

## 'Property guardian' cheap rent scheme on way to NI



editorial image

A novel Dutch property scheme that enables people to live in unoccupied buildings in exchange for looking after the place is heading to Northern Ireland.

The 'property guardian' concept has seen offices, warehouses, convents and even pubs turned into temporary low cost accommodation.

Camelot Property Management, which has utilised buildings across Europe by filling the empty space with people looking for affordable housing, is setting up in Northern Ireland.

The company said monthly rental costs for staying in the empty properties start at around £100 a month, including all bills.

In exchange, it said the owners of the buildings are able to mitigate against the risks of squatting, theft and vandalism.

Damian Woods, regional manager for Camelot Property Management, said: "With tens of thousands of commercial and residential buildings lying empty in Northern Ireland, managing vacant property has never been more critical for organisations, for communities and for economic growth.

"Without adequate protection these properties can be subject to misuse and either deliberate or unintentional damage, which is where our Property Guardian solution comes into play.

"For more than 20 years across Europe, owners of vacant developments, offices, warehouses, convents, pubs and other buildings have turned to the Property Guardian solution to protect their assets.

"Not only has this resulted in a reduction in dilapidation, vandalism and crime in the direct surrounding areas but we are also utilising properties that would otherwise be vacant.

"Our protection by occupation scheme currently houses thousands of guardians across Europe who enjoy living in this unique and very low cost way. There is a clear parallel between the interests of the guardians and of the building owners. The guardians make their homes here and put their belongings into the premises, so they will take immediate action when there is something wrong."

Camelot has organised a free breakfast briefing on October 15 at the Wellington Park Hotel in Belfast to give local councils, housing associations, commercial surveyors, owners and administrators of vacant property a chance to find out more about the concept.

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