

# Welcome to Housing Strategy & Investment

Rhondda Cynon Taf

This is the third edition of  
the Housing Strategy and  
Investment service newsletter.

## Content:

National  
Empty Homes  
Grant Scheme

Page 2

Houses  
into Homes

Page 3

Housing Grants

Pages 4

Affordable  
Housing

Pages 5

Heat & Save

Page 6-7

Building  
Control

Page 8

**ISSUE: 03**  
Summer 2024

  RCTCouncil

[www.rctcbc.gov.uk/housing](http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/housing)

Mae croeso i chi gyfathrebu â ni yn y Gymraeg  
You are welcome to communicate with us in Welsh

52863-14 August 2024





# National Empty Homes Grant Scheme

Following on from the success of the regional Valleys Taskforce Scheme, in January 2023 the Welsh Government appointed Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council as the Lead Authority to administer the delivery of a National Empty Homes Grant scheme.

**£50M** has been invested by WG to bring long term empty properties (at least 12 months empty) back into use across Wales and up to **£25,000** is available per property for essential works.

Response and uptake to the scheme has been overwhelmingly positive. As at 31st March 2024;

17 Local Authorities are currently participating in the scheme. Blaenau Gwent, Bridgend, Caerphilly, Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Denbighshire, Gwynedd, Isle of Anglesey, Merthyr, Monmouthshire, Neath Port Talbot, Pembrokeshire, Powys, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Swansea & Vale of Glamorgan.



## 1411

**Applications received of which 623 are valid.**

**Of the 623 valid applications, 133 are in RCT (21%)**



## 244

**applications have been approved with a commitment of £5.7M.**

**of which 66 are in RCT (27%) & £1.6M is apportioned to RCT (28%).**



## 30

**homes have been brought back into use with a spend of £604k.**

**Of which, 16 are in RCT (53%), & £336k is apportioned to RCT (56%)**

This funding continues to bring empty homes across Wales, back into use and is helping to alleviate issues such as poor housing stock and eyesores in local communities.

## Feedback:

An RCT resident reflects on their experience of the National Empty Homes Grant following the completion renovations at their home. This resident received £25,000 in grant funding.

**For further information please contact the Housing Grants team:**

✉ [emptyhomesgrant@rctcbc.gov.uk](mailto:emptyhomesgrant@rctcbc.gov.uk)  
☎ 01443 494712

“

*I would like to share my personal thanks with the entire Empty Homes Grant Team, from Administration Officers to Grant Surveyors, who have all taken the time to support and help me through the grant process. Every email sent was responded to and answered promptly and during every phone call officers were kind and courteous to me. All my questions were answered promptly and there were many! I have found the grant process quite easy to navigate with all the help from the Team and I re-iterate that the entire team has been great throughout. I look forward to enjoying our new home for many years to come.*

”

# Houses into Homes

Houses into Homes loans are being made available through the Houses into Homes Initiative to enable the renovation and improvement of single properties or the conversion of empty properties into a number of units, so that they are suitable for use as residential accommodation.

To date, Houses into Homes Loans have created 247 new units of accommodation for residents of RCT.

RCTCBC have also collaborated with Robert Owen Community Banking to offer an interest free loan to owner-occupiers. Loans are available for amounts between £1000 and £10,000, and are repayable up to a period of 5 years with no early repayment fees, and no set up fees. Robert Owen Community Banking Interest free loans have helped improve and upgrade 175 properties within RCT.

A further 8 properties have also benefitted from the Property Appreciation Loan, which is a loan to owner occupiers who are ineligible for the Home Improvement Loan. The loan is only repayable to the Authority on sale of the property.

In total, £7.175m of funding has been approved and paid via these schemes. The funding is due to continue until 2030 and information on the various grants and loans available can be found by following the link below.

<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/Housing/HousingGrants/HousingGrantsandLoans.aspx>

## Case Study:

Mid-Terraced Property in Rhondda Fawr, which had been empty for over 3 years and benefitted from Houses into Homes Loan of £25,000.

The total investment amounted to just over £40,000 and was completed within six months. The property has now been rented to a local family.

This is one of over 240 units of accommodation, which has been made available to residents of RCT under this scheme.



**For further information please contact the Housing Strategy team:**

✉ [housesintohomes@rctcbc.gov.uk](mailto:housesintohomes@rctcbc.gov.uk)

☎ 01443 281136



# Housing Grants

---

## Maintenance Repair Assistance Grants -

**£575k**

spent assisting private homeowners  
age 60 plus to carry out minor  
repairs to their homes.



## Disabled Facilities Grants -

**£6.6m**

spent assisting RCT residents  
to live independently and remain  
safe in their own homes.



**ENABLE -  
£476k**

spent of Welsh Government funding to  
support palliative clients remain in their own  
homes and also carry out minor adaptations  
for 693 residents.



**Successful bid of  
£344,412  
Housing Care Fund**

from Welsh Government to support our Disabled  
Facilities Grant programme, delivering  
adaptations to homes of residents in RCT.



# Affordable Housing

## Clos Heddfan & Llys Ty Garth

The Clos Heddfan scheme located in Rhydyfelin has received a total investment of £6.7m to build 35 homes on the site. Hafod Housing received a £4m contribution for the scheme through the Social Housing Grant and funded the remainder themselves. The scheme is located on the old site of an RCTCBC office building which has been demolished in order to provide these affordable homes in the area.

The second Hafod Housing scheme, Llys Ty Garth is located in Taffs Well, 20 homes have been built by M J Cosgrove for the £3.4m scheme. £2.1m of funding was received through the Social Housing Grant while the rest was funded by Hafod.



Cllr Bob Harris, Cabinet Member for Public Health and Communities, said:

*"Thank you to Hafod for the invitation to visit Clos Heddfan and Llys Ty Garth. It was great to be shown around the Heddfan development by Hafod and the directors of ASD, the work that has completed on the site is exceptional and I'm sure residents will be very happy to move into these homes."*

*"It was also great to visit Llys Ty Garth in Taffs Well and speak to the residents who have moved in. It was great to hear that they're all happy and have been able to build a tightknit community."*

## HomeStep

The HomeStep scheme is operated by RCT Council and is delivered in partnership with private developers to help first time buyers get on to the property ladder by offering brand new homes at an affordable price.

HomeStep enables eligible applicants to buy a home at a percentage of its full market value (usually 70%) with the Council retaining the remaining share of the freehold value of the house.

Current and upcoming developments include:

- **Coed Derw development in Llantwit Fardre by Bellway Homes**
- **Michaels Grove development in Llanharan by Persimmon Homes**
- **Cwm Heulwen development in Aberdare by Davies Homes**



“

*"Myself and my partner cannot recommend Homestep enough, the team have been brilliant and guided us every step of the way. We have been looking to buy our own property for about two years but due to both our incomes, we have found it a struggle to live close to home. With the scheme we were able to afford a lovely new build property and not need to worry about paying rent on the 30% we don't. From start to finish we have received quick replies and service, I would recommend anyone looking for their first home to consider this scheme. - Nathan"*

”

# Heat & Save

The Heat & Save team have been continuing to support households to help alleviate fuel poverty. The team has been attending a number of community engagement events and establishing closer working relationships with other agencies such as Citizen's Advice.

The aftermath of the Cost of living & Energy Crisis as well as Covid-19 has shown a greater increase in households with complex energy related problems needing further assistance. It is widely recognised that one single approach will not mitigate the impact of fuel poverty and the Council is passionate by providing an holistic service through the Heat & Save Hub.

Heat & Save not only enables energy efficiency improvements in homes through the ongoing grants and schemes available it also provides support and referrals for residents to access other assistance such as fuel bank vouchers, welfare benefits advice and energy debts.



## Heating Grant & Solar PV Grants

Both grants which are funded by Shared Prosperity Fund have remained popular and to date over 100 Solar PV grants and over 210 heating grants have been provided to residents across RCT making their homes more energy efficient and reducing energy bills. There has been a 60% increase in the number of households receiving assistance from the heating grant compared to the previous year. This has resulted in over 310 SPF grants being delivered, totalling circa £500k of investment for RCT residents.

## ECO 4 Flex

At the end of November 2023 the Council also launched it's ECO 4 Flex scheme, which is a national Government funded Scheme funded by energy companies which is delivered via installers. Although it is considered a private market scheme the Council has been utilising it's enabling role to administer the applications for the scheme and lever this external funding into the RCT area.

ECO 4 is a multi measure scheme assisting homes with low energy performance. To date we have received 41 applications and numbers continue to rise.

You can find more information regarding these schemes and the work that our Heat & Save team undertake by using the following link:

<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/Housing/HousingGrants/HeatandSave/HeatandSave.aspx>

# Case Study:

## Mr Chick

Mr Chick received an SPF funded grant for a Solar PV which helped him expand his existing solar panels with solar edge optimisers. This then raised the energy performance of his home from an EPC rating of C to a rating of A which is the highest level of energy performance that can be achieved. Mr Chick informed us that from calculations on his energy bills he is expecting to save around £650 per year.

**This highlights an example of resident who wants to generate cleaner renewable energy and make significant savings to their household bills.**

“

*My home is now pretty toasty and lashings of hot water is available. Many thanks for all your assistance in making this happen. Could you please pass on my thanks to all concerned.*

Mr C recipient of heating grant

”



Our Housing Strategy Officer Keryl Lanfear was pleased to speak and support National Energy Action Cymru at the recent Energy Crisis Conference in Cardiff. Keryl was able to highlight and share how the Local Authority can support residents living in RCT to make their homes warm and reduce energy bills.



**Gwresogi ac Arbed heat & save**

**For further information please contact the Heat & Save team:**

✉ [heatandsave@rctcbc.gov.uk](mailto:heatandsave@rctcbc.gov.uk)

☎ 01443 281136



# Building Control

## Full Plans



**136**  
approved

## Building Notices



**390**  
approved

## Dangerous Structures



**203**  
interventions to mitigate  
risk of harm to the public

## Which includes the following major developments:

- New 21 Century schools at Pontyclun Primary, New Welsh Medium Rhdyfelin, Penygawsi Primary School
- New housing development at Cwm Heulwen
- RCT Office accommodation Llys Cadwyn
- Care Home Facilities at Porth
- Muni Building Refurbishment



If you'd like advice from the team on your construction work get in touch with the Building Control team:

✉ [BuildingControl@rctcbc.gov.uk](mailto:BuildingControl@rctcbc.gov.uk)

☎ 01443 281156