

Cathaoirleach, members good afternoon,

My name is Conor O'Donnell and I'm the secretary for the Mayo Pyrite Action Group. I am a Mayo homeowner who is currently rebuilding their home.

Like all affected Mayo homeowners, I am finding that the New Enhanced Scheme still falls well short of what is required to rebuild my home. We are realising that many of the enhancements are just delaying mechanisms. The issues could easily and quickly be rectified if the will to do so at government level was there.

In the "Your Questions Answered", it states "the decision from Government is that existing applicants under the previous grant scheme will not be disadvantaged from being early movers". This is not the case. Those who hit the €420,00 cap and who are rebuilding their homes are being penalized. Testing fees, of up to €7,000 which were paid by homeowners are being taken from the current grant allocation, new joiners do not have this cost. We also lose out on €15,000 accommodation and €5,000 storage. If a homeowner was to join the scheme now, there would be no testing fees at all!

SEAI grants have effectively stalled. Mayo homeowners are trying to engage but to no avail. Nobody at SEAI knows what we are entitled to despite the fact it states on their website: "Grants are available to these homeowners under the same criteria as all other homeowners who are not affected with DCB". NZEB (nearly zero energy building) regulations apply to rebuild of Social Housing but Pyrite homeowners are expected to rebuild using archaic standards.

The BCA and DT are issues of grave concern as they deprive homeowners of the correct scientific solution which is Option 1 – Demolition and access to their independent engineer, forcing homeowners to remain in damp, unstable, crumbling homes with no light at the end of the tunnel. We understand that prioritization is needed however this is putting huge mental strain on families, nobody should have to go through this through no fault of their own.

The Department state that "the DCB grant scheme is not a compensation or redress scheme", rather it is "a grant scheme of last resort" put in place by the government "to voluntarily assist" homeowners. It's primary aim "was not to restore value or investment nor to fund the full cost of rebuilding damaged homes", but rather to ensure that homeowners could remain living in their homes.

So why are people still struggling to afford rebuilding their homes. There is still nothing in place with the Banks as they will not lend against zero equity homes. Can Members please tell me if anything has been agreed with the Banks regarding additional borrowing, re-mortgaging of remediated homes, insurance of remediated homes or indeed the selling of remediated homes? Under any of the Options, 1,2,3 or 4? We know that an engineer can only sign off on work they have completed. They acknowledged that in the matter of a home where an option other than full demolition was undertaken, that the Engineer engaged by the homeowner would not be signing off on retained blocks.

An SCSi review is badly needed as we cannot afford to rebuild our homes at today's rates. In February 2024 SCSi published that "House rebuilding costs have increased nationally by an average of 12%. The increase of 21% in 2022 and 2023 is still in place. The Department has requested updated costs and upon receipt of the report will consider recommended changes. We have also been informed by the Department that a 10% increase is all we will get if an increase is given. Can I please ask if this review has been done by SCSi and when we can expect to receive an update?

Mayo Pyrite Action Group has been in place since 2013. Each time we ask these questions it seems we are asking them for the first time. Can I please ask Members to familiarise themselves with the issues we have outlined, they can and must be resolved.

Thank you.