



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

**Newport City Council**

**'Safe, Warm & Secure'**

**Home Improvement Loan  
Scheme**

**Information for applicants**

**If you are a landlord, please ask for the landlord's version of this leaflet.**

## **Purpose**

The 'Safe, Warm and Secure' scheme is funded by the Welsh Government to provide interest-free loans for housing improvements. Improvements could be any work that is needed to make a home safe, warm or secure.

## **Loans**

The minimum loan is £1,000.

The maximum loan for one flat or house is £25,000, provided this does not amount to more than 80% of your home's current value. If you have a mortgage, the amount you owe, plus the amount of the loan, must be no more than 80% of your home's current value. If there is any doubt about this, we may need to carry out our own valuation of your property.

## **Loan Security**

We will register all loans as local land charges, which will bind successive owners. Loans of over £5,000 will also be registered as a legal charge at the Land Registry. If you already have a mortgage, we will need to obtain the consent of your first lender to register a Land Registry charge.

If you are a leaseholder, there would need to be enough financial value in your remaining lease to secure the loan; the loan could not exceed 80% of the lease's value. You would need to have the written consent of the freeholder and there would need to be at least 7 years left on the lease. If you are a tenant, your landlord would need to apply for the loan.

## **Affordability & Fees**

If you take out a loan but fail to repay it, your home will be at risk. To make sure that you can afford to repay the loan, we ask that you complete an affordability assessment for Newport Credit Union. You will need to provide evidence of your income and outgoings for the past 3 months and an up-to-date statement of your mortgage, if you have one, and any other financial commitment such as loans or credit cards. Newport Credit Union will then advise us what level of repayments you should be able to afford. The loan is interest-free but there is an administration fee of 8% of the loan value, plus VAT on the fee only.

You can pay the fee (and VAT on the fee) monthly in the same way as the loan repayments and we will include the cost in your repayment schedule. The fee will be collected at the start of the repayment period, from your first payments.

## **The Loan Term**

The maximum loan period is 10 years but in most cases it will be advisable to repay in a shorter term to allow a safety margin. We will agree a loan period with you

based on the affordability assessment. We will normally ask you to make monthly repayments by standing order from your bank account.

### **Disabled Facilities Grants**

If you qualify for a Disabled Facilities Grant but are required to cover the cost of the work yourself you may be able to apply for a loan to cover these costs. For clients who qualify for a Disabled Facilities Grant, the council provides a Home Improvement Agency Service that specifies the work and manages the contractor. This will be offered to you - should you wish to take advantage of it, there is no cost to you for this service

### **General Improvement Works**

The council is unable to offer an agency service for general improvement works. If you are applying for a loan to cover general improvement works to your home, you will need to find reliable contractors who can do the work for you and ask them to give you a quote for the work. You should get quotes from at least two contractors and send these in with your loan application. If required, we can provide a list of contractors who are approved to carry out housing improvement works for Newport City Council but this should not be taken as a recommendation. Newport City Council is not responsible for the works you carry out; you will be responsible for employing the contractors and supervising the work. We will visit your property to see what you are planning to do, before the work begins and when it is completed or nearing completion.

### **Payment of the Loan Monies**

The loan will be paid to you in full once the works have been completed.

### **The Application Process**

Loans are subject to the availability of funding. Once you have completed the application form, please send it, with your contractors' quotes to:

Sandra Batten,  
Regeneration, Investment & Housing Service,  
Room 704  
Civic Centre  
Newport  
NP20 4UR

If you have any queries about the application form, or would like help to complete it, please contact:

**Sandra Batten, telephone 01633 233592, e-mail [sandra.batten@newport.gov.uk](mailto:sandra.batten@newport.gov.uk)**

When we receive your completed application form, we will:

- Check, from the information you have given, whether your application will meet the rules of the scheme
- Visit your home to check its general condition and discuss the works you want to do
- Ask you to make an appointment with Newport Credit Union, who will carry out an affordability assessment; we will provide them with a copy of your loan application form but you will also need to complete a financial form for Newport Credit Union
- Make a decision on your application, taking account of Newport Credit Union's affordability assessment
- Contact you to confirm the loan amount and proposed repayment schedule
- If necessary, contact your first lender to obtain their agreement to a second charge
- Send you a loan agreement, including the repayment schedule and a legal charge document - you must return these within 8 weeks if you wish to take up the loan

When you return the loan paperwork, we will:

- register the loan as a local land charge; if it is for over £5,000, we will also register it as a financial charge at the Land Registry
- Let you know when the financial charge or local land charge is in place so that your improvement works can begin
- Visit once your improvement works are completed
- Subject to satisfactory completion of the works, release the loan money to you so that you can pay the contractor

## **Repayment**

Your loan repayments should begin the month after you receive your loan funding, in accordance with the repayment schedule. Your monthly repayments should be set at a level you find affordable but, if your circumstances change and you have any difficulty keeping up the repayments, you must let us know as soon as possible so that we can discuss this with you.

Once the loan has been repaid, the local land charge will be removed by our legal section. If there is also a legal charge, our legal section will send you a form so that you, or your solicitor, can contact the Land Registry to request removal of the legal charge.

**Please note that if you sell your property during the loan term, the whole of the loan would be repayable upon the sale.**

Please also see the information on the following page about what permission you may need from the council and how to find a contractor.

## **Carrying out work to your home or property**

For some kinds of work to your property, you will need approval from the council under the Building Regulations. There is information on the council's website [www.newport.gov.uk](http://www.newport.gov.uk) or you can e-mail to [building.control@newport.gov.uk](mailto:building.control@newport.gov.uk) or telephone the city contact centre on 01633 656656 and ask for building control. Before you hire someone to carry out work, you should check whether or not you need Building Regulations approval.

If you are planning to change the use of all or part of your property, or do something that will change its appearance, you will probably need planning permission. There is information on the council's website [www.newport.gov.uk](http://www.newport.gov.uk) about what types of work need planning permission, or you can e-mail [planning@newport.gov.uk](mailto:planning@newport.gov.uk), or there is a planning officer on duty to answer queries at the Information Station on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays – you can call in person or telephone via the city contact centre on 01633 656656.

If you live in a conservation area, you will need to check with the council before doing any work on your home. There are 15 conservation areas in the Newport area: Beechwood Park, Belle Vue Park, Caerleon, Clytha, Kensington Place, Lower Dock Street, Lower Machen, Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal, Redwick, St Woolos, Stow Park, The Shrubbery, Town Centre, Tredegar House and grounds, Waterloo.

## **Finding a Contractor**

The Citizens' Advice Bureau has very useful advice 'Before You Get Building Work Done' on their website and also has a consumer helpline 03454 040506.

When you are thinking about hiring a contractor, try to get personal recommendations from someone they have already worked for, not just recently but some time ago, in case there were problems later. Check what a contractor tells you about their business - ask to see a business card or a headed letter, then ring the business to check that it exists and that the contractor works for them. If they will only give you a mobile number, beware – they may be hard to get hold of if things go wrong! You can also check on the government website for Companies House, [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/companies-house](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/companies-house) to see when a company was set up, where its registered office is and who its directors are.

A reliable contractor will be prepared to offer an insurance-backed warranty for the product or work, before you pay. You should also ask what other insurance they have and, if you have any doubts, ask to see their insurance certificate.

When you meet a builder, ask them for a written quote. You should always try to get two or three quotes so that you can compare prices but be wary of anyone who offers you a much lower price for the same work, it may be that they are not doing work to the same standard.

For some kinds of work, contractors can be registered under a scheme to confirm that they are competent to carry out that work, or use that product. It is a legal requirement that electricians and gas engineers are registered.

When you are thinking about hiring a contractor, always ask them what qualifications they have to do the job - and then check.

The table below shows different kinds of work you may want to have carried out at your home and where you might that a contractor should be reliable.

Type of work	Where to check – accreditation or registration schemes	
Electrical work – electricians must be registered	BRE Certification Ltd	<a href="http://www.partp.co.uk">www.partp.co.uk</a> Tel. 0870 609 6093
	British Standards Institution	<a href="http://www.bsi-global.com/kitemark">www.bsi-global.com/kitemark</a> Tel. 01442 203442
	ELECSA Limited	<a href="http://www.elecsa.org.uk">www.elecsa.org.uk</a> Tel. 0870 749 0080
	NAPIT Certification Limited	<a href="http://www.napit.org.uk">www.napit.org.uk</a> Tel.0870 44401392
	NINEIC Certification Services Ltd	<a href="http://www.niceic.org.uk">www.niceic.org.uk</a> Tel. 0800 013 0900
Gas – all gas engineers must be registered	Gas Safe Register	<a href="http://www.gassaferegister.co.uk">www.gassaferegister.co.uk</a> Tel. 0800 408 5500
Doors and windows – if your installer is not registered, you must get building regulations approval	FENSA competent person scheme	<a href="http://www.fensa.co.uk">www.fensa.co.uk</a> Tel. 020 7645 3700
Wall insulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• British Board of Agrément (BBA) certificate scheme</li> <li>• PAS 2030 certificate</li> </ul>	<a href="http://www.bbacerts.co.uk">www.bbacerts.co.uk</a> Tel. 01923 665300
Plumbing and heating	Association of Plumbing and Heating Contractors (APHC)	<a href="http://www.aphc.co.uk">www.aphc.co.uk</a> Tel. 0121 711 5030
Roofing	National Federation of Roofing Contractors Ltd – Competent Roofer scheme	<a href="http://www.competentroofer.co.uk">www.competentroofer.co.uk</a> Tel. 020 7448 3189
General	Trust Mark government endorsed standards scheme	<a href="http://www.trustmark.org.uk">www.trustmark.org.uk</a> Tel. 03333 555 1234