

Press Statement / Update on Enhanced Defective Concrete Blocks Grant Scheme - 14th September 2023

Council confirms positive progress on Enhanced Scheme implementation.

In early July the Council confirmed that the Enhanced Defective Concrete Blocks Grant Scheme had been introduced by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, and that online applications could be made with effect from 10th July 2023. The Council is tasked with administering the scheme in Donegal, on behalf of the Department. The following update is being provided for affected homeowners on the state of play since the Enhanced Scheme commenced some 9 weeks or so ago.

Applications transitioning from the previous scheme.

In parallel with receiving new applications under the Enhanced Scheme, there is a requirement for 1296 applications made under the previous scheme, to transition to the new Enhanced Scheme. This involves a process of calculating or recalculating grant amounts due under the new Scheme. Given the volume of applications involved, the Council has previously advised that this will take a period of time. However, this is progressing well, and details are outlined below.

Applications approved under the previous scheme.

849 of the 1,296 applications had already received approval under the previous scheme. The Council contacted all homeowners in this category in late July and early August outlining what needed to be done next, and what information was required. To date 84 applicants have returned the information required. The Council anticipates that the homeowners who have submitted the information to date will receive formal notification of their remediation option grant under the enhanced scheme within the next two weeks. The Council will process the remaining calculations as and when the relevant information is received from the homeowners, and we will continue to turn these around as quickly as we can. A priority list has been put in place commencing with those who have completed works or are on site. We will be moving to the remaining categories shortly.

Applications under the previous scheme that have been referred to the Housing Agency.

The remaining valid applications made under the previous scheme have been referred to the Housing Agency for engineering / technical assessment. The Housing Agency will in the first instance decide whether each house meets the damage threshold under the terms of the enhanced scheme. This is progressing well, and the Council is now starting to receive notifications from the Housing Agency in respect of their determination in each individual case. The first batch of 231 cases has now been received from the Housing Agency, and the Council has already commenced notifying these homeowners of the Housing Agency's determination on the damage threshold.

New applications received under the enhanced scheme.

To date 50 new applications have been received under the Enhanced Scheme. The Council is required to ensure that the applications are valid and contain all the information required under the terms of the Scheme, prior to sending to the Housing Agency. 8 of these applications are now valid and are in the

process of being referred to the Housing Agency. The remaining 42 applications received are incomplete. In this regard, the Council has already contacted each homeowner by phone and in writing in order to explain what information is missing, and we continue to engage in each case. The type of information that is missing can be summarised as follows:

- Copy of Planning permission not submitted.
- Certificate of compliance with Planning permission not submitted.
- Consent form from joint owners of the house not submitted or incomplete.
- Out of date documentation submitted (e.g. tax clearance).

Payments.

The Council has paid out €15.6 million to date under the DCB Scheme, which includes almost €1.3 million paid out in the recent months of July and August.

Conclusion.

A Council spokesperson has stated that 'given the volume of applications involved, the transitioning of applications from the previous scheme to the enhanced scheme is a significant task, and will take some time. However, this is now starting to gain momentum, and it is expected that around 350 homeowners will get progress and clarity in relation to their application within the next few weeks.

The Council is aware that the most important application for each homeowner is their own individual application, and we appreciate the patience of homeowners who have yet to have their application progressed. We want to reassure homeowners that the staff are working hard to progress each application under the terms of the new scheme. Significant volumes of payments have issued and this will continue, with €1.3 million recently having been paid out in July and August. There is certainly light at the end of the tunnel, and while there is some way to go, there is a sense that this is starting to move forward, with positive feedback received from a number of homeowners this week'.

End.