

# **First Minister challenged to meet homeowners facing devastating RAAC repair bills**

**Scotland's First Minister has been challenged to meet homeowners facing devastating repair bills over the use of 'crumbling concrete' in their homes**

Livingston's Ghost estate campaigner Kerry Macintosh has taken the demands of the national campaign for homeowners affected by crumbling concrete to John Swinney's door.

Kerry, who is deputy chair for the UK RAAC Campaign Group, delivered a letter to Holyrood calling on the First Minister to meet homeowners affected.

And on the eve of the crucial Scottish Government budget she also demanded he finds funds to address what campaigners have branded a growing national crisis.

Kerry told the Local Democracy Reporting Service this week: "The First Minister must come up with funding to help those with RAAC in their homes.

"The letter has been hand delivered to Mr Swinney at Holyrood. He knows that he must meet those in Aberdeen, Dundee, Tillicoultrie and in West Lothian. These homeowners whose lives have been affected by the stress of having RAAC in their homes."

"There has to be money in the Scottish budget to help

people.”

In the letter to the First Minister, Wilson Chowdhry who heads the UK RAAC Campaign group referred to Mr Swinney’s St Andrew’s Day speech.

He wrote: “ In your recent speech, you claimed that ‘every single day, I meet inspirational people from all walks of life – people who are doing their bit to make their community, their business or their country that wee bit better today than it was yesterday.’

“I find it troubling, then, that despite the gravity of the situation, you have yet to meet with any of the thousands of homeowners across Scotland who are living in homes made dangerous by RAAC (Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete).

“These homeowners are facing mounting debts, bankruptcy, and the very real possibility of homelessness, yet they have received no meaningful support from the Scottish Government.”

Mr Chowdhry added: “Councils across Scotland are offering little more than paltry and often punitive proposals [to homeowners]

“These were ... properties sold to them through government-backed schemes such as the Right to Buy. Many of these homes are now health and safety hazards, and the people who trusted the state to protect them are being left to pay the price for a failure they did not cause.”

Reiterating his call for a meeting with homeowners Mr Chowdhry added: If you truly want to “roll up your sleeves” as you have stated, this meeting could be a productive step toward understanding the dire situation these families face. I would be happy to introduce you to many of the homeowners directly impacted by RAAC, who would be willing to provide first-hand accounts of how they have been unfairly treated.”

He added: "There is also a huge opportunity for you to right this wrong. The £3.4 billion budget being offered by the Chancellor could be used to establish a national fund for RAAC homeowners."

The Scottish Government has ongoing engagement with multiple stakeholders across the housing sector, including local authorities, housing associations, the Association of British Insurers, UK Finance, the Institution of Structural Engineers and the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors. This allows for comprehensive and detailed discussion of all relevant issues.

A Scottish Government spokesperson said: "We recognise this is a worrying time for homeowners affected by RAAC. The Scottish Government takes RAAC very seriously and we have established regular meetings with public and private sector bodies to ensure best practice is shared across sectors impacted by RAAC.

"We continue to work closely with local authorities who can provide advice on what support may be available including advice, guidance, and information on potential sources of funding."

The spokesperson added that the First Minister has received the letter and will respond in due course.

By Stuart Sommerville, Local Democracy Reporter