

# **Temporary library to be set up a year on from RAAC covered building's closure**

**A temporary library is to be set up in Edinburgh to maintain services after the main building was closed over concerns about crumbling concrete.**

This month marks one year since Blackhall Library was shut following the discovery of Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) in the roof. The dangerous material which experts say can collapse without warning has also been found in several other council buildings, with repairs set to cost millions.

While the capital's eight schools caught up in the UK-wide concrete crisis have been able to remain open, with some sections closed off, RAAC panels have deteriorated to such an extent at the Hillhouse Road library that maintaining services there is not possible, according to a new report.

While the future of the library is considered, councillors have agreed to open a temporary facility in a modular building outside Davidson's Mains Primary School nearby.

The report said: "From an overall project perspective, the delivery of the temporary accommodation should be progressed as quickly as possible.

"Quotes have therefore been received from modular building

contractors for the provision of a temporary library facility. The best value option is for the facility to be purchased rather than rented.

“This option allows the most flexibility in terms of the time taken to deliver the permanent solution as the one-off cost is known compared to rental fees which increase the longer it takes to deliver the permanent replacement library.

“The cost of the temporary facility will be in the region of £1m and can be funded from the RAAC capital budget allocated in the 2024 budget setting process.”

Options put on the table for Blackhall Library include replacing all the RAAC, or demolishing it and building it again – which is understood would be the cheaper solution – either on the existing site or at Davidson’s Mains Primary.

Meanwhile the work to remove RAAC from Edinburgh’s schools has been hit by a setback after the council’s contractor went into administration.

Crawford McGhie, the council’s head of strategic asset planning, said at Trinity and Cramond repairs were “nearing completion” and officials were working with the main sub-contractor “to see if we can take on the responsibility for those works”.

However rectifications at Colinton Primary and Pentland are yet to begin and a retendering process to find a new contractor could delay works being progressed by two to three months, officials said.

“I would imagine two to three months for a re-tendering process would be the delay at least in those circumstances. That’s a rough guess at the moment,” Mr McGhie said.

Peter Watton, head of property and facilities management, added: “Unfortunately these circumstances, whilst they are not

new, they do create a problem and we have to address that as soon as we can in order to get the buildings finished.

“We’ve bolstered resources in that area to make sure we keep delays to a minimum and do it as quickly as possible.”

By Donald Turvill Local Democracy Reporter