

Repaired farm buildings: A key part of our heritage

The DAFM Traditional Farm Buildings Grant, available through the Heritage Council and GLAS, supports preservation of significant farm structures

Eimear Connery
Teagasc, Midleton

Jerry Manning runs a suckler farm in The Hermitage, Glanmire, Co Cork. As a current GLAS participant, he was able to receive funding for repairs to the lofted floors of old stone buildings within a farm courtyard.

The eastern side of the courtyard was constructed first (evident on the Historic Maps 1837-1842) and the western side sometime later – it is present on the 25” historic maps dating from 1888-1913.

The property was once owned by Captain Glen Browne, who was friendly with the Duchess of Westminster. She owned the famous racehorse Arkle, and stabled him in the courtyard as a foal. His skeleton is on display at the Irish National Stud in Kildare. The Hermitage gets its name from the remains of hermits cells. In early Christian times, hermits lived in these stone cells and they are still visible in the adjoining woods, which



Historic 25” map (1888-1913).

forms part of the local heritage walk in Glanmire.

“I applied for the grant for restoration of old farm buildings [which is only available to farmers in the GLAS scheme] and got through the first stage of the grant application process,” says Jerry.

“The next stage was to attend an information day held by the Heritage Council in Tullamore, Co Offaly. The day delivered plenty of information on traditional farm building methods and carrying out the work with respect to wildlife.”

Once Jerry had secured full grant approval, the first step was to carry out a bat and bird survey. No bats were present in the building, but there were swallows nesting in it, so work could only commence once they had graduated from their nests.

Anna Meenan, project manager with GLAS traditional farm buildings grant scheme at the Heritage Council emphasizes that: “An imperative part of the Heritage Council grant is that it promotes repairs rather than replacement, so whenever possible building materials are reused.”

Grants awarded will not exceed 75% of the cost of the project, with a maximum grant of €25,000 and a minimum grant of €4,000. The aim of the grant is to restore these buildings to be structurally sound with minimum intervention. Grants are also available for other related structures, such as historic yard surfaces and landscape features around the farmyard like walls, gate pillars and gates. To be eligible for the scheme, buildings and



other related structures (constructed before 1960) must have architectural or vernacular heritage character, make a contribution to their setting and not be overwhelmed by large-scale modern buildings. The building must continue to be used for agricultural purposes.

Tom Daly of Duagh near Listowel renovated a coachhouse built by his grandfather around 1900 with support from the Heritage Council.

“The coach house is interesting, because it played a role in the war of independence in Kerry,” says Jimmy Lyons of Teagasc Listowel.





Jerry Manning and Eimear Connery.

“Like any building project of this type, it can be a chore to repair the building with the appropriate materials. It is also skilled and painstaking work. Jimmy was lucky to find a builder able to take it on and meet the specifications laid down by the Heritage Council in Kilkenny.

“Another challenge was to avoid disturbing a small colony of bats which were in residence. It’s now a fine building and has the advantage that as a coach house, it has relatively high ceilings, so it’s a bit more versatile but it’s still an agricultural building.”



Repair work carried out to lofted floor.



The lofted floor before repairs.

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After years assisting farmers apply for the Traditional Farm Building Grant within the REPS and GLAS schemes, I decided to try my hand at securing funding for a building on our own farm. This building was the last remaining section in a traditional square farmyard.

It was dark, dull, damp, with crumbling walls and slates starting to slip. The timbers were wet looking with woodworm. There had been an electrical fire in the building 15 years ago and that had left its mark on the wooden rafters. In February 2020, we sent in our application and in March 2020 we received a letter that we were shortlisted. The grant is available for the conservation of traditional



farm outbuildings, including roofs, walls, structural repairs, windows and doors.

After this, we submitted our report by our conservation consultant, Aoife, of David Kelly Engineers, as well as a bat and bird survey, and were awarded funding for the project.

Construction started in mid-September with our local contractors C & H Builders and was finished by our end of October deadline.

Our builders and consultant carried out a sieve analysis of the old lime mortar, which turned out to be, un-

sually, mixed with clay.

By doing so, they were able to remake a similar mortar for the repointing of the stone. By the end of the project, we were delighted.

“What was once the ugly duckling in the yard is now the shining gem,” said Anna Meehan of the Heritage Council.

Traditional Farm Building Grant: Tips on filling up the application form

•What makes your building special?

Its history, stories and special features. There are many valuable resources online, such as archaeology.ie and [Mapviewer on osi.ie](http://Mapviewer.onosi.ie), which have a wealth of maps dating back to the 1840s. The online version of Griffith evaluation can tell you who lived on the premises, rates paid and what their occupation was.

My husband's family, the McCarthys, only moved there in the 1870s, so we learned about the tenants and landlord who were there at the time. It's unknown when exactly it was built, but it's at least 184 years old, as it is on the 1837 OSI 6inch maps. It was originally used as a store for apples with a large orchard beside it. After that, it was used as a piggery and calf house with outside exercise area.

•What essential repairs are required?

The GLAS Traditional Farm Building grant Scheme advocates minimum intervention i.e. what is needed to keep the building alive. Roofs, walls, timbers, doors and windows. Include photos of the necessary works.

•What is a conservation consultant?

A conservation consultant is someone who will oversee the project if your application is successful. A list of sources can be found under [https://www.heritagecouncil.ie/projects/traditional-](https://www.heritagecouncil.ie/projects/traditional-farm-buildings-grant-scheme)

[farm-buildings-grant-scheme](https://www.heritagecouncil.ie/projects/traditional-farm-buildings-grant-scheme) or ask your local advisor. You do NOT need to engage this person at the application stage.

•Cost.

Be realistic. High costs for unnecessary work may rule you out. Keep works to minimum intervention. A quotation or estimate of the works must go in with the application.

•Is there a public view or a public benefit to your project?

A public view may mean it can be seen from a road, near or far, or it may mean it can be seen from other public areas such as parks, golf courses and public walkways.

A public benefit is any good to the public. Will the current view of the area be enhanced if the building is repaired? Would using builders from the area and locally sourced material benefit the local economy? There are a wide range of possible answers to these questions.

•Is there wildlife using it?

Simple – check. Most old buildings have some birds nesting. If it's not swallows with their mud nests attached to the rafters, wrens or robins could be in little crevices in the stonework. Bats are common visitors and it's easy to check the floor for droppings. Perhaps you might be lucky enough to have some unusual visitors like owls.

•How do you ensure your project is environmentally sustainable?

We had hoped to re-use 50% of the old slate and rafters. However, due to our

careful builders, we managed to re-use 70%. They also sourced matching used slate to complete the roof.

Some stone was needed in areas where the wall had crumbled and they sourced this from a neighbouring yard that was undergoing a similar project on buildings of equal vintage. Have a good look at your building and estimate how much of the original materials can be kept.

•Any past maintenance carried out?

Were there any similar projects done in the yard back through the years out of your own pocket? It may be that you love repairing vintage machinery or maybe you have an old dwelling house or old stone boundary wall in fields that you have repaired.

•Photographs.

Include good, clear, quality photos, but not too many. You do not need several photos showing the same thing. Get help taking the pictures from a family member or neighbour if you need it. Most smartphones have good quality cameras. Ensure you have pictures that highlight:

- Front, back and sides.
- Main repairs to be carried out, both internal and external.
- View from a public setting.
- View of the building in its wider surrounding.

Be organised and on time. All documentation must be submitted with the application. Late paperwork is not an option. The 2021 scheme is going online and will be open for applications in early March.