

Campaigner calls for change in law on RAAC to protect homeowners

One of the last residents of a West Lothian 'ghost estate', condemned after the discovery of the dangerous crumbling concrete, has called for action from politicians to protect homeowners faced with huge bills.

Fears have been raised that there may be dozens of privately owned ex-council homes affected by RAAC in West Lothian, after it emerged that the material had been discovered in 69 council homes.

RAAC or 'Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete' is the lightweight bubbly concrete used in many buildings from the 1950s to 1990s. It is cheaper to produce but more susceptible to structural failure than traditional reinforced concrete, leading to many buildings where it has been found being condemned.

Kerry Mackintosh, who spent 18 years fighting for a new home after the Deans South estate was condemned in 2002, said it was time for politicians nationally to tackle the legacy of RAAC.

The council recently identified 69 homes in Craigshill and other areas across the county as having RAAC, but many homes

in the Livingston estate – one of the first to be built in the New Town in the late 1960s – have been sold to private owners and landlords.

While the council has plans to spend more than £4m rectifying RAAC issues in its own housing stock, current laws says that homeowners are liable for survey and repairs to their homes – even if they are former local authority homes.

Kerry Mackintosh met with home-owners in Craigshill at the weekend, and said some of those she had spoken to – those in private tenancies – had heard nothing from the council regarding the discovery of RAAC in council homes.

And she told the Local Democracy Reporting Service: “There are about a dozen home-owners in Craigshill. The council knew about RAAC in 1999. A lot of people have bought their homes since then. The responsibility for the structure lies with the council. I want the law changed because this is not going to go away. It’s only going to get a lot worse – there’s going to be more and more people who find that they have RAAC in their houses. Common sense says that. Look at all the houses built at the same time as the Deans South houses. It doesn’t matter if it’s called Siporex- its RAAC just the same.”

Dozens of people on social media have commented on the similarities to the discovery of Siporex in Deans South in 2002. One commented: “I just hope for damage limitation and not Deans South in scale.”

Ms Mackintosh told the LDRS she had offered support to homeowners in Craigshill and urged them to get together and support each other.

“They have done it to us in Deans South and now they are doing the same to all the other families who have bought their homes and found RAAC in them”. She added that she had watched the meeting of the Housing Services PDSP (Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel) [on the council’s YouTube channel](#) and been

“appalled”, although she praised local councillors for their stance: “I was raging when I was watching the meeting. It’s all coming out now. I’m worried people’s houses are going to be condemned. Fair play to Alison Adamson and Robert De Bold. I was impressed that they were right in there and asking questions on behalf of the home-owners.”

At the PDSP, council officers disputed the similarity between the Deans South estate, built by Livingston Development Corporation and the latest discoveries in existing council stock – much of it dating to around the same build timeframe of the late 1960s/early 1970s.

Council officers also stressed that under existing legislation it remains with home-owners to survey and repair their own property at their own expense – even if it was originally built as a council house.

But Ms Mackintosh said politicians at all levels need to face up to the issue. She said:

“Deans South has been one of the biggest stories of the last 20 years. Why has nobody from the Scottish Government ever come to see us? They have been invited, but told us they were too busy. ”

“We were not responsible for the structure of the homes we bought. Livingston Development Corporation was. The council is responsible for taking care of the structure of the houses. They have a duty of care to the home-owners. The council put us in this situation by condemning the houses.”

By Stuart Sommerville Local Democracy Reporter



Deans South, Livingston. Deans South resident Kerry Mackintosh. Photo Stuart Vance