



Waterford City & County Council Shop Front Improvement Scheme 2021

As part of the brief to improve city and town centre presentation, a Shop Front Improvement Scheme (SFIS) has been introduced in Waterford City centre and Dungarvan town centre.

The objectives of the scheme are:

- To enhance the appearance of retail and commercial premises in Waterford City centre and Dungarvan town centre by encouraging and supporting owners of local retail and commercial premises to improve their individual shop/ business fronts
- To support the vitality and vibrancy of Waterford City centre and Dungarvan town centre with positive benefits for all
- Create a more attractive environment that residents, visitors, shoppers and businesses can enjoy
- To promote Dungarvan as a Gaeltacht service town

What type of buildings/ premises are eligible?

- Commercial premises fronting onto a public road
- Commercial premises in the city or town centre (as defined by the Development Plan)
- Owners or leaseholders of indigenous commercial businesses/ retail premises – premises that are part of a franchise or chain are not eligible
- Commercial premises where there are not commercial rates outstanding to Waterford Council
- Businesses not in receipt of the Rates Incentive Scheme or Economic Incentive Schemes.

Grants available

The scheme provides for up to 50% of the cost of shop front refurbishment, depending on the work proposed with a maximum allowable contribution of €2,000 per applicant depending on the nature of the work.

Type of Work (Examples only)	Up to a max.
Paint and redecorate shop front Decluttering and repair of shop fronts	€1,000
Replace shopfront and/or signage Material changes to shopfront Removal of high level signage Specified works to upper floors, subject to improvements at ground level	€2,000

Scéim Éadan Siopaí

In addition to the above grant aid, specific grants will be available in Dungarvan town centre to promote the use of Irish language signage. The objectives of this will be to:

- To promote Dungarvan as a Gaeltacht Service Town and its' unique identity.
- To assist businesses who wish to promote the use of the Irish language.

Type of Work	Up to a max.
Bilingual signage (75% Grant up to a maximum of €500)	€500
Irish only signage (100% Grant up to a maximum of €750)	€750

Note: any bilingual or Irish language signage proposals will be reviewed and approved by Waterford City & County Council's Irish Language Officer to ensure compliance with the Irish Languages Act.

Foras na Gaeilge have produced a document [Bilingual signage: A guide for best practice](#) which may be of use. Foras na Gaeilge also offer a Business Support Scheme which supports small and medium-sized commercial enterprises promote Irish in their businesses through signage, packaging, websites and printed marketing material. For more details visit their [website](#).



Eligible works under the scheme include:

- In order to encourage best practice approaches to shop front maintenance and presentation, applications should be in line with the criteria outlined in the following documents:
 - [Waterford City Development Plan 2013-2019](#)
 - [Waterford County Development Plan 2011-2017](#)
 - [Dungarvan Town Council Plan 2012-2019](#)
 - [Retail Design Manual 2012 and other Section 28 Ministerial Guidelines](#)
 - [Waterford Council 'Shop Front and Signage Guidance Document' \(2019\)](#)
 - Foras na Gaeilge [Bilingual signage: A guide for best practice](#)
- Repair and reinstatement of all or any part of a shop front fixture that is visible from the street, including the first and upper floors of premises (subject to the associated ground floor unit being in commercial use).
- Reinstatement of architectural or historic features that have formed part of the building's design and character.
- Repainting of shop fronts. Colour schemes should co-ordinate with adjoining shop fronts and upper floors of buildings should be painted to blend in appropriately with ground floors.
- Repair and reinstatement of guttering and down-pipes (to match historic materials where appropriate).
- Repainting and/ or re-rendering of prominent elevations.
- Repair of external stonework and brickwork and replacement of stonework or brickwork which forms part of the stall riser of the shop front.
- Removal of neon signs, banner or other inappropriate signage affixed to front elevations (or side elevations visible from the street) and replacement with signage in line with Waterford City & County Council standards.
- Permanent removal of external security shutters and installation of suitable replacements.
- The removal of redundant wiring, alarm boxes and utilities on premises is encouraged.
- Works to the side or rear of a building will only be funded if they are clearly visible from the street and if they are associated with an overall project which includes improvements to the front façade of the same building.

Ineligible Expenditure:

- Improvements to residential property.
- Retrospective applications i.e. work already completed or underway before receipt of application.
- Structural repairs including re-roofing.
- Internal repairs and alterations.
- External security features, such as CCTV Systems.
- Any work which is not in accordance with Planning Legislation, ACA Guidelines or protected Structure Guidelines.
- Statutory fees • Architect / consultant fees • Professional fees (e.g. solicitor / surveyor) • Insurances

How to apply for a grant?

1. Applications may be made by the owner of the premises or by the lessee with the owner's written consent.
2. Applications should clearly identify each element of the proposed works.
3. The completed application form must be accompanied by a description of the proposed works to include:
 - a. Photographs of the existing shopfront (prior to works being carried out)
 - b. Sketch of proposed changes e.g. drawings of new shopfront or signage
 - c. Indication of the material type and colour scheme to be used
 - d. Two written quotations for the proposed works from registered builders/contractors
 - e. Where works are to be completed by the owner, quotations for materials should be included and grant assistance will only be available for the cost of materials.



4. Any alterations to design and/or materials must be agreed in advance and recorded on the work schedule. No grant will be paid to any project where changes are made that have not been agreed in advance with Waterford City & County Council.

Note: A site visit may be arranged with the applicant to discuss the application and if necessary facilitate the submission of further information in support of the application, and where permissible under Covid-19 restrictions.

Assessment Criteria

The following will be considered in assessment of applications:

- The quality of the proposed changes to the shop front/ building facade.
- Impact on the immediate area of the street
- Preference will be given to applications for clusters, where a number of adjacent properties make a joint application.
- Applications will be considered by an Adjudication Panel appointed by the Council. The Adjudication Panel may include expertise from Economic Development, Forward Planning/ Development Control and the Conservation Officer.
- Applicants currently in receipt of the Rates Incentive Scheme or Economic Incentive Scheme will not be eligible to apply for funding under this scheme.
- The decision to award a grant rests with Waterford City & County Council, whose decision shall be final.
- All grants will be subject to funding being available.

Grant Drawdown

- Payment will only be made following completion of works.
- Upon completion of works, the applicant must submit evidence of paid contractor invoices together with photos of the completed shop front to Waterford City & County Council. Invoices should include the Tax Reference Number of the builder/ contractor.
- All payments must be made through the applicant's bank account. Applicants will be required to be set up as a supplier if they are not already set up.
- An inspection may be undertaken to ensure compliance with the agreed work schedule.
- If the inspection/ works are satisfactory, Waterford City & County Council will then pay the applicant.
- If a grant is not drawn down within a period of 6 months from the date of issue of the Grant Offer letter then funding will be withdrawn, unless a prior agreement has been made.
- Where the works are undertaken by the owner, grant assistance will be provided towards the costs of materials only. Vouched expenditure receipts must be submitted and bank statements may be required as proof of payments.

Will I require Planning Permission?

- Applicants are advised to contact Waterford City & County Council in advance of making an application for funding to discuss individual proposals. Guidance will be provided by a Planning Officer in respect of whether the proposed works put forward require the making of a planning application or whether the works proposed are exempt from planning permission.
- It is the business owner/ lessees responsibility to ensure they are fully compliant with planning legislation in relation to any alterations to the building.
- Please note that additional provisions may apply in the case of Protected Structures and any applications from buildings on the Record of Protected Structures will require sign off by Waterford Council's Conservation Officer.
- Where planning consent is not in place and a proposal involves a material alteration to the structure, planning permission will be required at payment stage. The onus is on the applicant to ensure that their project proposal has the necessary planning consents in advance of drawing down grant assistance from this scheme.



Terms & Conditions

- Works commenced prior to receipt of written approval from Waterford Council will not be considered eligible.
- Maximum grant permitted is 50% of final costs (exclusive of VAT) with a maximum payment of €2,000.
- Properties must be commercially rated and there should be no local taxes or charges due to the Council.
- Recipients currently availing of other local authority grant schemes including the Retail Fit Out, Office Refurbishment Scheme and Arts, Crafts, Artisan Food Scheme and Economic Incentive Scheme are not eligible to apply.
- Applications will be accepted from either the landlord or the lessee, whichever is appropriate. Where the applicant is a lessee, the lease must have a minimum of 2 years to run and the application should have the consent of the landlord. This requirement will not apply in the case of rolling leases where the lessee can prove continuity for a minimum of 2 years.
- Grant payment will be subject to the applicant having obtained planning permission if required and submission of a copy of the Final Grant of Permission.
- In the event that planning permission is required for the proposed works, please note that this is a separate process to the grant application and the statutory timelines in the processing of a planning application apply.
- Nothing in the agreement or negotiation of the grant will affect the Council's decision over planning permission.
- The Council accepts no responsibility should a business receive a Grant Offer letter or subsequent grant payment, which become subject to Planning Enforcement proceedings relating to improvements got which monies are issued. In such circumstances any offer of funding will be withdrawn and where a grant has been awarded, the applicant will be required to reimburse any grant claimed and to comply fully with statutory planning requirements.
- The council reserves the right to publish photographs of shop fronts (before and after) in promotional material associated with the scheme and its purpose.

For more queries on the scheme, please contact:

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Key Dates	
Scheme open for applications	08 March 2021
Closing date for applications	30 April 2021
Successful applicants notified	10 May 2021
All works completed and invoices submitted	30 September 2021