



Empty Homes

Lonely²Homely

Bring Your Empty Property Back to Life!

Perth & Kinross Council have operated a range of empty homes initiatives since 2012. This publication aims to make owners of empty properties aware of services and incentives that the authority has to help owners make decisions about empty properties and in turn make them revenue generating assets.

Owners of empty properties should be aware of the recent Local Government Finance (Unoccupied Properties etc) (Scotland) Bill whose powers came into force on 1 April 2013. Perth & Kinross Council have implemented this legislation and now apply 100% Council Tax to properties that have been empty for over twelve months. This will increase to 130% from April 2015. The Scottish Government are eager to encourage owners of empty homes

to bring them back into use in order to increase housing supply and in particular to help tackle the shortage of affordable accommodation.

Perth & Kinross Council strongly endorse and support the Scottish Government's empty homes commitment and in response have developed a range of grants and advice services to assist owners of long-term empty properties make decisions about their use.

We appreciate that properties lie empty for many different reasons and we understand that for many owners the thought of bringing a long-term empty property back into use can be overwhelming and financially difficult. So we hope that you find this first edition of Perth & Kinross Council Empty Homes Focus useful and interesting.

Your Empty Property Can Make a Difference

Bringing empty properties back into use has long been on the Scottish Government's agenda.

In 2007 the discussion document Firm Foundations announced that there would be a review of the private rented sector. The review highlighted the importance of bringing empty properties back into use and the varied benefits that this would bring to the built environment, meeting local housing need and helping local authorities meet their duties towards homeless people.

It is not a statutory requirement for local authorities to participate in empty homes work but Perth & Kinross Council could immediately see the benefits of bringing empty properties back into use.

To us empty properties are more than just empty, they provide us with an opportunity to regenerate Perthshire, boost the supply of housing for rent and sale and particularly to tackle the shortage of good quality affordable private accommodation.

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Empty Homes

To date the authority has issued 11 grants to 10 owners: this has resulted in a staggering 30 bed spaces being created in Perth City Centre.

Contact

Emily Kernahan
Empty Homes Accommodation Officer

Housing Advice Centre
Perth & Kinross Council
10-16 York Place, PERTH, PH2 8EP

Tel **01738 783435**
Email Ekernahan@pkc.gov.uk

Initiative Grants

Empty Homes Initiative Grants are available to owners of long-term empty properties that fail to meet the Repairing Standard. After a formal grant application process owners could benefit from a grant of up to £5,000 per bedroom. Grants will be awarded to properties that require heating, plumbing, electrical and glazing upgrades. Unfortunately we don't give grants for the installation of new kitchens, bathrooms, floor coverings or décor but we will give successful applicants a £500 decoration allowance.

There are a number of conditions attached to the grant, one being that the property is made available to the Rent Bond Guarantee Scheme for a period of five years and that the property once refurbished is let at the Local

Housing Allowance rate. Once the property is refurbished our Rent Bond Guarantee Scheme can market the property on your behalf and prepare tenancy agreements for your tenants.

The initiative was successful in securing additional funding for this financial year and we are keen to engage with as many empty property owners as possible. We are predominantly looking for one and two bedroom properties in Perth City but we will consider all properties and we will even consider properties that require change of use from commercial to residential.

Our Empty Homes Accommodation Officer will be happy to discuss the initiatives conditions of grant and any other enquiries that you might have.

Rent Bond Guarantee Scheme



Perth and Kinross

Rent Bond Guarantee Scheme



Our Rent Bond Guarantee Scheme has been operating since 2010. For many customers wanting to rent privately and trying to save for a deposit and first month's rent is extremely difficult.

Our Bond facilitates an agreement between landlord and tenant and allows a deposit to be paid over twelve monthly installments. If a tenant defaults on their bond and if it is not paid in full over the twelve month period, or if there is damage to a property when a tenant leaves, the landlord can make a claim against the Bond.

Accommodation Officers ensure that prospective customers are adequately vetted before accepting them to the scheme. Our accommodation team will support both landlord and tenant throughout a tenancy and can give advice and assistance relating to tenancy

agreements and rent payments. An additional incentive is that customers who are in receipt of Housing Benefit will have their rent payments fast tracked to their landlord.

Our Accommodation Officers have a wealth of knowledge and expertise and are happy to discuss the Rent Bond Guarantee Scheme with prospective and established landlords.

If you have any queries about Rent Bond please get in contact with our team.

Contact

Rent Bond Guarantee Scheme

Housing Advice Centre
Perth & Kinross Council
10-16 York Place, PERTH, PH2 8EP

Tel **01738 474500**
Email homelessaccommodation@pkc.gov.uk

Becoming a Registered Landlord

If you are considering renting your empty property you must become a Registered Landlord. It is a Statutory Requirement to register with the Local Authority in terms of Part 8 of the Anti-Social Behavior etc (Scotland) Act 2004. If you haven't applied to become a Registered Landlord you will be committing a criminal offence if you let or attempt to let a residential property.

You can apply online to become a Registered Landlord at Landlord Registration Scotland. By using this method you will receive a 10% discount. Alternatively you can download a landlord registration application form from our website:

www.pkc.gov.uk/landlords

It costs £55 to become a Registered Landlord and £11 to register each property you want to rent. Registration lasts for three years.

Our landlord registration team are happy to help you with any questions or concerns that you have about becoming a Registered Landlord.

Contact

Landlord Registration

Perth & Kinross Council
2 High Street, PERTH, PH1 5PH

Tel **01738 475143**

Email landlordregistration@pkc.gov.uk

Vacant Property Development Officer

Our Vacant Property Development Officer is here to provide advice to owners on how to sell, rent, repair or convert properties to another use. This Officer also looks at problematic properties and owners who do not want to address or bring their empty property back into use.

If you want to do something with your empty property but you are not sure what, our Vacant Property Development Officer is at hand to give support and advice. There are a large amount of options to help ensure that appropriate and sensible solutions can be found for owners.

Feasibility Funding

Do you have an empty commercial premises but think it would be good to convert it to residential premises or have a property that you think could have an alternative use? If so our Vacant Property Feasibility Funding could be for you!

You could apply for a grant of up to £5,000 towards architect or surveyor fees to help you realize your property's full potential.

There are certain conditions attached to this grant but once the property has been refurbished there is no condition that it should be made available to customers of the Rent Bond Guarantee Scheme. However this grant can be blended with our Empty Homes Initiative Grant (conditions apply).

Our Vacant Property Development Officer is available to answer any of your enquiries and grant applications and additional information is available to view and download at:

www.pkc.gov.uk/vacantproperty

Matchmaker Scheme

Perth & Kinross Council's Matchmaker Scheme has been set up to help prospective buyers and sellers of empty properties find each other more easily. The condition of the property for sale does not matter as some buyers may be looking for a complete project, whilst others may just be looking for a property that needs updating.

Not all empty home owners have the time or financial resources to return their property to use, and sometimes the best solution is to sell the property to someone who can. This is a hassle-free option if you've been thinking about selling your empty property but not quite made up your mind.

The benefit of using this scheme is that it is Free! Contact **Isobel Butt** for more information.

Contact

Isobel Butt, Vacant Property Development Officer

Housing & Community Care, Perth & Kinross Council, Pullar House, 35 Kinnoull Street, PERTH, PH1 5GD

Tel **01738 475955** • Email ijbutt@pkc.gov.uk

Report an Empty Home



The television celebrity and architect George Clarke is passionate about bringing empty properties back into use.

If you are concerned about an empty property in your area, you can report it to:

emptyhomes@shelter.org.uk

When a property has been reported, the local authority where the house is situated will be notified.



Scottish Empty Homes Partnership

PKC Crowned Empty Homes Champions

Perth & Kinross Council are delighted to have won the 2013 Shelter Scotland and Camelot's Scottish Empty Homes Champion of the Year Award at the Grand Central Hotel in Glasgow.

Perth & Kinross Council were praised for employing both a Vacant Property Development Officer and an Empty Homes Accommodation Officer to carry out empty homes work. It was also noted that the authority showed that they understand the links between empty property and wider regeneration work. Our collaborative working techniques were also acknowledged.

If you or someone you know would like a copy of this document in another language or format, (on occasion, only a summary of the document will be provided in translation), this can be arranged by contacting the Customer Service Centre on 01738 475000.

You can also send us a text message on 07824 498145.

All Council Services can offer a telephone translation facility.

www.pkc.gov.uk

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Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust

In 2012 Perth was granted City status. To celebrate this and to help regenerate the city Historic Scotland awarded £650,000 of funding available as grants to repair buildings within the conservation areas of Perth.

The Fund is managed by Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust in conjunction with Perth & Kinross Council.

The Heritage Trust also provides Historic Building Grants of up to £2,500 to fund repairs to historic buildings within Perth and Kinross.

For more information please contact the trust on tel **01738 477082** or email Andrew Driver on **andrew.driver@pkht.org.uk**

We are keen to engage with all owners of empty properties in Perth and Kinross, and hope that this newsletter will help you consider different options about how to bring your empty property back into use. Please use the contacts within this newsletter to have a chat with our staff, they will be happy to help with any enquiry.