

## **Enhanced Defective Concrete Blocks Grant Scheme**

### **Monthly Report to Elected Members**

**Date: 29th February 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 29th February 2024.

At the commencement date, Donegal County Council had 1,296 applications received under the Previous Scheme which required transitioning to the Enhanced Scheme.

#### **Overview of Approved Remediation Options under the Enhanced Scheme**

<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 leafs) down to foundation on a phased basis and re-render
Option 3	Demolish and rebuild external walls (both outer and internal leafs) 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

#### **Status of Transitional Applications**

Of the 1,296 applications received, 849 applications were approved by Donegal County Council under the Previous Scheme.

The current status of these 849 applications is outlined in Table 1.

This table also provides detail on the Grant Calculations / Recalculations completed to date by Donegal County Council under the terms of the Enhanced Scheme, where applicants have submitted the required documentation.

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

Under the provisions of the Enhanced Scheme, Donegal County Council has an administrative role. 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 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.

Further detail is contained within the Tables under Section 2 of this report.

## **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.

## **Overview of Defective Concrete Block Grant Scheme**

Table 4.1 provides an overview of the number of applications received by Donegal County Council since the commencement of the Enhanced Scheme.

Tables 4.2 provides an overview of submitted applications on the Enhanced Scheme together with applications from the Previous Scheme which are subject to transitional arrangements.

Table 4.3 provides an overview of Remediation Option Grants decided to date.

## **Assistance to Applicants**

The DCB Grant Office continues to actively engage with applicants across the full scope of the Scheme including in respect of Validation of Applications, 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 Monthly Activity Reports are also included on the website.

The telephone clinics are available to applicants 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.

In addition, both Community Facilitators continue to provide assistance and support to applicants in their respective geographical areas. 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.

Donegal County Council continues to contribute to the Enhanced Scheme National Implementation Steering Group. This Group provides a forum for the discussion of emerging issues with the key stakeholders ensuring a consistent approach across all Designated Local Authorities on the rollout of the Enhanced Scheme.

The Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage is currently preparing a Six Month Progress Report on the rollout and implementation of the Enhanced Scheme across the four current Designated Local Authorities and it is expected that this report will be published shortly.

## Section 1

**Table 1: Status of Transitional Applications as at 29th February 2024**

<b>Categorisation and Priority</b>	<b>Applicants per Category at <u>3<sup>rd</sup> July 2023</u></b>	<b>Information Received from Applicants for Grant Calculations to date</b>	<b>Information Reviewed by Donegal Co Co and returned to applicant for follow up</b>	<b>Grant Amount Calculated under Enhanced Scheme and notified to applicant</b>	<b>Percentage of Applications Processed or returned to applicant for follow up</b>	<b>Value of Grant Amounts under the Enhanced Scheme</b>
<b>1A</b>	40	35	1	32	94%	€7,320,079
<b>1B</b>	39	36	1	32	92%	€10,549,903
<b>2</b>	9	8	1	7	100%	€2,160,114
<b>3</b>	58	55	0	53	96%	€15,647,711
<b>4</b>	668	261	47	191	91%	€64,460,527
Change of Remedial Option	35					
<b>Totals</b>	<b>849</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>315</b>	<b>92%</b>	<b>€100,138,334</b>

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

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

- For the 849 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.
- 46% of all approved applicants have submitted the required information to allow Grant Calculation by Donegal County Council.
- To date 92% of Grant Calculations have been processed or returned to the applicant for follow up.
- The Grant Calculations are ongoing with required resources allocated. This important aspect of the Scheme will be kept under review.

**Explanation of Categories and Prioritisation at 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2023:**

**Category 1A** - Remediation Works fully Completed

**Category 1B** - Remediation Works In Progress

**Category 2** - Grant Amount notified to applicant but works had not commenced at 03.07.2023

**Category 3** - Stage 2 documentation submitted, but Grant Amount not calculated at 03.07.2023

**Category 4** – Applicant notified of Stage 1 Confirmation of Eligibility & Remedial Option

**Section 2: Referral of Applications to the Housing Agency as at 29th Feb 2024**

**2.1 Determination of Damage Threshold**

Applications Validated by Donegal County Council & Referred to the Housing Agency for Determination on Damage Threshold	527
Determination on Damage Threshold received from the Housing Agency and communicated to applicant by Donegal County Council	468
Determination by Housing Agency – Dwelling Meets the Damage Threshold	458
Determination by Housing Agency – Dwelling did not meet the Damage Threshold	10
Awaiting Determination from the Housing Agency	59

To date, **97.8%** of applications assessed by the Housing Agency have been determined to meet the Damage Threshold.

**2.2 Remediation Option & Grant Amount**

To date, the Housing Agency have decided the Remedial Option Grant on **29.7%** of the applications which have been determined to have met the Damage Threshold under the provisions of the Enhanced Scheme.

Remediation Option Grant Determined by the Housing Agency	139
Option 1	107
Option 2	19
Option 3	3
Option 4	4
Blended Option or Combination	6
Value of Grant Amounts decided by the Housing Agency	€49,265,370

### Section 3

**Table 3: Payments Processed since the Introduction of the Enhanced Scheme**

Month	Value	No. of Applicants receiving Payment*
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

<b>Total Value of Grants Paid to Date (Previous Scheme and Enhanced Scheme)</b>	<b>€21,260,401</b>
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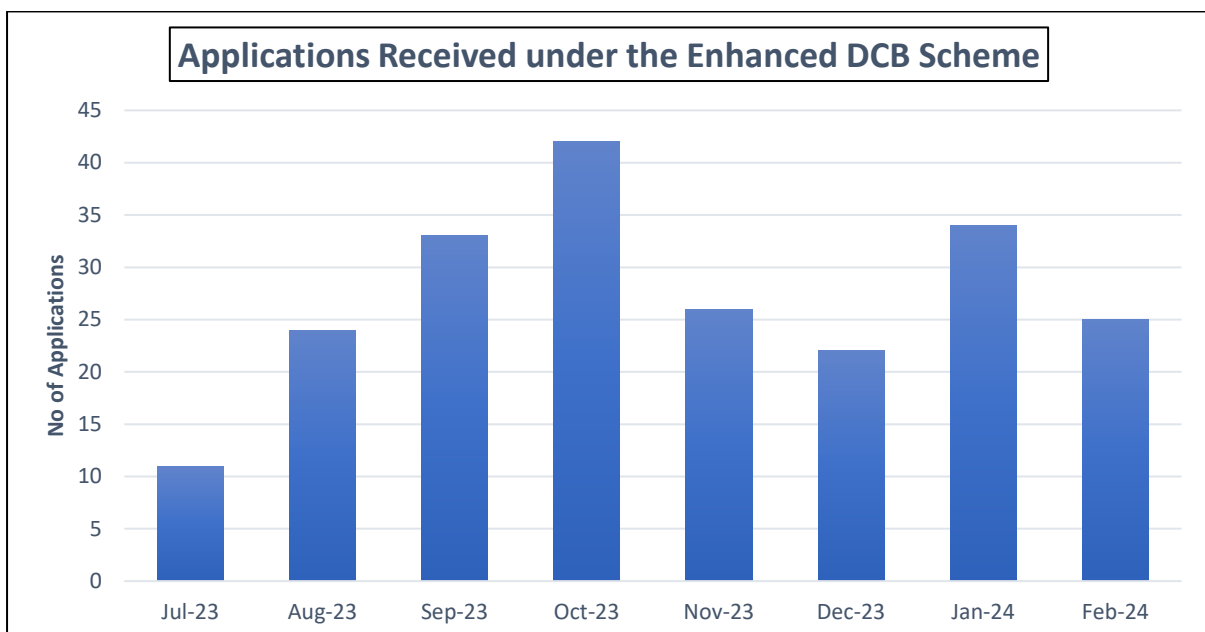
\*Payments are issued in Stages; therefore, a number of applicants will have received Payments across more than one month listed above.

On the 29<sup>th</sup> February 2024, the Council released the next phase of the Online Portal for applicants including the Payment Module for applicants who have received a Remediation Option and Grant Amount under the provisions of the Enhanced Defective Concrete Blocks Grant Scheme.

This further development enables all approved applicants to submit their Payment Claims to Donegal County Council, in respect of remediation works and ancillary grants, via their Online Portal facility.

### Section 4

**Figure 4.1: Overview of Applications received under the Enhanced DCB Scheme**



**Table 4.2: Overview of Submitted Applications**

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**Validation Work Program as at 29th Feb 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	217	217*
<b>Total Applications under the provisions of the Enhanced Scheme</b>			<b>339</b>
Applications transferred or pending transfer to Housing Agency	86	115	201
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	40	48
Applications currently being reviewed by Donegal Co Council	21	62	83

\*The applications received under the Enhanced Grant Scheme can be categorised as follows:

Principal Private Residence (PPR) - 201

Residential Tenancy Board (RTB) - 16

**Table 4.3 Remediation Option & Grant Amount as at 29th Feb 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>454</b>
<b>Total Value of Grant Amounts decided to date (Previous Scheme &amp; Enhanced Scheme)</b>	<b>€149,403,704</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)	315
Value of Grant Amounts from the Previous Scheme as calculated / recalculated under the Enhanced Scheme by <b>Donegal County Council</b>	€100,138,334
Number of Confirmation of Grant Amounts received from the <b>Housing Agency</b> under the terms of the Enhanced Scheme	139
Value of Grant Amounts decided by the <b>Housing Agency</b>	€49,265,370

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

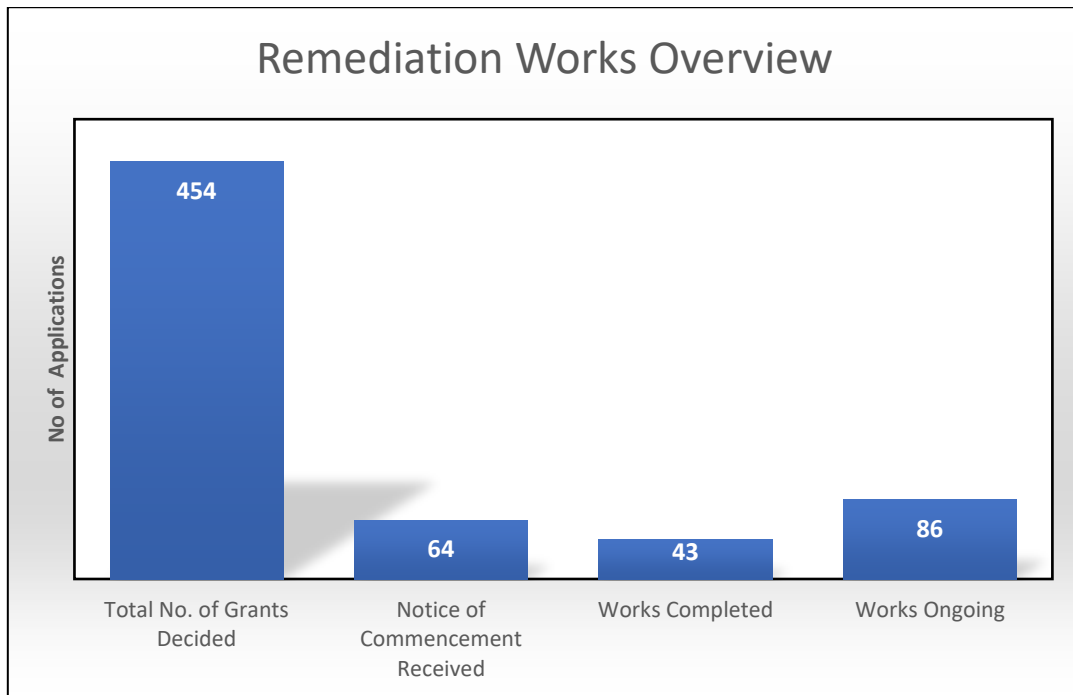
Under the Remediation of Dwellings Damaged by the Use of Defective Concrete Blocks Act 2022, applicants are required to submit their Notice of Commencement of their Remedial Works to the Council. This facility is available to approved applicants through their Online Portal and in accordance with the 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.

Notice of Commencement submitted by Applicants to the DCB Grant Office	64
No. of Dwellings currently undertaking Remediation Works*	86
No. of Dwellings Fully Remediated*	43

\*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.



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



**Report prepared on: 8<sup>th</sup> March 2024**

**DCB Grant Office**