

A property owner's guide to **Empty Homes**

Unlock your property's potential



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1. Introduction

Bridgend County Borough Council considers empty properties to be a wasted resource and is therefore committed to supporting owners of empty properties in bringing them back into use. A range of financial assistance schemes and support options are available to assist owners in restoring and re-occupying their properties. This information pack provides an overview of the initiatives on offer, along with contact details for further guidance.

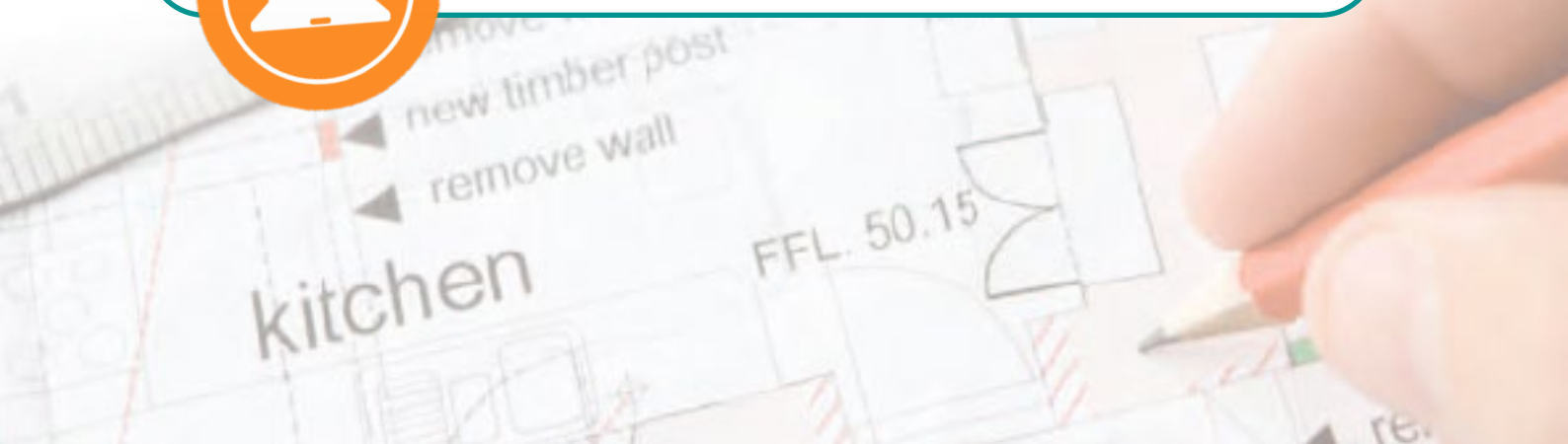
Property owners have a responsibility to ensure their empty properties are maintained and managed appropriately. Properties deteriorate more rapidly when left empty, and therefore if left unaddressed, a short-term empty property can quickly become a burden, that becomes increasingly difficult and costly for owners to manage. Therefore, we recommend that empty property owners take early, preventative action before issues escalate.

Formal enforcement action is always a last resort, but where properties continue to remain empty and are in a state of disrepair or are detrimental to an area, the council will use its legislative powers to remedy the adverse impact on the community and bring the properties back into use.

If you would like to talk to someone about an empty home or need a bit of guidance, feel free to give us a call on [0300 123 6696](tel:03001236696) or email us at emptyproperties@bridgend.gov.uk.



Our officers are here to help.



2.1. Empty Property Loans

Interest-Free Funding to Bring Properties Back into Use

Own (or buying) a property in Bridgend that's been empty 6+ months?

You could access support through the Welsh Government Houses into Homes

What You Can Get:

- ✓ Up to £25,000 per property/unit
- ✓ Up to £250,000 per applicant
- ✓ Interest-free loan
- ✓ Funding paid in agreed instalments
- ✓ For repairs, renovation or conversion (*subject to planning permission*).

Suitable for properties being brought back into use for:

- Sale
- Rental
- Residential or commercial

Repayment Terms:

- 2 years (if selling)
- 5 years (if renting)

Key Criteria:

- Property must be empty for 6 months minimum
- Loan capped at 80% loan to value
- Lender consent required if mortgaged
- Secured by first or second charge

On completion of works the property must:

- Be suitable for immediate occupation.
- Comply with all relevant Building Regulations.
- Not present any serious hazards for occupiers that would be identified during a Housing Health and Safety Rating System Assessment.

Please Note:

- ! An application fee applies
- ! You must be able to demonstrate your ability to repay
- ! Subject to approval and legal checks

How to apply

Complete an **Expression of Interest Form** to get started by visiting our website by using the QR code or the link below:

<https://www.bridgend.gov.uk/residents/housing/empty-properties/>

Any queries should be directed to:

✉ emptypropertyassistance@bridgend.gov.uk



2.2. Leasing Scheme Wales



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Unlock the benefits of Leasing Scheme Wales.

What is Leasing Scheme Wales?

Leasing Scheme Wales is a scheme funded by the Welsh Government and managed by local authorities. The scheme provides property owners the opportunity to lease their flat or house to their local authority for hassle free guaranteed monthly rental income.

It is designed to make renting privately in Wales more accessible and affordable offering property owners an opportunity to access grants and guaranteed income while providing tenants with secure, long-term, and affordable housing.

Benefits for property owners

- ✓ **Hassle free guaranteed rental income** for the length of the lease (at the relevant Local Housing Allowance rate) – meaning no rent arrears and no voids.
- ✓ **Up to £25,000 grant** to bring the property up to rental standard.*
- ✓ **Up to £5,000 grant** to increase your property's energy rating.*
- ✓ **Leases of between 5-20 years.**
- ✓ **Property inspections, repairs and maintenance covered** (subject to reasonable wear and tear).
- ✓ **Full management of the property and tenant** for the lifetime of the lease.



How to apply

Scan the QR Code to find further information about the scheme and on how to apply.

Alternatively, you can contact the private sector housing team by email:

privatesectorhousing@bridgend.gov.uk

2.3. National Empty Homes Grant



Empty Homes Grants

Grants of up to £25,000 are available to renovate empty properties to make them safe to live in and improve their energy efficiency.

The grant is available in instalments as the work is undertaken. A minimum 15% contribution is required from the applicant.

Local authorities, Registered Social Landlords and Community Housing Groups are also able to apply for funding.

Eligibility

Anyone can apply for a grant, however, in order to qualify:

- the property must have been registered with the local authority as empty for a minimum of 12 months;
- the property must be owned, or in the process of being purchased, by the applicant at the time of application; and
- if successful, the applicant must live in the property for a minimum of 5 years post completion of the works as their main and only residence.

How to apply

Scan the QR Code to find further information about the scheme and on how to apply.

If you have any queries, please contact the team at EmptyHomesGrant@rctcbc.gov.uk or 01443 494712



2.4. Transforming Towns

Welsh Government funded, the Transforming Towns Programme offers owners and long-term leaseholders the opportunity to access grant funding to unlock the potential of vacant upper floors and create high-quality homes in our town centres.

This fund is available for owners/leaseholders (7+ years) to convert vacant floor-space on upper floors into new residential accommodation.

Areas covered: Bridgend, Maesteg, Porthcawl Town Centres

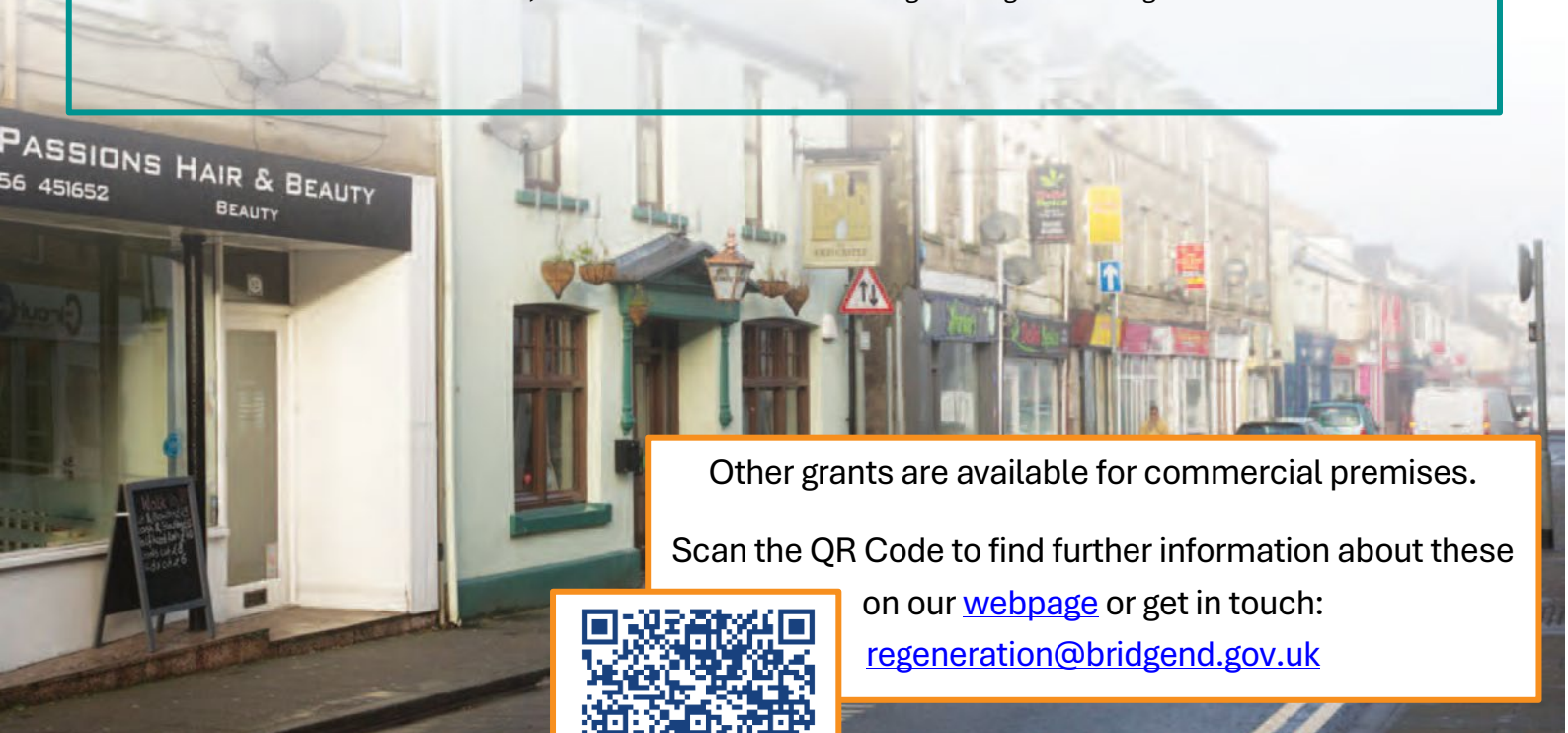
The minimum requirement from each scheme is:

- 1 x 1 bedroom self-contained flat

Schemes should comply to the minimum floor space as recommended in the most up to date Welsh Housing Quality Standards, currently this is:

- 46m² per one bedroom flat
- 59m² per two-bedroom flat

*Please note: Student accommodation, bedsits and studios are **NOT** eligible for grant funding.*



Other grants are available for commercial premises.

Scan the QR Code to find further information about these on our [webpage](#) or get in touch: regeneration@bridgend.gov.uk



2.5. Additional Opportunities

Own a Listed Building?

You may be eligible for repair and conservation funding through [Cadw Historic Buildings Grants](#).

🔍 Check if your property is listed via [Cadw's online register](#) and details of the grant by scanning the QR Code.



Vacant Town Centre Property Opportunities

Looking to invest or expand in the town centre?

📱 Scan the QR code to view the [latest vacant properties](#) and explore regeneration support available.



Improve Energy Efficiency

Reduce costs and future-proof your property.

Scan the QR code for the [latest energy-efficiency schemes](#), grants and practical advice on the council website.



Unlock the full range of support available and take the next step today.

3. VAT Discounts

If you're renovating, converting, or bringing an empty home back to life, you may be entitled to reduced VAT rates that make your project more affordable.

You may be eligible for:

- Reduced VAT of 5% for homes empty 2 years or more.
- Reduced VAT of 5% also applies to the installation of certain energy-saving materials in residential accommodation.
- Zero rate of VAT on homes empty 10 years or more.
- Reduced VAT Rate for Conversion of a non-residential building into a dwelling or a change in the number of dwelling units.



To qualify, the work must be carried out by a VAT registered builder. This discount is part of the [Buildings and Construction VAT Notice 708](#) and [HMRC Notice 431C](#). For full details, please visit HMRC's [website](#).

Upon request, the Council can provide an official letter to the property owner confirming how long the property has been empty.

To request a letter please contact our team by emailing us at emptyproperties@bridgend.gov.uk

This letter may be requested by companies before applying the reduced VAT as it may be required by HM Revenue & Customs.

Please Note: Only HMRC can decide the work eligible or confirm the reduced VAT rate that applies to your property.

4. Renting Options

Rent Smart Wales

The Housing Act (Wales) 2014 requires all private landlords to register with Rent Smart Wales.



Landlords who manage their own properties must also get a licence, complete approved training, and show they are 'fit and proper'. If a landlord does not want to manage the property themselves, they can appoint a licensed letting agent instead.

For more information on the requirements of Rent Smart Wales and how to register visit www.rentsmart.gov.wales or contact **03000 133 344**.

Landlord Advice

The Wallich regularly host Landlord Forums on behalf of the Council to support local landlords. These events offer the chance to:



- Network and share ideas with other landlords
- Hear from expert guest speakers
- Access advice and support
- Learn about the latest landlord-related legislation in Wales

Whether you're an experienced landlord or just starting out, the forum is a useful way to stay up to date and get practical guidance. To find out more about attending the next Landlord Forum, contact The Wallich by phone on **01656 674184** or email: mail@thewallich.net

Letting Agents

Letting agents can assist you in letting and managing a private rented tenancy by advertising the property; managing and conducting viewings, safety checks and inspections of the property rent collection, maintenance and paperwork.

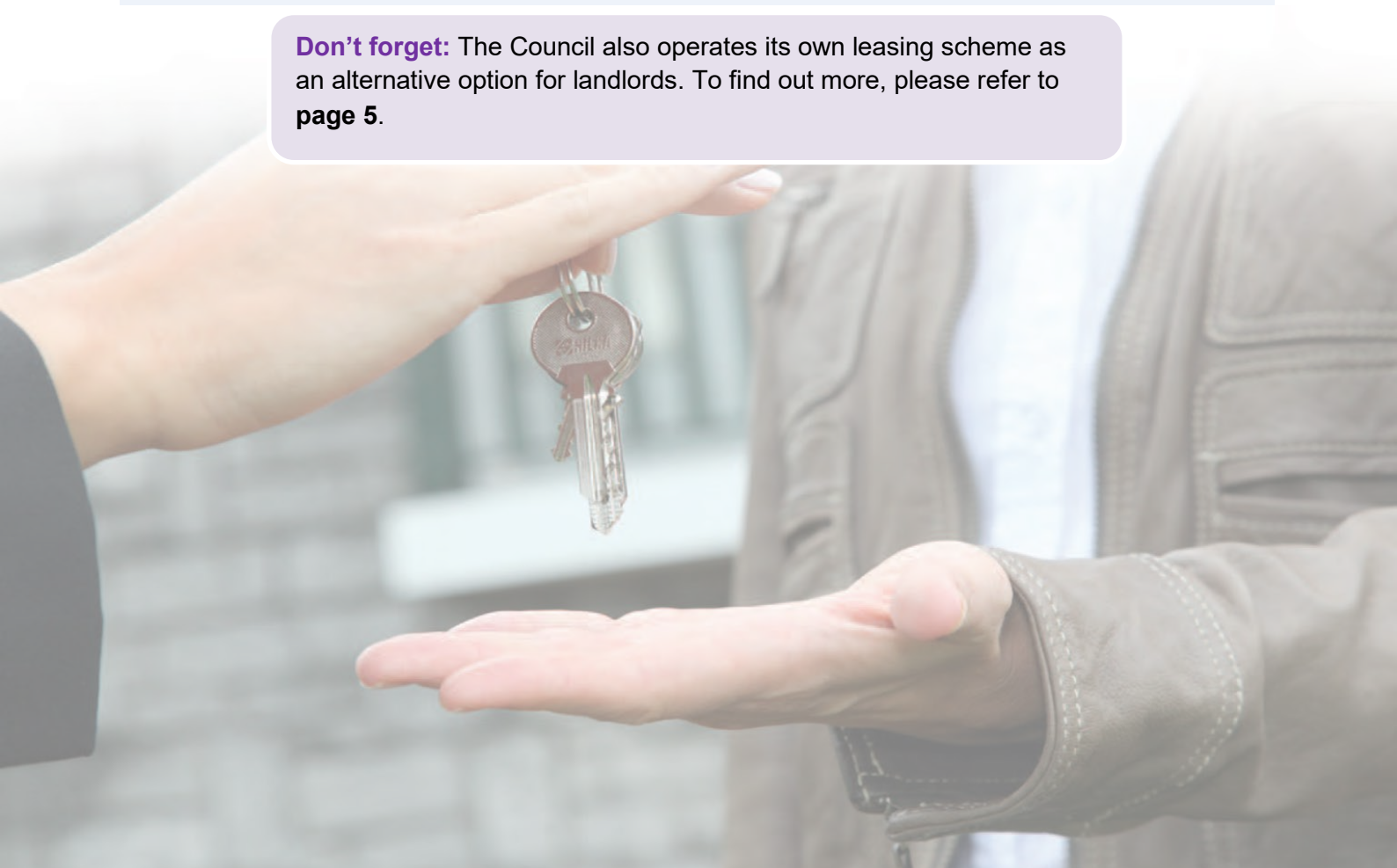
To find a local letting agent, visit www.arla.co.uk/find-agent

It is advisable to choose a letting agent that is a member of a professional organisation, such as the Association of Residential Letting Agents and is licensed with Rent Smart Wales.

To check if an agent is licensed go to: www.rentsmart.gov.wales/en/check-register and type in the agent's name.

Please note: Bridgend County Borough Council does not have an affiliation with any of these private letting agents.

Don't forget: The Council also operates its own leasing scheme as an alternative option for landlords. To find out more, please refer to **page 5**.



5. Selling Options

Estate Agents

Selling your property through an estate agent is likely to be quicker and easier than selling it yourself if you have no previous experience. Estate agents will value, market and sell your property, arrange viewings, negotiate offers, liaise with your solicitor and deal with the paperwork.

Please Note: There are a number of estate agents that operate in Bridgend County Borough, but the council does not have an affiliation with any of them. However, you are recommended to ensure that they are members of the National Association of Estate Agents (NAEA). To find a local estate agent: www.naea.co.uk/find-agent



Empty Property Investors

The Council holds a list of empty property investors who have made enquiries with regards to purchasing empty properties within the Authority.

With your permission, we can pass on your contact details and details of your empty property for you to further discuss a potential sale.

Please Note: The Council will only assist in the exchange of contact details, and it will become a private matter between buyer and seller after this point. It is recommended that you seek legal advice and obtain an independent valuation of your property when negotiating and agreeing the terms of sale.

To refer your property to an empty property investor, contact the Empty Property Coordinator on 0300 123 6696 or emptyproperties@bridgend.gov.uk

Selling by Auction

Selling a property at auction can be a fast and effective way to secure a sale, particularly for properties that are difficult to sell. Auctions attract a targeted audience of developers, cash buyers, investors and portfolio landlords, increasing the likelihood of a successful sale.

One of the key advantages is the buyer is legally committed to completing the purchase, removing the risk of sales falling through. Auctions also offer a quick alternative route. Properties are typically listed within one month, and completion usually takes place within 20–30 days of the auction date.

Demand from multiple buyers can quickly drive up the price of the property and can help achieve a strong sale price.

There are numerous auctioneers operating within Bridgend County Borough and across South Wales, with many holding monthly or quarterly auctions throughout the region.

For further information about the auction process and to find a local auctioneer, visit: www.propertyauctionaction.co.uk



6. Council Tax

Council tax premiums for long-term empty properties

On the 1st April 2023, Bridgend County Borough Council introduced a Council Tax Premium on long-term empty properties.

Long-term empty properties in Bridgend will be subject to a Council Tax charge of 200% of the annual council tax charge for the first two years, after which the charge will increase to 300% of the annual charge.

A long-term empty dwelling is defined as a dwelling which is both unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for a continuous period of at least one year.

There are certain exemptions for unoccupied properties and exceptions to the premium.

For further information please visit Bridgend Council's webpage for more information using the QR Code.

If you need help or think you qualify for an exemption, please email: premiums@bridgend.gov.uk



7. Enforcement Action

When owners of empty properties are non-compliant and all other negotiations have failed, the council will look to take the appropriate enforcement action to ensure that the empty property is brought back into use and returned to a habitable condition.

The enforcement powers we will consider are:

- Environmental Protection Act 1990 Section 80 and the Building Act 1984 Section 76 to deal with nuisance
- Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949 Section 4 to deal with infestations of rats and mice
- Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 Section 29 and the Building Act 1984 Section 79 to deal with unsecure or dilapidated properties
- Town & Country Planning Act 1990 Section 215 to deal with unsightly properties
- Building Act 1984 Section 77 & 78 to deal with dangerous properties
- Housing Health & Safety Rating System from the Housing Act 2004 to improve housing conditions
- Compulsory purchase under Section 17 of the Housing Act 1985
- Empty Dwelling Management Order under the Housing Act 2004
- Enforced Sale from the Law of Property Act 1925



