

## Enhanced Defective Concrete Blocks Grant Scheme

### Monthly Report to Elected Members

**Date: 31st March 2024**

#### **Background**

The Minister for Housing, Local Government & Heritage announced the commencement of the Enhanced Defective Concrete Block Grant Scheme on the 3rd July 2023.

Donegal County Council is tasked with administering the Enhanced Scheme, on behalf of the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage.

This report provides an update on the implementation of the Enhanced Defective Concrete Block Grant Scheme and covers the period up to and including 31st March 2024.

At the commencement date, Donegal County Council had 1,296 applications received under the Previous Scheme which required transitioning to the Enhanced Scheme. These applications are referred to as “Transitional Application”.

The approved Remediation Options under the Enhanced Grant Scheme are outlined in the Table below.

<b>Remedial Option</b>	<b>Remedial Works Description</b>
Option 1	Demolish entire dwelling and rebuild (in the exact position on the land on which the relevant dwelling was situated before it was demolished)
Option 2	Demolish and rebuild external walls (both outer and inner leaves) down to foundation on a phased basis and re-render
Option 3	Demolish and rebuild external walls (both outer and internal leaves) down to top of rising wall on a phased basis and re-render
Option 4	Demolish and rebuild external walls (outer leaf only) down to top of rising wall on a phased basis and re-render
Option 5	Demolish and rebuild outer leaf of affected walls only and re-render

## **Section 1**

### **1.1: Status of Transitional Applications as at 31st March 2024**

Transitional Applications including Change of Remedial Option	<b>849</b>
Information Received from Applicants for Grant Calculations to date	<b>447</b>
Information Reviewed by Donegal Co Co and returned to applicant for follow up	<b>16</b>
Grant Amount Calculated under Enhanced Scheme and notified to applicant	<b>338</b>
Percentage of Applications Processed or returned to applicant for follow up	<b>79%</b>
Value of Grant Amounts under the Enhanced Scheme	<b>€109,875,203</b>

#### **Change of Remedial Option for Transitional Applications at 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2023:**

All 35 applicants were notified of the process to advance their applications for a Change of Remediation Option.

To date, 33 of these applicants have engaged in the process and their revised applications have been transferred to the Housing Agency on 19th March 2024 for assessment.

The applicants will be notified once the Housing Agency complete their determination.

#### **1.2 Analysis of Transitional Applications by Approved Remediation Option:**

Stage 1 – Confirmation of Eligibility & Remediation Option under the Previous Scheme	<b>849</b>
Option 1	<b>527</b>
Option 2 – 5 and Blended Options	<b>322</b>

#### **Key Points:**

- For the 849 Transitional Applications which received Confirmation of Eligibility and Remediation Option by Donegal County Council under the provisions of the Previous Scheme, 62% of applicants were approved for Option 1.
- 53% of all approved applicants have now submitted the required information (Declaration of Floor Area, dimensioned drawings) to enable Grant Calculation by Donegal County Council.
- To date 79% of all submitted Declarations have been processed or returned to the applicant for follow up.
- The Grant Calculations under the provisions of the Enhanced Scheme for Transitional Applications are ongoing with additional resources allocated.

## **Section 2 - Referral of Applications to the Housing Agency**

Under the provisions of the Enhanced Scheme, the technical assessment of validated applications is the remit of the Housing Agency. The initial step for an application, following validation and referral to the Housing Agency, is the Housing Agency's Determination of Damage Threshold of the relevant dwelling.

For those applications that meet the Damage Threshold, the Housing Agency provides an indicative timeline for determination of the Remediation Option & Grant Amount. The Determination of Damage Threshold and the Remediation Option Grant as decided by the Housing Agency is communicated to the applicant by the Council's DCB Grant Office.

Where it is deemed by the Housing Agency that an application has not met the Damage Threshold or where an applicant is not satisfied with the Approved Remediation Option, the applicant may submit an appeal to the Independent Appeals Panel.

## **Overview of Referral of Applications to the Housing Agency**

### **2.1 Determination of Damage Threshold as at 31st March 2024**

Applications Validated by Donegal County Council & Referred to the Housing Agency for Determination on Damage Threshold	574
Determination on Damage Threshold received from the Housing Agency and communicated to applicant by Donegal County Council	493
Determination by Housing Agency – Dwelling Meets the Damage Threshold	483
Determination by Housing Agency – Dwelling did not meet the Damage Threshold	10
Awaiting Determination from the Housing Agency	81

To date, **97.9%** of applications assessed by the Housing Agency have been determined to meet the Damage Threshold.

### **2.2 Remediation Option & Grant Amount as at 31st March 2024**

To date, the Housing Agency have decided the Remedial Option Grant on **35%** of the applications which have been determined to have met the Damage Threshold under the provisions of the Enhanced Scheme. These Options are summarised below:

Remediation Option Grant Determined by the Housing Agency	169
Option 1	127
Option 2	23
Option 3	9
Option 4	4
Blended Option or Combination	6
Value of Grant Amounts decided by the Housing Agency	€59,651,798

### **Section 3 - Payments Processed since the introduction of the Enhanced Scheme**

Table 3 provides an overview of Payments issued to applicants since the introduction of the Enhanced Grant Scheme in July 2023.

The Payments represent reimbursement of Professional Fees and costs associated with approved remediation works.

#### **3.1: Payments Processed since the Introduction of the Enhanced Scheme**

<b>Month</b>	<b>Value</b>	<b>No. of Applicants receiving Payment*</b>
July 2023	€586,164	23
August 2023	€697,993	17
September 2023	€828,753	15
October 2023	€928,006	9
November 2023	€857,790	14
December 2023	€2,165,626	28
January 2024	€218,861	6
February 2024	€1,113,658	17
March 2024	€1,545,774	22

<b>Total Value of Grants Paid to Date (Previous Scheme and Enhanced Scheme)</b>	<b>€22,806,175</b>
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\*Payments are issued in Stages; therefore, a number of applicants will have received Payments across more than one month listed above.

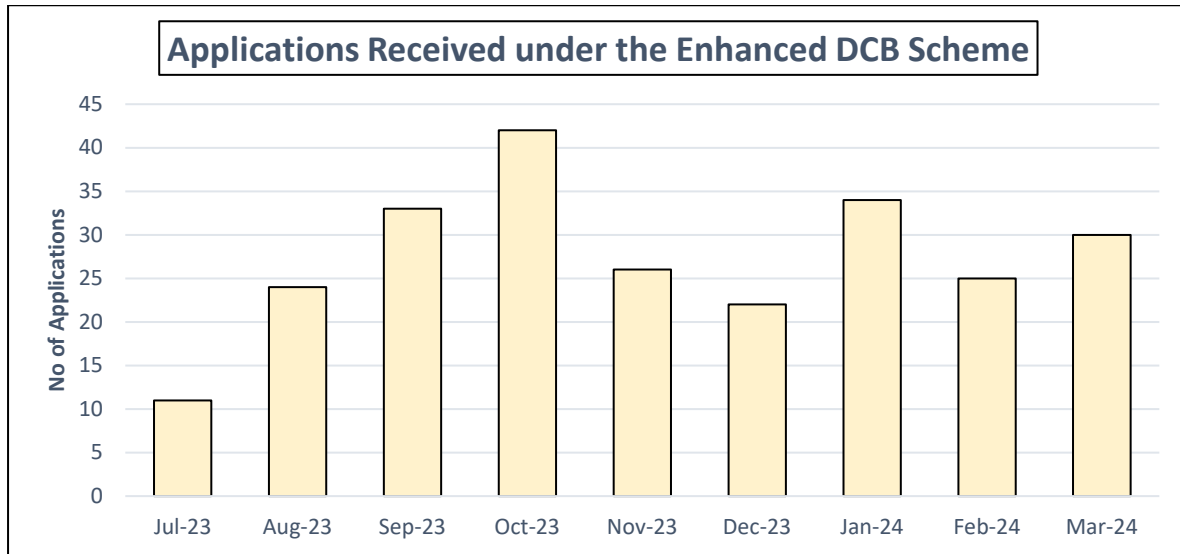
To date the Council has received a total of 23 Ancillary Grant applications which have all been assessed. Valid Ancillary Grant Claims have now progressed to payment stage. The Council continues to engage with applicants where the required documentation is incomplete in order to progress their Payment Claims.

The Ancillary Grant (up to a maximum of €15,000) is available where the relevant homeowner has incurred costs in respect of **alternative accommodation**, where their relevant dwelling is no longer habitable due to damage caused by defective concrete blocks in construction or where alternative accommodation is necessary during the carrying out of a Remediation Option under the Act. The Ancillary Grant is also available where the relevant homeowner incurs **storage costs** for the contents of the relevant dwelling, whilst remediation works are ongoing and the maximum grant amount for storage costs is €5,000.

The Council is committed to turning around all Payment Claims as efficiently as possible, on receipt of all required documentation from applicants as set out under the provisions of the Remediation of Dwellings Damaged by the Use of Defective Concrete Blocks Act 2022 and the 2023 Regulations and on completion of the necessary pre-payment validation checks.

## Section 4 - Overview of Defective Concrete Block Grant Scheme

### 4.1: Overview of Applications received under the Enhanced DCB Scheme



### 4.2: Validation Work Programme as at 31st March 2024

	Previous Scheme	Enhanced Scheme	Total
Applications submitted under Previous Scheme & remaining to be validated at the commencement of the Enhanced Scheme	122	N/A	122
Applications received under the Enhanced Scheme	N/A	249	249*
<b>Total Applications under the provisions of the Enhanced Scheme</b>			<b>371</b>
Applications transferred or pending transfer to Housing Agency	86	170	256
Applications Withdrawn by Applicant	4	0	4
Applications deemed ineligible under the terms of the ES	3	0	3
Applications deemed incomplete and currently with applicant	8	48	56
Applications currently being reviewed by Donegal Co Council	21	31	52

#### Key Points:

- In addition to the Transitional Application referrals, the Council has referred a further 69% of valid applications to the Housing Agency.
- The applications received under the Enhanced Grant Scheme can be categorised as follows:
  - Principal Private Residence (PPR) - 232
  - Residential Tenancy Board (RTB) - 17

### **4.3 Remediation Option & Grant Amount as at 31st March 2024**

This table outlines the decided Remediation Option Grants which have been notified to approved applicants by the DCB Grant Office.

<b>Total No. of Grant Amounts decided to date (Previous Scheme &amp; Enhanced Scheme)</b>	<b>507</b>
<b>Total Value of Grant Amounts decided to date (Previous Scheme &amp; Enhanced Scheme)</b>	<b>€169,527,001</b>
No. of Confirmation of Grant Amounts from the Previous Scheme as calculated / recalculated under the Enhanced Scheme by <b>Donegal County Council</b> (Transitional Applications)	338
Value of Grant Amounts from the Previous Scheme as calculated / recalculated under the Enhanced Scheme by <b>Donegal County Council</b>	€109,875,203
Number of Confirmation of Grant Amounts received from the <b>Housing Agency</b> under the terms of the Enhanced Scheme	169
Value of Grant Amounts decided by the <b>Housing Agency</b>	€59,651,798

### **Assistance to Applicants**

The DCB Grant Office continues to actively engage with applicants across the full scope of the Scheme. This includes Validation of Applications, Notification of Decisions, Validation of Payment Claims, Processing Payments, Change of Competent Building Professional and all other general queries.

The DCB Section of Donegal County Council's Website is updated regularly and contains all the information and links that an applicant may require at various stages of the application process.

The telephone clinics are available every Tuesday and Thursday (9am – 12.30pm) to assist applicant with any queries and the DCB Grant Office Team follow up on applicants' queries outside of the specific telephone clinics.

Applicants can also submit queries via email to [dcb@donegalcoco.ie](mailto:dcb@donegalcoco.ie)

In addition, the Community Facilitators continue to provide assistance and support to applicants. This is a welcome resource for applicants in their communities. The DCB Office meet with the Facilitators on a monthly basis to discuss emerging issues.

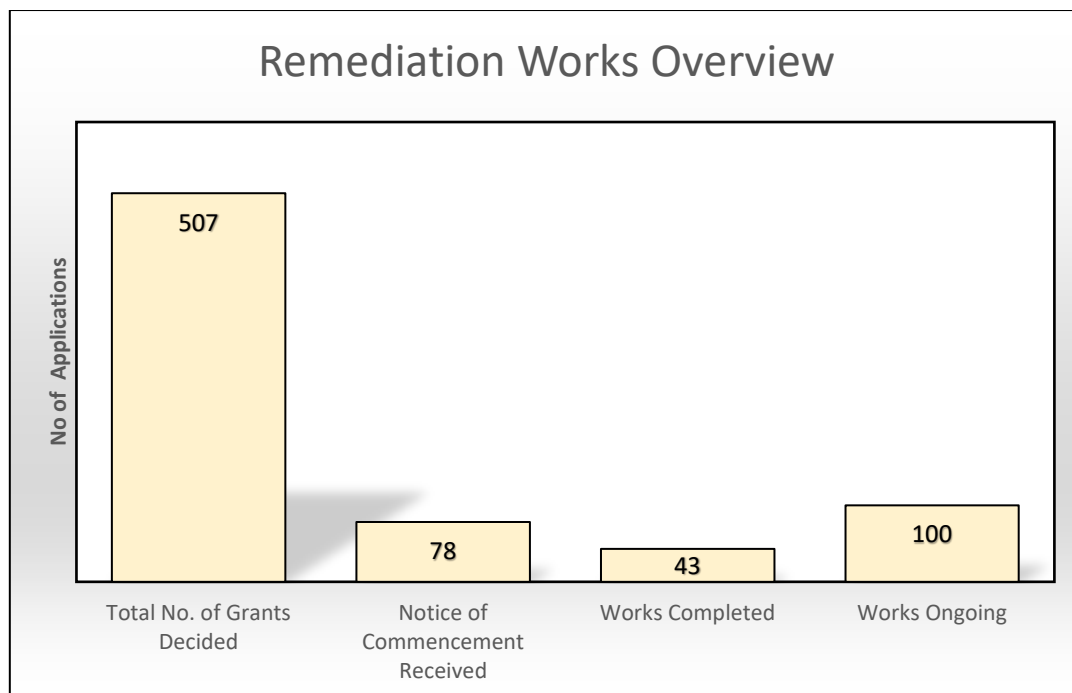
#### **4.4 Notice of Commencement & Remediation Works**

Notice of Commencement submitted by Applicants to the DCB Grant Office	78
No. of Dwellings currently undertaking Remediation Works*	100
No. of Dwellings Fully Remediated*	43

Under the Remediation of Dwellings Damaged by the Use of Defective Concrete Blocks Act 2022, applicants are required to submit their Notice of Commencement of their Remedial Works to the Council. This facility is available to approved applicants through their Online Portal and in accordance with the Act, Notices of Commencement must be submitted not more than 14 days prior to commencement of their remedial works and not less than 7 days prior to the commencement of remedial works.

\*Note: Applications approved under the Previous Scheme and had commenced Remediation Works prior to the implementation of the Enhanced Scheme at 3rd July 2023 were not required to submit a Notice of Commencement of Works to Donegal County Council.

#### **4.5 Notice of Commencement & Remediation Works**



**Report prepared on: 15<sup>th</sup> April 2024**

**DCB Grant Office**