



Comhairle Chontae Liatroma
Leitrim County Council



**Occupation of
Vacant Commercial
Property Incentive
Scheme**



Scheme Guidelines
2023

Introduction

Leitrim County Council (hereinafter referred to as ‘the Council’) is providing a Business Incentive Scheme to encourage the use of **vacant commercial premises**. The Council is aware of the current challenges facing businesses in County Leitrim and the difficulties for new businesses to gain a foothold during recessionary periods. The purpose of the scheme is to give an incentive to both landlords and new aspiring business owners/lesers to occupy vacant premises by lowering entry costs through a grant related to the level of rates payable on the property.

By encouraging the occupation of vacant premises, the Council will also support the improvement in appearance and attraction of the commercial properties and thereby will contribute indirectly to increased footfall for existing businesses. This scheme sets out the mechanism, eligibility, and conditions for new businesses to receive financial assistance from the Council for the purpose of locating in premises which have been vacant for a period exceeding 3 months.

Aims of the Scheme

- To encourage and support a qualifying business that might occupy vacant commercial premises.
- To facilitate the development of new retail, office and related commercial services that will revitalise commercial centres in the County.
- To support new business creation as a means of generating new vibrancy in Leitrim’s main Towns and other urban centres within the County.
- To support the continued role of retail and wider commercial centres in the urban fabric of the County and their prominence as business destinations.
- To demonstrate the serious commitment of the Council to contribute to economic development, regeneration, and recovery in the County.

Competition Clause:

Potential displacement will be a primary concern in determining the eligibility of any application to the scheme. The executive may deem a project to be ineligible if it has the potential to lead to displacement of existing enterprises.

Eligibility

The Scheme will be available to:

- a newly established business
- an existing business relocating or expanding from outside the County
- an existing business maintaining current location and expanding into a new location
- other exceptional circumstances may be deemed eligible subject to information submitted

The Scheme is applicable to the use of existing rated commercial properties in Leitrim's main towns (per attached Schedule B) maps can be viewed on Leitrim County Council website. The scheme will normally apply to commercial space of not more than 60 square metres except where exceptional circumstances exist and that are within the ethos of the scheme.

The following prerequisites apply to the subject premises:

- There are no outstanding enforcement proceedings or monies due to the Council under the Planning & Development Acts 2000-2014 or the Derelict Sites Act 1990.
- There are no outstanding or current commercial rates, or any other local authority charges owing on the subject premises for which the grant is sought.

The qualifying uses under this scheme are shops, offices and commercial businesses.

Conditions to the above include the following:

- The proposed use is in accordance with existing planning permission on the premises.
- The proposed use must not generally include any of the uses or types of business in attached Schedule A. The scheme provides discretion to award a grant to a premises included in Schedule A where there may be a specific local need for that type of premises.

Qualifying Applicants

The following requirements apply to all applicants:

- The applicant must be the owner or lessee of the subject premises.
- The applicant must have a current Tax Clearance Certificate at the time any Grant becomes payable.
- The applicant must sign up for Standing Order payments of any charges due to the Council.
- The application must be accompanied by a lease agreement (if applicable) whereby the parties agree to a minimum three-year lease period, which can be a rolling lease renewed annually OR a copy of the Land Registry entry showing ownership details.

The following conditions will lead to immediate disqualification and/or cessation of grant aid under the rules of this Scheme:

- Failure to remain current on any charges will result in the immediate cessation of the Scheme and the removal of supports.
- Changes to the uses or any of the requirements stated above for the applicant that materially alter the original application for grant aid.

Incentive Details

Grants may be paid by the Council to qualifying applicants in respect of the rates struck for the subject premises as follows:

End of Year 1 Grant payable equivalent to **75%** of rate paid for subject year (i.e. 12 month period of trading starting at date of occupancy).

End of Year 2 Grant payable equivalent to **50%** of rate paid for subject year.

End of Year 3 Grant payable equivalent to **25%** of rate paid for subject year.

This scheme only makes provision for payment of a grant towards the costs associated with the occupation of qualifying vacant properties and does not mitigate in any way the obligation of qualifying applicants to discharge all fees associated with other approvals which may be required to be obtained from Council i.e. planning fees, s.254 licences, and development contributions.

Application

The initial application, to be submitted within six months of occupation of the property for which the application is being made, must be accompanied by the following:

- Fully completed and signed Application Form, Consent for Disclosure of Information Form and Supplier Set Up Form.
- Evidence of unit vacancy exceeding 3 months.
- Evidence of ownership and occupation of unit (e.g. Land Registry Certificate) OR 3 year lease agreement (this can be a rolling one year lease renewable annually).
- Evidence of permissions/consents for proposed use of leased premises (normally a part of the lease agreement).
- Revenue Commissioners Tax Reference No. OR PPS No. to enable us to obtain up to date Tax Clearance Certificates prior to making Grant payments.
- A completed EFT form showing the Account Name and Address, Account No., IBAN, Sort Code and BIC (it is not necessary to provide a copy of any transaction details) to confirm details and enable the Council to make Grant payments into it.
- Evidence that an expanding business is continuing in its current location as well as in the new premises (for retail applicants) OR that a move to new premises from an existing location will result in increased employment for other forms of business.
- All obligations, including commercial rates or any other charges due to the Local Authority are up to date.

Effective period for operation of Scheme

This scheme will be available up to and including 31st December 2023.

The Scheme may be the subject of review and amendment at any time by Leitrim County Council.

Once approved the Scheme will continue to apply to an approved applicant for 3 years even if the scheme is subsequently withdrawn or amended.

Assessment of Applications

Each application will be assessed in accordance with this Scheme. The Council will interpret each application on face value according to its own discretion. The Council may request further information before or after the evaluation of an application.

The Council may communicate to the applicant those aspects of the application which could lead to disqualification or refusal of a grant. The Council may accept an amended application following a request for more information or amendments to the original application.

Any grant aid awarded on foot of a successful application will be subject to the availability of the necessary funds to implement this Scheme.

Details of the Scheme together with an Application Form will be available to view and download online at www.leitrimcoco.ie or can be obtained from the Leitrim County Council offices in Aras an Chontae, Carrick on Shannon.

Completed application forms with attached documentation to be submitted to Lisa O'Connell, LEO Business Advisor, Local Enterprise Office, Leitrim County Council – lisa.oconnell@leitrimcoco.ie.

SCHEDULE A

Uses and types of businesses NOT generally covered by the Scheme

- Takeaways Amusement arcades or premises with gaming machines
- Head shops
- Betting offices
- Nightclubs/Private members clubs
- Moneylenders (excluding banks, building societies and credit unions)
- Discount stores/Charity Shops
- Adult-themed shops

The above schedule is not necessarily an exhaustive list.

Note:

A final decision on eligibility to qualify for the scheme will rest with Leitrim County Council in each case.

The decision of the Council is final.

SCHEDULE B

Zoning Maps – Ref County Development Plan

| TOWN | Eligible Area Highlighted |
|--------------------|----------------------------------|
| Carrick On Shannon | Mixed Use |
| Carrigallen | Mixed Use |
| Ballinamore | Mixed Use |
| Ballinaglera | General |
| Cloone | General |
| Dowra | General |
| Dromahair | Mixed Use |
| Dromod | Mixed Use |
| Drumkeerin | Mixed Use |
| Drumshanbo | Mixed Use |
| Drumsna | General |
| Fenagh | General |
| Glenfarne | General |
| Jamestown | General |
| Kilclare | General |
| Kiltyclogher | General |
| Leitrim Village | Mixed Use |
| Lurganboy | General |
| Manorhamilton | Mixed Use |
| Mohill | Mixed Use |
| Newtowngore | General |
| Roosky | General |
| Rossinver | General |
| Tullaghan | General |

Conditions

- i. New builds are allowed to qualify for the Scheme provided they are on 'In-Fill' sites that support regeneration objectives for a town or village (Advice from the Planning Department to be sought regarding size of redevelopment & zoning issues.)
- ii. A maximum of three months grace to pay any outstanding rates &/or comply with documentation requests in the first year (where the promoter has failed to comply with terms of the scheme as laid out in the letter of offer), reduced to two months for the second year & one month in respect of the third year can be extended to members of the Scheme at the discretion of the Council.
- iii. Incentive Scheme membership will run from the month of occupation of vacant premises on a twelve-month rolling basis, i.e. Incentive Scheme grant payments will only be made at the end of twelve months occupancy of the admitted property provided rates and any other charges due to Leitrim County Council are fully up to date (allowing for the above mentioned grace periods if necessary) & all documentation is in order.
 - a. Application for membership of the scheme must be submitted within six months of the date of commencement of the lease on the premises for which application is being made.
 - b. The use of a grace period for submission of supporting documentation and/or payment of outstanding commercial rates or other payments due to Leitrim County Council is limited to once only during the three-year term of the scheme membership.
 - c. To facilitate payment of grants under the scheme, which can now only be made via direct transfer into a bank account, details of the applicant's bank account should be provided at the time of application for membership of the scheme.

The scheme will be further supported by a number of supports available through the LEO office as follows:

- Confidential one to one advice
- Participation on a Start Your Own Business Course
- Training and mentor support in areas like marketing and social media marketing
- Assistance with preparing an application for Microfinance Ireland if relevant
- Financial Assistance towards trading online via the Trading Online Voucher Scheme