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CONSTRUCTION DEFECTS ALLIANCE WARMLY WELCOMES GOVERNMENT DECISION ON PUBLIC PROCUREMENT DEROGATION FOR INSTALLATION OF SMOKE AND FIRE DETECTOR AND ALARMS

The Construction Defects Alliance has warmly welcomed today's Government decision to provide a public procurement derogation for the installation of smoke and fire detector and alarm systems in apartment complexes, with a high fire-safety risk profile, under the Government's Interim Remediation Scheme.

Construction Defects Alliance's spokesperson, Pat Montague, explained that the Alliance had proposed such a derogation last autumn and the Minister for Housing, James Browne TD, had agreed to pursue this with his Government colleagues, leading to the Cabinet decision this morning.

"The Interim Remediation Scheme was launched in December 2023 to provide an acceptable level of fire safety to over 50,000 apartments, housing over 100,000 people, which were deemed to be at a high-level of fire safety risk. The focus of the Scheme was to ensure that smoke and fire alarm detectors and alarm systems, as well as means of escape, were up to scratch, while the apartment complexes concerned awaited full defects remediation. To date, just one apartment complex has received a grant under the scheme, two complexes have been approved for grants and one is close to receiving grant approval.

"The Interim Remediation Scheme has not been operating as speedily as had been anticipated, for a range of reasons. Chief amongst them was that grant applications for support under the Scheme had to go through the full rigours of public procurement. This means that – even with a fair wind – applications would take 13 or 14 months to process. This is far too long in the context of the fire-safety risks that tens of thousands of people are now facing".

Pat Montague explained that, last autumn, the Construction Defects Alliance approached Minister Browne, his advisers and officials in the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and the Housing Agency with a range of proposals to expedite the application process, given the associated grave risk of threat to life. The Oireachtas Housing Committee's pre-legislative scrutiny hearings last November and December, on the General Scheme of the Apartment and Duplex Defects Remediation Bill, also enabled the Alliance to outline its proposals for change.

"Minister Browne, his officials and the Housing Agency – along with the Oireachtas Housing Committee – responded very positively to our proposals and agreed to bring the proposal for a derogation from public procurement requirements, for the installation of fire and smoke detectors and alarm systems, to Government. Today's Cabinet decision will greatly speed up the process for owners' management companies (OMCs) applying for such funding and, in turn, will accelerate their installation, thus greatly reducing the fire-safety risk they are living with".

Mr Montague concluded by setting out the other measures recently agreed with Minister Browne, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and the Housing Agency, that will also greatly contribute to the efficiency of funding applications and the delivery of fire safety works:

- Removal of the requirement for owners' management companies (OMCs) to have full legal ownership of the common areas in their complexes, in order to progress an application for a grant, under the Interim Remediation Scheme;
- Creation of a panel of competent professionals (which came into effect yesterday, 3 February) through a Dynamic Purchasing System that will speed up the procurement of architects/engineers/surveyors to undertake fire safety risk assessments on defective apartment complexes;
- Putting in place project management support for OMCs that have applied to the Scheme, for support to assist them with preparing their applications and managing their interim works. This will, initially, be directly provided by the Housing Agency and, subsequently, by an external agency;
- Establishing a panel of contractors to carry out remediation works, which will again greatly shorten the time it takes OMCs to procure such building personnel.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT:

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