

Changes to Private Sector Housing Policy in respect of Empty Property Grants (May 2009)

1. Empty property grants (section 7.9 of the 2003 policy)

Empty property grants are available when a property has been empty for at least six months, and as a condition of the grant, the owner agrees to lease the property to the Council or rent it to clients of the Council's Rent Deposit Scheme for three years. Depending on the size of the property, the amount of grant aid ranges from £25,000 for properties with one or two bedrooms and £27,000 for a three bedroom property. This grant ensures that unsightly, vandalised and nuisance properties are brought back into use, for vulnerable residents.

Conservation Grants are available for vacant buildings which are on the English Heritage Register of Buildings at Risk as well as vacant 'eyesore' properties within Conservation Areas. The maximum grant is £15,000 for each bedroom provided that the grant must be match funded at 50% of eligible expense.

Empty Property Loans are available for a two year period with a simple variable interest rate of Bank of England base rate plus 1%. The loan must be repaid at the end of the two year period or when the property is sold, whichever comes first. It is equally available for traditional voids and listed buildings.

2. Eligibility (section 8)

Eligibility for the empty property grant depends on the following

- The rent deposit scheme or the short term leasing scheme must be satisfied that the property meets the criteria for the scheme
- The owner must complete an application form and agreement to lease the property to the Council or rent it through the rent deposit scheme for three years
- The property must have been empty for six months or longer •
- The owner must meet certain standards of renovation.

Eligibility for the empty property conservation grant depends on the following

- The Council's conservation officer must be satisfied that the property is a listed empty dwelling or an empty property in a conservation area
- The Council's conservation officer must be satisfied that the property can be used as a dwelling
- The owner must complete an application form and agreement to provide some affordable units on completion of the works (40% target)
- The owner must provide 50% match funding to the grant aid
- The property must have been empty for six months or longer •
- The owner must meet certain standards of renovation.

Eligibility for the empty property loan depends on the following

- The owner must complete an application form and loan agreement form and agree to repay the loan within two years or on when sold if this is within the two year period
- The property must have been empty for six months or longer •
- The owner must meet certain standards of renovation.

3. Amounts of grant aid (section 9)

The levels of assistance for empty properties are set out in the table below

Type of assistance	Maximum amount
Empty property grant for a property with one or two bedrooms	£25,000
Empty property grant for a property with three or more bedrooms	£27,000
Empty property conservation grant	£15,000 per bedroom with 50% match funding
Empty property loan for a property with one or two bedrooms	£25,000
Empty property loan for a property with one or two bedrooms	£27,000