many owners utilise the Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant or SEAI Grants to do this.

Removal from the Register

A local authority shall remove an entry from the Register where the owner / occupier has taken action to solve the dereliction and the land has ceased to be a derelict site.

Compulsory Acquisition

- Section 14 of the Derelict Sites Act, 1990, provides that a local authority may acquire compulsorily a derelict site within their functional area.
- This may arise after encouraging the owner (if engaging) to deal with the matter – carry out works, apply for planning permission, sell the property – but they fail to do so.
- Cases on the Register are reviewed regularly to consider escalation to this stage. A key consideration is: “Will more time resolve the matter?” This is taken on a case by case basis.
- A Section 15 Notice can be served on the owner/occupier of the Council’s intention to acquire the site compulsorily.
- Where an objection to the Notice is received from an Owner, consent to the acquisition must be sought by the Council from An Bord Pleanála.

Vesting

- Where no objection is received to the section 15 Notice, or an objection is withdrawn by the owner, or consent is granted by ABP following owner's objection, the property may be vested in the Council by Order and Notice under Section 17/18 of the Act
- The Vesting Order has the effect of making the site "*free from encumbrance and all estate, rights, title and interests of whatsoever kind*"
- LCCC approach is not to delay in vesting the derelict site. In some cases delays occur in gaining access to complete surveys to create accurate vesting maps

Prioritise Activation - Managing & Disposing of property

- Section 20 of the Act provides that a local authority may use any derelict site acquired under this Act for any purpose connected with its functions.
- Property activation is the key priority and all options will be explored to ensure this happens

Role of the Councillor

- Representative Role – Working with Derelict Site Team i.e complaints, ownership information.
- Housing for All – 2,500 properties to be sold on the private market.
- Section 183 notice of disposal –Buy in required from councillors

Limerick City & County Council Key Stats

Jan 2019 – end April 2025

Key Outcomes:

8389	Derelict Site & Vacant Homes Inspections completed
3103	Notices served under the Derelict Sites Act, 1990.
414	Properties currently entered on the Derelict Sites Register
300	Properties proposed for Compulsory Acquisition (section 15)
212	Properties vested in Council ownership (section 17)
13	Properties retained for community/tourism/other Council uses
50	Properties awaiting confirmation on future use
41	Properties currently for sale / sale agreed on private market
44	Properties sold to new owners and being monitored
24	Properties sold and made non-derelict by new private owners
33	Properties acquired under Derelict Sites Act referred to Housing Directorate
6	Properties CPO'd under the Housing Act referred to Housing Directorate
296	Vacant property Refurbishment Grant Applications Approved
100	Vacant property Refurbishment Grant Applications In Progress towards Approval
98	Vacant property Refurbishment Grant Applications Finalised and Paid
43	Vacant property Refurbishment Grant Applications Withdrawn
12	Vacant property Refurbishment Grant Applications Rejected

Compulsory Acquired under Derelict Sites Act 1990

No. 1 Grennan Villas

Sold on 21/09/2022 and renovated out of dereliction on 22/03/2023

Before



After



Compulsory Acquired under Derelict Sites Act 1990

Jesuit Lane, Limerick

Sold on 16/05/2023 and renovated out of dereliction on 04/09/2023

Before



After



Compulsory Acquired under Derelict Sites Act 1990

Lord Edward Street, Limerick

Sold on 13/09/2022 and renovated out of dereliction on 16/08/2023

Before



After



Compulsory Acquired under Derelict Sites Act 1990

21-23 Old Clare Street, Limerick

Sold on 12/12/2023 and renovated out of dereliction on 31/01/2025

Before



After



Compulsory Acquired under Derelict Sites Act 1990

58 St Lawrence Park, Limerick

Sold on 02/04/2024 and renovated out of dereliction on 15/01/2025

Before



After



Compulsory Acquired under Derelict Sites Act 1990

West Square, Askeaton

Sold on 27/08/2021 and renovated out of dereliction on 06/03/2024

Before



After



Compulsory Acquired under Derelict Sites Act 1990

Knight Street, Ballingarry

Sold on 03/08/2021 and renovated out of dereliction on 31/01/2024

Before



After



Compulsory Acquired under Derelict Sites Act 1990

Main Street, Ballingarry

Sold on 26/01/2021 and renovated out of dereliction on 25/11/2021

Before



After



Compulsory Acquired under Derelict Sites Act 1990

The Square, Galbally

Sold on 06/07/2021 and renovated out of dereliction on 03/09/2022

Before



After



Compulsory Acquired under Derelict Sites Act 1990

The Square, Galbally

Sold on 10/05/2021 and renovated out of dereliction on 01/12/2021

Before



After



Compulsory Acquired under Derelict Sites Act 1990

Bridge Street, Knocklong

Sold on 27/07/2023 and renovated out of dereliction on 16/12/2024

Before



After



Compulsory Acquired under Derelict Sites Act 1990

Cois na Coille, Murroe

Sold on 06/06/2023 and renovated out of dereliction on 05/07/2024

Before



After



Compulsory Acquired under Derelict Sites Act 1990

Athea

Sold on 18/05/2022 and renovated out of dereliction on 20/03/2023

Before



After



Positive Outcome with Owner Engagement

Tall Trees, Askeaton

Before

Now



Positive Outcome with Owner Engagement

St Marys Terrace, Askeaton

Before



After



Positive Outcome with Owner Engagement

Adare

Before



After



Positive Outcome with Owner Engagement Shanagolden

Before



After



Positive Outcome with Owner Engagement Rathkeale

Before



After



Positive outcome with owner engagement

- DS-149-20 – Galbally
- Entered on the DSR 14/03/2023



Positive outcome with owner engagement

DS-019-17 – Darragh More, Glenroe



Derelict Sites Case Opened Recently

- DS-083-24 The Wild Geese Restaurant, Adare



Derelict Sites Case Opened Recently

- DS-084-24 – Woodpark, Castleconnell
- The paint is stripping from the house
- The rear is overgrown



Positive Outcome with Owner Engagement

LCCC PAINT SCHEME - Loghill

Before



Positive Outcome with Owner Engagement

LCCC PAINT SCHEME - Loghill

After



Acquired Compulsorily through Derelict Site Act 1990

The Parklet at West Square, Askeaton



Acquired Compulsorily through Derelict Site Act 1990

The Parklet at West Square, Askeaton



Section 15 Notice to Acquire Compulsorily served LCCC refused consent to be acquired by ABP



Bridge Street, Croom



Section 8(7) Notice under the Derelict Site Act 1990

Property entered in the Derelict Sites Register

Main Street, Croom



Kerry Hill, Shanagolden



Section 8(7) Notice under the Derelict Site Act 1990

Property entered in the Derelict Sites Register

High Street, Croom



High Street, Croom



Section 8(7) Notice under the Derelict Site Act 1990

Property entered in the Derelict Sites Register

Knight Street, Ballingarry



Granagh



Section 8(7) Notice under the Derelict Site Act 1990

Property entered in the Derelict Sites Register

Ballyengland Lower, Askeaton



Cowpark, Kilcornan



Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant

- Addressing vacancy and dereliction is a key part of ***Housing for All***, the Government's Housing Plan, set out in the context of Pathway 4 on 'Addressing Vacancy and the Efficient Use of our Existing Stock'.
- The Croí Cónaithe Towns Fund is a key initiative that underpins the policy objectives and the **Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant** is a part of this initiative.
- Grants of up to **€50,000** may be made available to refurbish vacant homes for occupation as a **principal private residence** or to make available to the **private rental** market.
- Where the refurbishment costs are expected to exceed the standard grant of €50,000, a further maximum amount up to **€20,000** may be available where the applicant confirms that the property is derelict (i.e. structurally unsound and dangerous). Must be quantified by formal report from an independent qualified professional.

VPRG Applications by status

Aug 2022 to 31st Jan 2025

APPLICATION STATUS	TOTAL
Applications Approved	269
Applications Withdrawn	36
Applications Rejected	12
Applications In Progress	107
Applications Paid	77
TOTAL RECEIVED:	501

- **Reasons for rejections/withdrawn:** property is not vacant 2 years, property is agricultural in nature, works already completed, excess demolition not in keeping with the spirit of the scheme, applicant decides to withdraw, information not received in reasonable time.
- **Reasons for delays in application approval :** supply of correct documentation - ownership, proof of vacancy, detailed works quotations, engineer's report, LPT and TCC, confirmation that work is permitted/exempted under the Planning Acts

Positive outcome with owner engagement

- DS-115-21 3 Greenhills, Garryowen
- Entered the DSR on 26/10/2022. VPRG Final Inspection 07/11/2024



Positive outcome with owner engagement

- DS-034-22 Station Road, Castleconnell
- Entered the DSR on 10/05/2023. VPRG Final Inspection 23/09/2024



Dereliction resolved through VPRG

3 Greenhills, Garryowen

Entered DSR on 26/10/2022. VPRG Final Inspection 07/11/2024

Before



After



Dereliction resolved through VPRG

26 Sean Heuston Place, Limerick

Entered DSR on 02/12/2019. VPRG Final Inspection Nov 2023

Before



After



Dereliction resolved through VPRG

Main Street, Bruff

Entered DSR Aug 2020. VPRG Final Inspection July 2024

Before



After



Dereliction resolved through VPRG

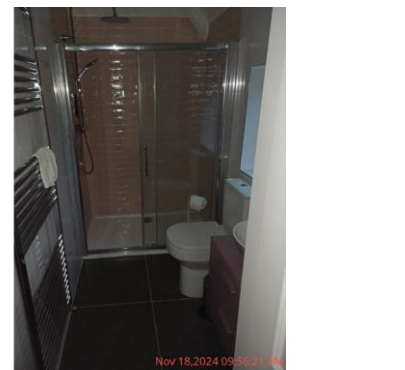
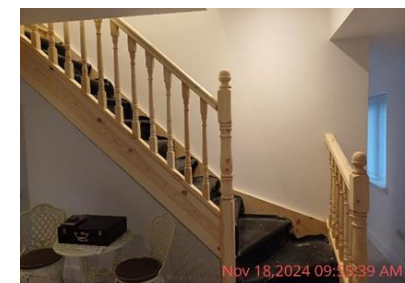
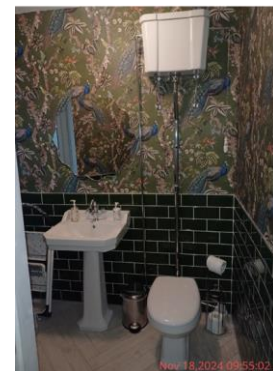
O'Callaghan Avenue, Limerick

Entered DSR Aug 2020. VPRG Final Inspection October 2024

Before



After



Dereliction resolved through VPRG

Ennis Road, Limerick

Entered DSR May 2019. VPRG Final Inspection Nov 2023

Before



After



Dereliction resolved through VPRG

The Square, Galbally

DS Case opened Jan 2020. VPRG Final Inspection April 2024

Before



After



Challenges facing Limerick

- No legislation in place to deal with Vacancy, where the property is no longer derelict.
- Housing directorate targets and URDF call 3 targets are competing over the same properties – residential or capable of conversion to residential
- The success that has been achieved by Limerick has led to owners actioning the works prior to getting to vesting stage, as it is now clear that LCCC will progress to the vestings. This is a success in its own right ... but going forward the number of vestings will reduce.
- Availability of Technical staff is quite a challenge. Technician qualifications are highly demanded both in the open market and internally in LCCC.
- Lack of financial support for staff costs is an issue in Limerick as it is in other authorities
- Bespoke system for the administration of the grant would be very beneficial, and this could be developed and shared nationally, as all are dealing with the same data.
- Care needed as to some of the properties to be vested require significant H&S works, often cannot be recovered on the future sale due to the extent of the works needed eg Hartstonge Street
- Arbitration process is costly and not well supported legally. Have not had good experience in this regard to date.

Achievements

- Winner of Local Authority Innovation Award: Limerick City and County Council's Living Again: Vacancy, Dereliction and Reuse initiative.
- The Housing Agency: Housing Insights Issue 6: Tackling Dereliction - Limerick City and County Council's approach
- Irish Times Article March 2025: Dereliction in Ireland: How Limerick is leading the way in tackling the issue

<https://www.irishtimes.com/ireland/housing-planning/2025/03/17/leading-the-way-on-dereliction-limerick-brings-hundreds-of-properties-back-into-use/>

- Limerick council best at tackling dereliction - report

<https://www.rte.ie/news/2025/0414/1507475-limerick-dereliction/>

- Ongoing workshops with local authorities seeking assistance with using the Derelict Sites Act, 1990



Thank You

Property Management Services

Rural, Community, Culture & Tourism Development Directorate

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