



Defective Concrete Blocks Committee

WEDNESDAY 9TH NOVEMBER 2022

Background Introduction

- ❖ The processing of Stage 1 applications was put on hold in December 2021, pending receipt of Departmental advice and guidance on a range of technical matters.
- ❖ Such matters included the fact that additional deleterious materials (other than mica and pyrite) were arising within test results that had been submitted to the Council as part of the application process.
- ❖ In addition, a national review is underway on the IS465 standard, upon which the current scheme is based.
- ❖ Given the uncertainty, it has not been possible to make decisions on stage 1 applications without the additional advice and guidance from the Department which is consistent with I.S:465 +A1: 2020.

Recent Clarifications on Stage 1 Applications

- ❖ Numerous engagements between Donegal County Council and the Department throughout the year including the Defective Concrete Blocks Committee.
- ❖ Council presented a number of case studies (including redacted Chartered Engineers Reports) where Option 1 (demolition) was recommended by the Chartered Engineer as the minimum feasible option.
- ❖ Following ongoing engagement with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, the updated guidance and parameters to be applied by the Council when considering the stage 1 applications, have now been clarified.

Summary: Updated Parameters/Clarifications

While each application is case specific, as a minimum, the following should be demonstrated by the Chartered Engineer to warrant recommendation for **Option 1s** as the minimum feasible remedial option.

- ❖ Analysis of loading on existing block walls to demonstrate actual loading and compressive strengths and compared with compressive strength results obtained from the core samples with associated allowable loading. This analysis should also consider the cement content and petrographic assessment.
- ❖ Emphasis on the Chartered Engineer demonstrating the presence of damage in the internal walls and rising walls consistent with damage caused by defective blocks and as outlined in Table 1 and Section 5 of I.S. 465.

Summary: Updated Parameters/Clarifications

- ❖ Geologist Classification on risk of mica degradation is High/Critical/Unsound (Reference Table 3 in I.S. 465).
- ❖ Emphasis on the Chartered Engineer demonstrating the presence of free muscovite mica and the presence of pyrite and other sulphides including pyrrhotite (Reference tables 4 and 5 in I.S. 465) and including appropriate test results as outlined in Section 7 of I.S.465, with Geologist Interpretation. (While Pyrrhotite is not listed as a deleterious material in IS465, it is now confirmed that where it is present, it can be considered in the decision making process).
- ❖ Emphasis on the Chartered Engineer using Table 6 in I.S. 465 for selection of recommended remedial option.
- ❖ Note also introduction of 40 year guarantee for options 2 – 5 or blended.

Next Steps

- ❖ A review of the applications at hand will commence and will continue until all Stage 1 applications, which were on hold pending this clarification, have been dealt with (387 applications). We aim to have the majority of these applications reviewed by early January 2023 leading to either an approval of eligibility or a final further information request.
- ❖ Other applications at stage 1 and applications being submitted on an ongoing basis to be dealt with subsequently (216 applications at present).
- ❖ A meeting with the chartered engineers will be arranged shortly to provide details of the updated parameters/clarifications
- ❖ A communication will issue to each affected Stage 1 applicant advising of the commencement of this review.
- ❖ Press release will issue with the updated position.

Expected Outcomes

As part of the review of Stage 1 applications and taking into consideration the updated parameters/clarifications the following expected outcomes will arise:

- ❖ Some applicants will receive confirmation of eligibility where information submitted is considered complete and provides the necessary evidence to substantiate the recommended minimum feasible remedial option, or
- ❖ Where this is not considered to be the case, the Engineer's report is deemed to be incomplete.
 - ❖ In such cases, a final further information request will be issued. This will afford the applicant's chartered engineer an opportunity to provide the necessary evidence to substantiate the recommended minimum feasible remedial option submitted.

Expected Outcomes

- ❖ After consideration of response to the final further information request, where it is considered the required evidence has been provided,
 - ❖ the application will be approved and,
 - ❖ confirmation of eligibility will issue.
- ❖ After consideration of response to the final further information request, where it is considered the required evidence has still not been provided:
 - ❖ the Engineers report will be deemed to be incomplete,
 - ❖ the application will be put on hold, and
 - ❖ will be assigned to the Housing Agency for determination when the new Enhanced Scheme commences.

Concluding Comments Stage 1s

- ❖ The Council appreciates homeowners continued patience as we review the affected Stage 1 applications.

Stage 2 Applications

- ❖ In order to progress Stage 2 applications under the current scheme, where the Contractors Quotation is in excess of €275,000 (for Options 1's) and we are satisfied that the submitted costs are in excess of €275,000,
 - ❖ we will award the maximum grant cap which has been set out in current regulations to the applicant.
 - ❖ We will advise applicants in the approval letter that the total grant amount will be calculated retrospectively based on rates per square metre, which will be established under the new enhanced scheme, and
 - ❖ that if appropriate, they will avail of an increase, up to the max, of the revised grant cap under the new scheme.

Thank you

