

Construction defects discovered in hundreds of homes

Hundreds of Edinburgh residents have had their lives upended after construction defects were discovered in homes built by a developer which failed to properly install vital fire safety measures.

Robertson Partnership Homes took responsibility for the scandal and are carrying out repairs at 12 affected sites, understood to be mainly in the north and west of the city.

Problems were first discovered last year in both council and privately-owned new builds delivered by the Edinburgh-based housebuilder.

Further investigations have uncovered issues in 728 properties in total.

However the widespread presence of building errors, which differ at each development and are 'low level' according to the council, were not formally reported to the authority's housing committee until earlier this week.

A senior official said some tenants have been forced to move out while remedial works take place and Robertson had "responded well to everything we've asked of them".

In a statement Robertson said it was "working closely with the

council and its tenants to carry out repairs”.

A report before councillors on Tuesday said “construction defects” had been identified within the Edinburgh Living portfolio, the local authority’s mid-market housing initiative, however it contained no details on what defects were found.

Responding to further enquiries by the Local Democracy Reporting Service the council said they generally relate to roof and ventilation systems installed creating leaks, and firestopping installations, adding the latter ‘has been prioritised during the repairs process’.

Critical for stopping the spread of fires in homes, firestopping installations are designed to seal openings and gaps in walls, floors, and ceilings. Proper firestopping is essential for compliance with building codes and standards, ensuring a safer environment in residential and commercial structures.

Jane Meagher, Edinburgh housing committee convener, said it was “very disappointing to find any defects in recently completed buildings”.

She said: “I’d like to thank our many tenants affected for their patience and cooperation. Over the last year we’ve been checking for any problems that may exist in their homes. This has been an extensive investigation and while the defects found are low risk, we’re keen to see them addressed fully.

“Making sure our tenants are safe, looked after, and fully informed is our priority.

“We’re working with the contractor to ensure that they are put right. We have made strong progress to date with repairs, and we’re keen to see all remaining works completed as promptly as possible.”

The issue was briefly discussed at Tuesday's meeting, where Cllr Pauline Flannery raised an eyebrow the mention of defects in the report.

Responding to her questions, head of development and regeneration David Cooper admitted there had been "a lot of disruption to people".

He said the repair works "are underway, have been underway for quite some time," adding that in "some areas" tenants have had to move into temporary accommodation to allow the repairs to progress

Mr Cooper said Robertson had "responded well to everything we've asked of them and is putting right the things that weren't constructed properly in the first place" but added the council had "instigated legal proceedings" to ensure all issues were addressed and costs were met by the contractor.

On its website Robertson says it has "delivered over 200 affordable homes for the Edinburgh Small Sites Housing Programme over a two year period" across seven separate sites across the north and west of the city. These include projects at Sighthill, West Pilton Grove, Clermiston and Wester Hailes.

A spokesperson for Robertson Partnership Homes said: "Working with our customer City of Edinburgh Council, some defects were identified across developments within the Edinburgh Living Portfolio.

"As a responsible contractor, we are working closely with the Council and its tenants to carry out repairs."

By Donald Turvill Local Democracy Reporter