

# Call for Holyrood to take action on concrete

A campaigner who spent 18 years fighting for a new home after hers was condemned for a crumbling concrete roof has warned that the problem extends far wider than schools and public buildings – and insisted the Scottish Government would have to foot the bill for repairs.

Kerry Mackintosh watched in tears, and growing anger as stories of hundreds of schools being closed because of the danger from RAAC roofs rolled out on television over the weekend

“That was my life, and the life of others, for 18 years,”, the campaigner from Deans South, Livingston’s Ghost Estate, told the Local Democracy Reporting Service on Monday.

West Lothian Council already faces a bill running into millions for work on schools and other public buildings across the county.

From 2021 the council has had a rolling programme of checking for RAAC following its discovery in the Lanthorn Community Centre in Livingston.

One new school building alone in Blackburn will cost upwards

of £30m. The council has already petitioned Holyrood for financial assistance.

Now, Kerry says, Holyrood needs to take the lead in dealing with the potentially deadly legacy of shoddy public construction programmes and contracts stretching back half a century.

And she argued that the government will have to pay for the repair and rebuild of not just public buildings but council homes across the country which may have used the roofing material – also known as Siporex.

“Holyrood needs to act. I want it to be in the parliament. It’s not just about schools or hospitals. It’s about homes,” Kerry told the LDRS .

“They’ve known about it since 1999. and they moved everyone out of Deans South in 2004. I want justice. I want our voices to be heard.”

Kerry and her neighbours in Deans South fought for proper compensation for 18 years. The council estate, built by Livingston Development Corporation, was condemned in 2004 and tenants quickly moved out.

Having bought their homes Kerry and neighbours, including Joe and Isobel Baxter, were among the last to move – in early 2022- only after a deal had been secured to give them a new home for the home condemned almost 20 years before.

Springfield Homes agreed to provide new homes after winning the contract to redevelop the Deans South estate. Kerry and neighbours had lobbied the council to sign the Springfield deal since 2017.

By then fewer than ten of the original 240 homes on the Ghost Estate showed a light at night. Those who had bought their homes saw their fight for justice stagnate in council offices

Arguments rolled on about compulsory purchase orders and poor compensation packages.

Kerry remains angry that it took so long to address the problem faced by those who bought their homes in good faith only to see their dream of home ownership shattered and then having to live in a home that actually crumbled around her.

“I remember that water coming in my son’s bedroom, the bits of concrete falling off the roof.”

There is bitterness as she also remembers council officers visiting to check the empty homes around her and refusing to enter buildings “ because they were dangerous”.

She told the LDRS: “This is now a UK scandal. The can of worms I always said this was is opening up. There’s thousands of homes that will have this. There’s thousands of people that will be affected.” said Kerry.

by Stuart Somerville Local Democracy Reporter



Deans South, Livingston. Deans South resident Kerry Mackintosh  
Picture by Stuart Vance.