

Government make statement on RAAC

The Social Justice Secretary Shirley-Anne Somerville made a statement to The Scottish Parliament on Thursday afternoon about the problem of Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) which is affecting schools and some other public buildings in Scotland.

The government confirmed it is following professional advice working with local authorities and it says Ministers have been reassured that the current guidance of the Institute of Structural Engineers and their risk-based approach remains appropriate.

Ms Somerville said: “The Scottish Government and the wider public sector has already done much to understand the extent of RAAC issues in Scotland, and we recognise there is more to do. Everyone with the responsibility for building safety takes this matter very seriously.

“Local authorities have a clear responsibility to ensure their schools are safe for pupils, staff and all their users. They are carrying out assessments of all their school buildings.

“We are aware that some parts of the school estate in some councils still need to complete full surveys. Ministers have been clear to authorities that these must be carried out as a

matter of highest priority.

“Safety is the central consideration and there is robust guidance which is followed by every local authority to ensure these buildings are safe for the pupils, staff and the public to be in.”

COSLA President Shona Morrison said: “The first point to make is that there are many councils who own no buildings where RAAC is present.

“The safety of everyone in Scotland’s schools and all other council buildings is of paramount importance to councils. We treat the safety of everyone within our facilities extremely seriously. Scottish local authorities are aware of the RAAC issue in buildings across some of their estates and have regular inspections, put in place mitigations as appropriate and closed some buildings where this is required.

“We would stress that some councils have no RAAC affected buildings. We would reiterate that safety is the central consideration and there is robust guidance to ensure these settings are safe for the public to be in.”

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

It is not only schools which are affected. The University of Edinburgh confirmed is also following the guidance from the Institute and has reported that it has introduced restrictions on access to areas within eight buildings as a precautionary measure owing to safety concerns around the use of RAAC.

Initial inspections have already taken place in all of the buildings, in line with previous guidance on the issue, and no significant concerns have been identified. In light of updated guidance from the UK Government’s Department of Education, however, the university have restricted access to the affected areas with immediate effect until they can carry out more

detailed surveys.

None of the affected buildings includes residential accommodation, but some of the areas do include teaching, laboratory and office spaces. We are looking into appropriate alternative spaces as a matter of urgency so that activities scheduled to take place in these areas can be relocated where possible.

The affected buildings are:

Building	Campus	Area affected
Appleton Tower	George Square	Lecture Theatres 4 & 5
The Hunter Building	Edinburgh College of Art	Level R (all areas)
Dan Rutherford Building	King's Buildings	Level 1 (all areas)
James Clerk Maxwell Building	King's Buildings	Rear back corner at Data Centre, Front Lecture Theatres and remainder of this curved extension area, 8th floor plus upper plant rooms (9th Floor), LT 3.911, 3.912, 3.913
Joseph Black Building	King's Buildings	Small Decant Block extension at rear of building
The Grant Institute	King's Buildings	Rear section of side extension
The Ashworth Building Extension	King's Buildings	Rooftop plant areas
Institute of Genetics and Cancer	Western General Hospital	Rooftop plant room roofs only on Centre Building

RAAC

Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) is a building material that combines the benefits of autoclaved aerated concrete (AAC) with the added strength and durability of reinforcement.

AAC is a lightweight precast concrete product that is known for its excellent thermal insulation properties, making it a popular choice in construction for both residential and commercial buildings. It is particularly well-suited for projects where thermal performance and structural strength are both essential considerations.

EDINBURGH

In Edinburgh these are the affected schools: Cramond Primary School, Trinity Primary School, Lorne Primary School, Pentland Primary School, Fox Covert Primary School, St Andrews Fox Covert RC Primary School (one site but two schools), Colinton Primary School, and Currie High School.

No schools have been closed. There are two “high quality temporary classroom blocks” being used by pupils at Cramond Primary School and Trinity Primary School where investigation and remedial work continues. Apart from that there are other sites where RAAC has been identified, but the work is contained within the school meaning there is no need for pupils to be decanted elsewhere.

The areas of the schools which are affected are all different but examples include: classroom, kitchen, gym hall and corridors.

Where RAAC is identified the council has confirmed it means that part of the school is cordoned off for detailed survey work and any follow up remedial actions.

The Edinburgh Reporter is a member of The Scottish Beacon, a collaborative journalism project with members all over Scotland. This allows us to pull in comments and advice from our colleagues and they have reported on the situation elsewhere as follows:

FIFE

Director of Property and Asset Management at NHS Fife, Neil McCormick said: “Following an initial desk-based survey of NHS buildings across Scotland, parts of some of our buildings were identified as potentially containing Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) in their construction. These assessments were primarily based on the buildings having been constructed during the period when RAAC was used regularly and include a number where the likelihood of containing RAAC is considered low.

“More detailed surveys have recently been carried out to determine whether the material is present in any of the most likely buildings identified and we await the results. These surveys will also determine any requirements in terms of ongoing monitoring or whether any immediate or future remedial action is required.”

MIDLOTHIAN

Phil Bowen of Midlothian View has confirmed that no schools in Midlothian are affected by RAAC.

The national snapshot is as follows:

ARGYLL & BUTE

One school in Argyll and Bute is affected but is open with “mitigation measures in place”.

SHETLAND

Hans Marter Editor of Shetland News advised The Edinburgh Reporter that there is no RAAC in any schools in the Shetland Islands Council area. He was also able to confirm that the local health board and trust which run local sports and leisure facilities have confirmed that none of their buildings are affected.

DUMFRIES and GALLOWAY

Sarah Ade of Glenkens Gazette said that three schools in Dumfries and Galloway are affected –

Laurieknowe Primary School, Dumfries

Carrutherstown Primary School, Nithsdale

- **Dumfries Academy, Dumfries**

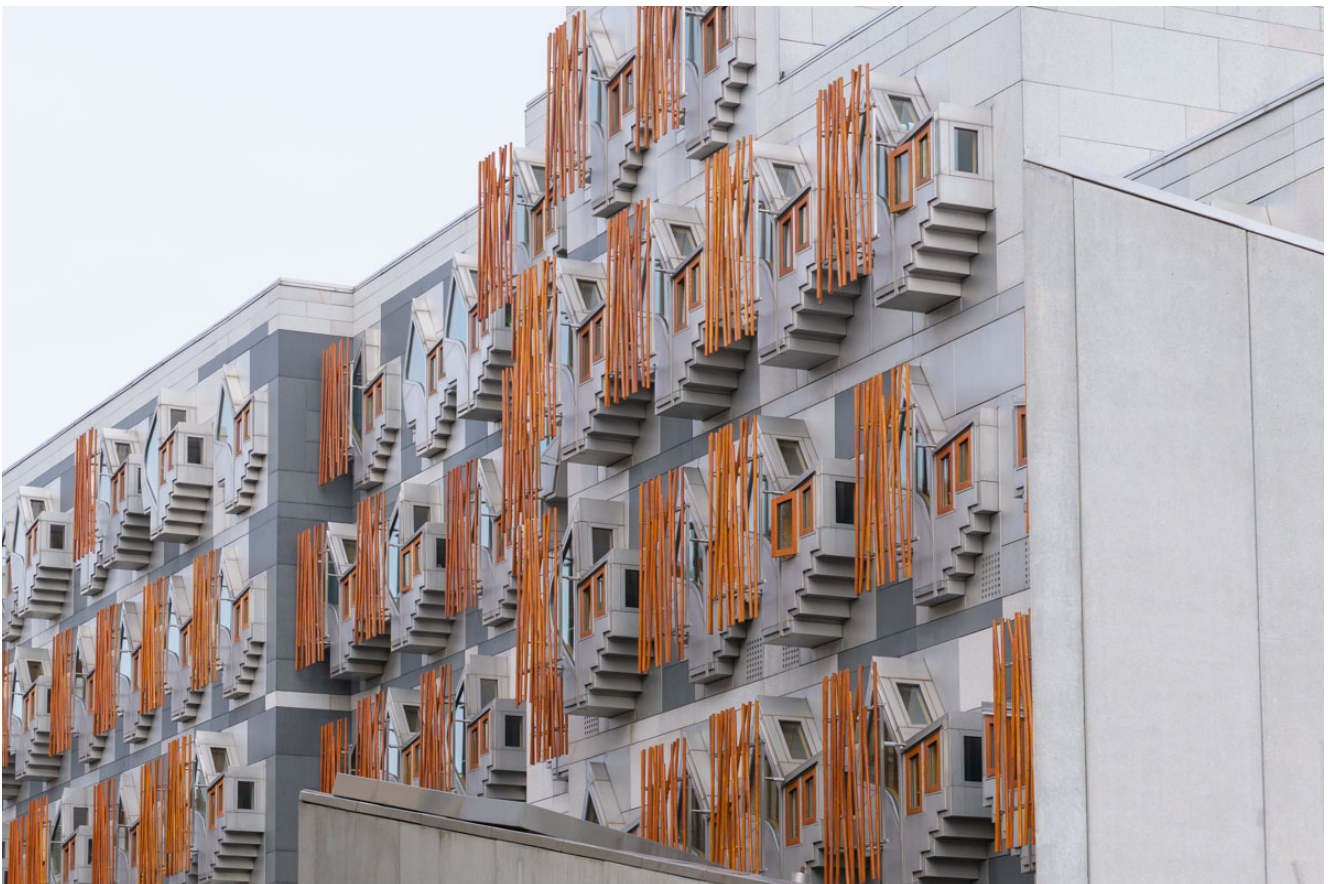
The council announced on 31 August 2023 that in accordance with the UK Government advice that no spaces in schools where there is RAAC should be open any longer with “mitigations being put in place” the council had identified affected schools in their area..

A spokesperson for the council said: “The Council commissioned consulting engineers to undertake detailed inspections of nine schools as a matter of urgency. The inspections centred on confirming the presence of RAAC panel systems; assessing their

span, width, thickness and condition; and quantifying the number of panels. This work is being undertaken in line with guidance from the Institution of Structural Engineers.

“The Council now has the results of most of the surveys carried out by the team of structural engineers we hired to undertake this work. Any remedial work recommended by our consulting engineers will now be undertaken outwith school hours. There are no plans to close the schools while this work takes place.”

The council also confirmed that they are awaiting inspection reports about **Kirkcudbright Academy**, and the same investigation work is also to be done at **Gatehouse Primary School** to check for RAAC panels. Dumfries and Galloway Council have set up a dedicated webpage to deal with the matter which they said would be updated regularly.



The Scottish Parliament. Photo © 2023 Martin P. McAdam
www.martinmcadam.com