

RAAC works in West Lothian delayed by retendering

Plans to replace roof tiles built of crumbling concrete in council homes are unlikely to get under way until the new year.

An initial marketing programme failed to attract bids from contractors for the almost £2m job to replace RAAC roofing panels.

The work has been repackaged and has gone to open tender with a planned start date of January.

Around 90 council homes have been identified as having RAAC roofing panels in Bathgate, Linlithgow and Broxburn. Homes in Livingston's Craigshill- now managed by Almond Housing also have RAAC panels.

Outlining capital spending plans to the last meeting of West Lothian Council's Executive, Marjory Mackie, the Housing Strategy and Development Manager told the meeting there had been slippage of £1.78 million.

Her report added this was "as a result of the requirement to re-tender the planned works due to insufficient market interest. "

The report said: "This programme of work has been reviewed and is currently in the process of going back out to tender with an anticipated start on site in January 2025. Monitoring work will continue to ensure the ongoing safety of tenants."

Linlithgow SNP councillor Pauline Orr asked: “Do we know why that is at all? Is it due to the complexity of the work, is it due to the size of the projects or is it due to a lack of skill out there to be able to undertake the works required on these premises?”

Ms Mackie said: “We undertook some analysis. It was a combination of items. We have looked at packaging up the work in order that it makes it more manageable. We are also going out to open tender this time and we have actually undertaken a supply forum to ensure that suppliers come in in advance of tender and were given full information around the tender.

“We are anticipating that this will have a successful tender at the end of this period.”

SNP group depute leader Pauline Stafford asked if there were any financial implications in the retendering.

Ms Mackie said that while the market will dictate, she did not expect any financial problems.

She added: “The work itself is not complex, it is removing RAAC panels and replacing roofing. The fact it is going to the open market will deliver best value, there’s no indication that it will be negative.”

A West Lothian Council spokesperson said: “We are aiming to have our Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) Remediation Programme for affected council homes ready to start from January 2025.

“Work has been delayed after our initial tender exercise in the summer did not attract any bids from contractors. An engagement event was carried out with potential contractors before revised tenders were issued last month, and we hope to be able to appoint a contractor soon once this process is complete.

“Preparatory work has been undertaken in the common blocks of properties in Broxburn to ensure safety and support the main works. This included securing common areas, creating new access arrangements, removing asbestos, and completing essential remedial work.”

Housing officers have reassured local area committees that regular communication has been maintained with tenants.

By Stuart Sommerville, Local Democracy Reporter