

RAAC Homeowners hear petition raised at Holyrood

Campaigners fighting for help tackling the costs of dealing with crumbling concrete in their homes have been urged to “make some noise” as stage a protest at the Scottish Parliament.

MSPs are set to debate a petition over help for meeting the costs facing homeowners affected by the RAAC scandal.

And among those joining the demonstration outside Holyrood will be West Lothian ‘ghost estate’ campaigner Kerry Macintosh, who had to stage a fight for decades after her home was condemned over the use of RAAC.

In West Lothian, more than 150 owners of ex council homes as well as those owned by and housing associations such as Almond Housing face repair costs.

Homes in Bathgate, Broxburn, Livingston and Linlithgow have been discovered to have RAAC roofing panels.

A national campaign has won the support of some MSPs ahead of the debate as pressure grows on the Scottish Government to find cash to deal with the problems facing private homeowners.

Many face unknown bills for structural surveys as well as paying for repair work. Many have also found their buildings insurance has been cancelled.

Kerry fought for almost 20 years for a new home after the house she bought on a council estate in Livingston was discovered to have RAAC roof and wall panels.

She moved into a new home built by Springfield Homes in May at the start of a regeneration of the Deans South.

She told the Local democracy Reporting Service this week: "This affects thousands of people across Scotland. It makes sense for us to make some noise.

"We are so happy that this petition has been accepted and that some MSPs have given us their support."

The petition was raised by the national UK RAAC campaign group started last year by Wilson Chowdhry, whose daughter bought a house in Torry, Aberdeen, only to find that the property had been built with RAAC concrete roofing panels.

Kerry will be joining campaigners from across Scotland where both council and ex council homes have been found to have RAAC panels including in Aberdeen, Tillicoultry and now also Dundee.

The petition has three principle demands:-

- setting up a national fund to assist struggling homeowners and tenants affected by RAAC
- initiating a public inquiry to investigate the practices of councils and housing associations concerning RAAC.
- introducing or updating legislation to ensure developers, councils, and housing associations are held accountable for using substandard property materials, mandate risk disclosure, and make surveyors and solicitors liable for untraced defects.

Kerry praised support the campaign has received from MSPs include Edward Mountain, a Conservative member for the Highlands and Islands; Miles Briggs a Conservative member for the Lothians; and Liam Kerr a North-East Conservative.

Kerry told the LDRS that Mr Mountain had been “really shocked” at the situation homeowners were facing without any possibility of financial help.

She reiterated the need for councils to provide funding for people who had bought ex local authority homes in good faith adding: “No-one would have bought their homes knowing what they know now. I wouldn’t have bought my house had I known about Siporex .”

And she acknowledged: “That money will have to come from the Scottish Government.”

Kerry’s was one of 140 homes built in the late 1960s and early 1970s in Deans South Livingston by the Government backed Livingston Development Corporation.

The petition is scheduled for debate at Holyrood from 9:30 on Wednesday morning.

By Stuart Sommerville, Local Democracy Reporter