



Ards and
North Down
Borough Council

EMPTY TO ENERGISED PILOT GRANT SCHEME

INFORMATION SESSION



Welcome & Introductions

Responsible Officers

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PROGRAMME OVERVIEW



Programme Overview

Ards and North Down Borough Council is delighted to announce the launch of a new **Empty to Energised Pilot Grant Scheme**, designed to regenerate vacant and derelict commercial properties in **Bangor and Newtownards**.

This initiative forms the second strand of the **Supporting Thriving High Streets Programme**, a £1 million investment, funded by Department for Communities, and Ards and North Down Borough Council, and is aimed at creating safer, more attractive streetscapes, boosting footfall, and attracting new businesses to our town and city centres.

The Empty to Energised Pilot Grant Scheme, **fully funded by the Council**, will provide financial assistance to property owners seeking to renovate vacant premises and introduce new commercial uses. This is the first scheme of its kind in Ards and North Down.



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QUESTIONNAIRE



Questionnaire

In June 2025, to help us understand the demand for the scheme, as well as the wider challenges and barriers preventing the uptake of vacant space, Ards and North Down Borough Council encouraged property owners to complete an **online questionnaire** and partake in **1-1 discussions with Council Officers**.

Officers have used the questionnaire findings to **support the development** of the pilot grant scheme that is aligned with corporate objectives.

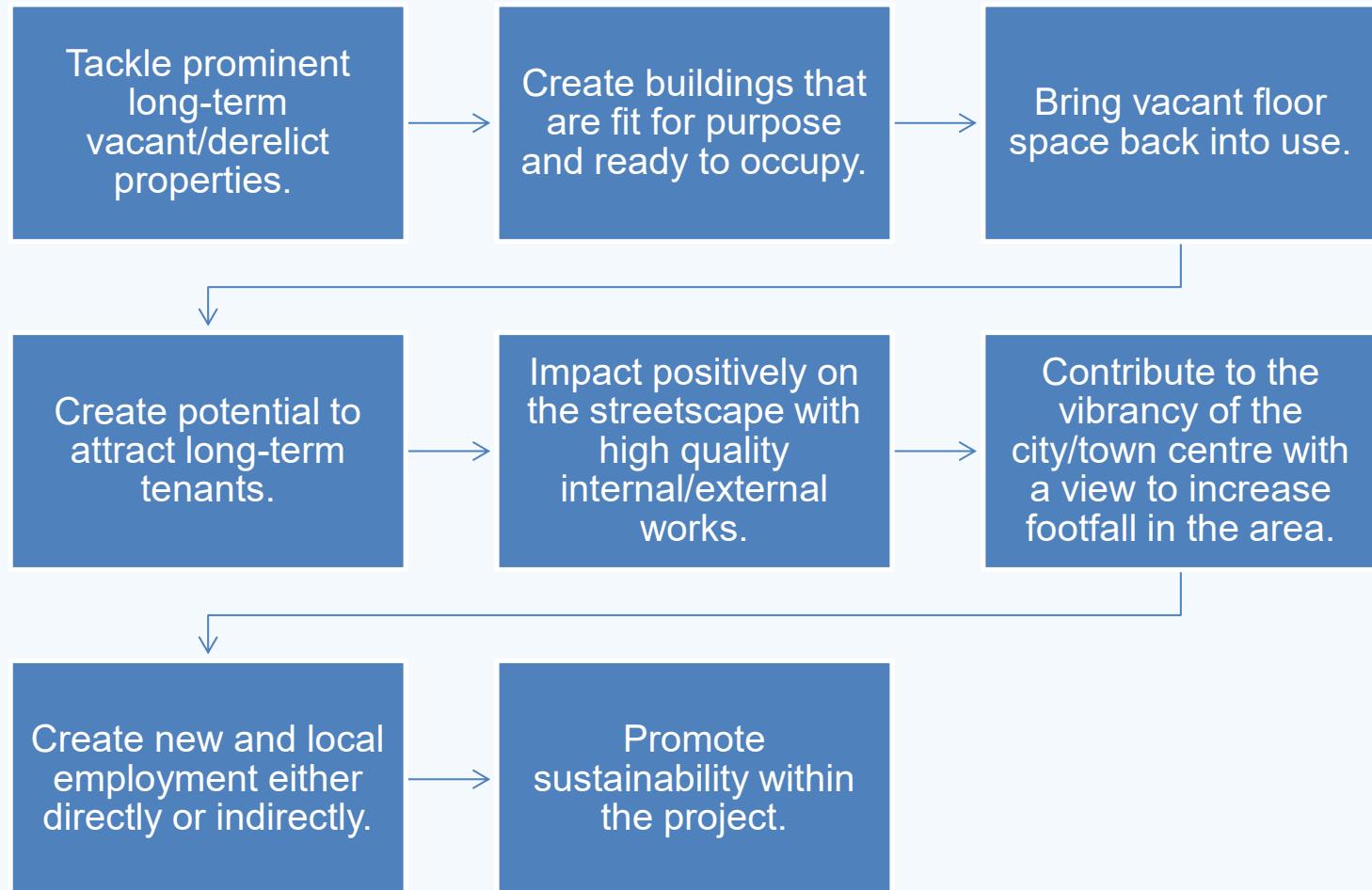


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EMPTY TO ENERGISED PILOT GRANT SCHEME OBJECTIVES



Objectives





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SCHEME OVERVIEW



Scheme Overview

- The scheme will assist Vacant/Derelict Property Owners in creating buildings that are **fit for purpose** and **ready to occupy**.
- To **attract tenants** which will impact positively on **increasing footfall** in our city and town.
- Vacant/Derelict Property Owners can apply for a maximum award of **£25,000**.
- There is a minimum level of **£10,000** grant award.
- A **20% contribution** is required from the applicant.



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WHO CAN APPLY?



Who Can Apply?

- The property must be a **vacant/derelict** commercial premises located **within Bangor city or Newtownards town**.
- Property must be in **applicants' ownership** at point of application.
- The property must have **not been in occupation for 12 months** at the time of application.
- Can deliver the project outlined in the application within **12 months** of approval of statutory consents and permission to proceed with project.
- Applications are limited to **one per property** per commercial business address.
- Property owners must make every reasonable effort to **secure a tenant within 6 months** from completion of the project.
- Property owners are limited to **2 active applications** at any one time.



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WHAT CAN BE FUNDED?



Eligible Items

Only **capital items** which are an **improvement to the interior or exterior** of the vacant/derelict building are eligible.

Examples of eligible capital items:

- Access improvements
- Internal Improvements/fitting out vacant premises
- Upgrading internal fixtures and fit
- Internal lighting
- Catering equipment
- Customer facilities
- Improved security features

This list is not exhaustive and can include other capital works/items that can be demonstrated as an improvement to the vacant/derelict property.



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WHAT CANNOT BE FUNDED?



Non-Eligible Items

Examples of non-eligible items:

- Statutory application fees
- Consultancy fees
- Professional fees (e.g. solicitor/ surveyor/architect)
- Insurances
- Retrospective expenditure where works/items have already been obtained and paid for prior to a formal final Letter of Offer
- VAT
- General Upkeep
- Marketing and Advertising
- Costs that are already covered by other funding

This list is not exhaustive and can include other items.



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STATUTORY CONSENTS



Statutory Consents

- All relevant contact information available in Applicant Guidance Notes.
- A copy of consent approval(s) will be required prior to a formal final Letter of Offer & works commencing.
- It is strongly recommended that statutory consent enquiries and applications are made as early in the process as possible.
- Consultancy and statutory application fees are not grant eligible.
- The Council will only issue a formal final Letter of Offer once consent is granted and sufficient evidence submitted.



Relevant Contacts

- Planning Department
 - Telephone: 0300 013 3333
 - Email: planning@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk
 - Website: www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/resident/planning
- Building Control Department
 - Telephone: 028 9120 8015
 - Email: buildingcontrol@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk
 - Website: www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/resident/building-control
- Environmental Health Department
 - Telephone: 0300 013 3333
 - Email: env.health@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk
 - Website: www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/business/environmental-health

Early discussions with the relevant departments are advised.



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APPLICATION PROCESS



Online Application

- ❑ The Scheme has a limited budget, and grants will be awarded through a competitive assessment process.
- ❑ The assessment panel will be made up of Council officers, and external specialists will be consulted if required.
- ❑ Eligible applications will be ranked in score order and awarded a grant amount until the total available funding is reached.

Online applications will open on **Monday 5th January 2026** and will close at **12 noon on Monday 16th February 2026**.

Review both the Applicant Guidance Notes and Project Description Guidance Notes documents to help you prepare in advance of the scheme opening.

www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/Empty-to-Energised



Stage 1

Applicants must:

- Submit an online application form. An alternative format will be available on request.
- Provide a detailed summary of project including a proposal on how they intend to market and promote the property once complete.
- Provide an accurate cost breakdown of the project.
- Submit supporting documentation.

On receipt of the online application & supporting documents, the application will be deemed complete and proceed to assessment.

Successful Applicants at stage 1 assessment will be awarded a Letter of Offer in Principle.



Points to Note

The Applicant is responsible for:

- Any additional costs over £25,000 (maximum grant).
- Ensuring successful supplier(s)/contractor(s) are properly qualified to undertake the works.
- Ensuring best value for money for any works is secured.
- Making enquiries & obtaining any required statutory consent(s).

Please note, Council reserve the right to carry out spot checks on information provided.



Stage 2

Within 12 months of receipt of Letter of Offer in Principle, Applicants will then be required to submit the following:

- Proof of all relevant statutory consents.
- Any other relevant documentation.
- A full and final cost schedule for works.

Successful applicants at stage 2 will then be awarded a formal final Letter of Offer which will set out the final maximum grant amount as well as the terms and conditions of the grant offer and cannot change from that point forward.



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GRANT FUNDING



Grant Funding

Allocated funding from Council	30% Upfront
Allocated funding from Council	40% Midpoint
Allocated funding from Council	30% on Completion

- 30% of grant funding will only be released for payment following formal final Letter of Offer.
- 40% will be offered further to successful submission of claim documentation evidencing the expenditure against 30% upfront payment.
- Final 30% of grant funding will only be released for payment following inspection of works by the Council. It is the responsibility of the applicant to notify the Council once works have been completed so inspection can be arranged.



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CLAWBACK



Clawback

- You must continue to **own the property** and keep **exclusive control** over what happens to it for a minimum of **5 years** following the final payment of the grant.
- 10% of the grant award may be withheld until all monitoring information has been submitted, including evidence of securing a tenant.
- Full details can be found in the Applicant Guidance Notes.



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MONITORING AND EVALUATION



Monitoring and Evaluation

- Applicants are required to provide **monitoring information** & a post grant **evaluation** on completion of works.
- Monitoring forms must be completed and submitted with **all grant claims**.
- An Officer **site visit** will be conducted pre/post work.
- External specialists** will be consulted if required.



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TIMESCALES



Timescales

Grant advertised	Thursday 13th November 2025
Grant open for applications	Monday 5th January 2026
Grant close for applications	12 noon on Monday 16th February 2026
Letter of Offer in Principle	March 2026
Final date for all works to be completed	12 months post formal final Letter of Offer
Final date for all claims and evaluation to be submitted	As detailed in the formal final Letter of Offer



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CONTACT INFORMATION



Contact Information

**For Empty to Energised Pilot Grant queries,
please contact:**

emptytoenergised@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

0300 013 3333 ext. 40670 and 40893



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QUESTIONS?



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