

More talks with housing minister promised over RAAC works dates

West Lothian Council is set to meet Holyrood's Housing Minister next month as part of its bid to secure funding programmes to help homeowners tackle the costs of crumbling concrete or RAAC.

The news comes as the council prepares to start work on its homes which have been identified as having RAAC in their roof space.

The potentially unsafe concrete is understood to have been identified in over 90 council homes and an estimated 150 former council houses now in private ownership.

Linlithgow's Local Area Committee was told that tenders for the repair work to council homes have gone out and updates would be issued to tenants, and homeowners this week.

Linlithgow and Broxburn housing manager Phyllis McFadyen said: "We recognise it is an anxious time for tenants and homeowners but we're keeping our communications channels open we are keeping tenants and homeowners up to date. There's regular communication going out."

She added: "We don't yet have dates for the work starting but we'll let them know."

Chairing the meeting, councillor Sally Pattle said: "I think it's important to emphasis to everybody that we haven't forgotten about this issue. It is just incredible that people are having to face this."

Depute chief executive Graeme Struthers acknowledged that the biggest concern of homeowners was the cost of surveys of RAAC identified in their properties in ex-council homes in Linlithgow, Broxburn and Bathgate.

Mr Struthers, who also acts as the lead officer for the Linlithgow committee, is responsible for housing matters as a depute chief executive.

He attended initial meetings in the summer between the Housing minister Paul McLennan, Council leader Lawrence Fitzpatrick and chair of Housing services George Paul.

Subsequent meetings have been held between local and national housing officers.

Mr Struthers said that financial help for homeowners had been part of those discussions.

He added that the biggest anxiety was not knowing if there was any damage to your home "So people just assume the worst." For this reason, it was important that surveys were done.

Mr Struthers acknowledged it was the cost of surveys which caused homeowners anxiety, and this had prompted discussions on a fund for homeowners with the minister.

By Stuart Sommerville Local Democracy Reporter