

# DONEGAL COUNTY COUNCIL UPDATE ON COMMENCEMENT OF THE ENHANCED GRANT SCHEME ON DEFECTIVE CONCRETE BLOCKS

The Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage announced the commencement of the Enhanced Defective Concrete Blocks Grant scheme on the 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2023.

Donegal County Council acknowledges the announcement by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage of the introduction of the Enhanced Grant scheme for the remediation of dwellings damaged by Defective Concrete Blocks.

## ROLES UNDER THE ENHANCED SCHEME

Both Donegal County Council and the Housing Agency will have roles in the implementation of the New Scheme.

- The Council's role is changed significantly and will involve the validation of applications, administration of the scheme and the issuing of payments.
- The role of Engineering, Technical assessment and Compliance is now the remit of the Housing Agency and/or the homeowners' Competent Building Professional.

Both organisations will work in co-operation to implement the new Scheme.

## **NEW APPLICATIONS UNDER THE ENHANCED SCHEME**

The Council has undertaken significant work in preparation for the enactment of the new scheme.

Final arrangements are currently being undertaken in advance of receiving new applications, in line with the Ministerial guidelines received from the Department.

In this regard, the Council expects to be in a position to accept new online applications for the Enhanced Grant Scheme from Monday 10<sup>th</sup> July.

## NEW APPLICATIONS UNDER THE ENHANCED SCHEME

Under the new Enhanced Scheme, the homeowner engages a Competent Building Professional to complete a Building Condition Assessment (BCA) on the dwelling, incorporating a non-invasive visual survey to determine if the damage is consistent with the use of defective concrete blocks and meets the damage threshold as set out in the regulations. There is no requirement in the enhanced scheme for the homeowner to do sampling, testing, laboratory report and chartered engineers report.

On completion of the survey, the Competent Building Professional will determine if the dwelling has met the damage threshold. The next step is the completion of an application form, accompanied by associated proofs and submission to the Local Authority.

Once a new application is submitted and the Council is satisfied that it meets the validation requirements of the Enhanced Grant scheme, it will be referred to the Housing Agency for engineering/technical assessment.

## TRANSITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

There are presently 1296 applications made under the previous scheme which will move across to the Enhanced Scheme under Transitional Arrangements. These can be split into two broad categories:

- Applications which have received Confirmation of Eligibility (Stage 1 Approval)
- Applications which have not received Confirmation of Eligibility (Stage 1 Approval)

## **TRANSITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS: Applications which have received Confirmation of Eligibility (Stage 1 Approval)**

There are presently 848 applications made under the previous scheme which have received Confirmation of Eligibility.

These applicants will need to be provided with confirmation of Grant amount under Enhanced Scheme.

This will take a period of time and the Council recognises the need to prioritise such applications.

The following lists the priority order for the recalculation of Grant Amount, with Category 1 being dealt with first.

- **CATEGORY 1 - Applications that have received Stage 2 Approval, and where remediation works have either been completed or have commenced.**
- **CATEGORY 2 - Applications that have received Stage 2 Approval under the previous scheme but have not yet commenced remediation works.**
- **CATEGORY 3 - Applications that have received stage 1 Confirmation of Eligibility Approval, and have submitted their Stage 2 documents, but have not yet received a Stage 2 Grant Approval.**
- **CATEGORY 4 - Applications that have received Stage 1 Confirmation of Eligibility approval but have not submitted their Stage 2 documents.**
- **CATEGORY 5 – Remaining applications.**

## TRANSITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS: Applications which have not received Confirmation of Eligibility (Stage 1 Approval)

Applications which have not received Confirmation of Eligibility (Stage 1 Approval) under the previous 90/10 scheme now fall within the remit of the Housing Agency for Engineering/Technical Assessment under the terms of the Enhanced Scheme.

- 251 of these applications have already been referred to the Housing Agency and applicants have been advised accordingly.
- All remaining applications which did not receive Confirmation of Eligibility (Stage 1 Approval) under the terms of the previous 90/10 Scheme will be transferred to the Housing Agency for technical and engineering assessment, subject to completion of validation requirements, and Applicants will be advised accordingly.

**TRANSITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS:** Applications which have received Confirmation of Eligibility (Stage 1 Approval)

**CATEGORY 1 - APPLICATIONS THAT HAVE RECEIVED STAGE 2 APPROVAL, AND WHERE REMEDIATION WORKS HAVE EITHER BEEN COMPLETED OR HAVE COMMENCED.**

- These applications will be prioritised as homeowners have already incurred costs and have either completed the remediation of their homes or have commenced works.
- In order for this recalculation to be completed, the homeowners Competent Building Professional will be required to provide details of the authorised internal floor area (of original dwelling and new dwelling), or details of blockwork replaced / to be replaced under the enhanced grant scheme, to enable the recalculation of the grant amount.

**CATEGORY 2 - APPLICATIONS THAT HAVE RECEIVED STAGE 2 APPROVAL UNDER THE PREVIOUS SCHEME BUT HAVE NOT YET COMMENCED REMEDIATION WORKS.**

- This category will be addressed once Category 1 has been dealt with.
- In order for this recalculation to be completed, the homeowners competent building professional will be required to provide details of the authorised internal floor area (of original dwelling and new dwelling), or details of blockwork to be replaced under the enhanced grant scheme, to enable the recalculation of the grant amount.



**TRANSITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS: Applications which have received Confirmation of Eligibility (Stage 1 Approval)**

**CATEGORY 3 - APPLICATIONS THAT HAVE RECEIVED STAGE 1 CONFIRMATION OF ELIGIBILITY APPROVAL, AND HAVE SUBMITTED THEIR STAGE 2 DOCUMENTS, BUT HAVE NOT YET RECEIVED A STAGE 2 GRANT APPROVAL.**

- This category will be addressed once categories 1 and 2 have been dealt with.
- In order to process / calculate the grant amount, the homeowners Competent Building Professional will be required to provide the remedial works plans, associated documents and details of the authorised internal floor area (of original dwelling and new dwelling), or details of blockwork to be replaced under the enhanced grant scheme, to enable the calculation of the grant amount.

**CATEGORY 4 - APPLICATIONS THAT HAVE RECEIVED STAGE 1 CONFIRMATION OF ELIGIBILITY APPROVAL BUT HAVE NOT SUBMITTED THEIR STAGE 2 DOCUMENTS.**

- This category will be addressed once Categories 1, 2 & 3 have been dealt with.
- In order to process / calculate the grant amount, the homeowners Competent Building Professional will be required to provide the remedial works plans, associated documents and details of the Authorised Internal Floor Area (of original dwelling and new dwelling), or details of blockwork to be replaced under the Enhanced Grant Scheme, to enable the calculation of the Grant Amount.

**TRANSITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS: Applications which have received Confirmation of Eligibility**  
**(Stage 1 Approval)**

**CATEGORY 5 – REMAINING APPLICATIONS.**

- THIS CATEGORY WILL BE ADDRESSED ONCE CATEGORIES 1, 2, 3 & 4 HAVE BEEN DEALT WITH.

## IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NEW ENHANCED SCHEME

In parallel with the outlined Transitional Arrangements the Council will also be accepting new applications under the enhanced scheme from Monday 10<sup>th</sup> July.

### **NEXT STEPS.**

New applicants:

- Will be able to apply from Monday 10<sup>th</sup> July via online portal.

Existing applicants:

- No requirement for applicant do to anything at present.
- Council will be in touch with applicants in line with the provisions of the enhanced scheme.