

PE2113/B: Provide support to RAAC-affected communities

Petitioner written submission, 6 October 2024

RAAC–Background

The mention of the Institution of Structural Engineers (IStructE) raises an important question: were they aware of the 1990s Basildon disaster, where 800+ homes were demolished, and residents were relocated? Homes built around 1964 showed structural defects within a year, leading to discontinuation of RAAC in England. Production in Newmains led to proliferation in Scotland. [An extract from Basildon.com](#) states –

“in 1969 and just three years after the first tenants moved in some were already being moved out as problems with the design and build began to manifest. Many thousands of pounds was spent on remedial work...the estate continued to be beset with structural issues.”

84 homes in Deans South were demolished in 2004 due to RAAC defects. Despite these large-scale demolitions there was no comprehensive investigation by IStructE or the Standing Committee on Structural Safety (SCOSS). Similar issues with supporting beams found in the demolished Basildon estate mirror those in Torry. Early identification by councils could have prevented the current crises. Now, Torry homeowners face demolition due to inadequate beam thickness, despite stable RAAC.

The Scottish Government response stated:

"While issues with RAAC have been known about for a number of years, the presence of RAAC in a building does not necessarily mean that the building is unsafe ... IStructE have been clear that if RAAC has been manufactured, designed, installed, and maintained correctly, there may be no risk to address and that RAAC is not an inherently substandard or unsafe building material."

In 1996, the Building Research Establishment (BRE) predicted a 30-year lifespan for RAAC but stated, "There is no evidence so far to suggest that RAAC planks pose a safety hazard to building users." This conclusion overlooked the Basildon demolitions. In 1999, SCOSS advised building owners with pre-1980 RAAC to inspect their properties. Scottish councils neglected inspections till 2023.

Properties in Tillicoultry were inadequately maintained. Clackmannanshire Council ignored repeated complaints of water ingress until the roof reached a critical state – a homeowner discovered RAAC before them.

National Fund

The Scottish Government mention the Scheme of Assistance Strategy as a potential RAAC-support mechanism, though no Scottish council offers anything beyond advice and guidance. All fail to offer financial support to homeowners aiming to retain and remediate their properties—no grants, loans, or shared/delayed-cost schemes.

Clackmannanshire Council whose neglect caused deterioration, has shared demolition plans without obtaining quotes for remedial work, using majority ownership to drive this agenda. West Lothian Council await Scottish Government intervention, deferring decisions and continually requesting funds, they too **hope** the state assists.

Six-month council delays in obtaining option reports leave District Valuers without current market data, leading to outdated valuations and lower voluntary purchase offers. Homeowners fear these delays aim to acquire land cheaply for profitable redevelopment, disadvantaging some of the country's most deprived homeowners. A national fund would ensure a smoother exit and address health and safety risk

The Scottish Government could consider:

- 1. reallocating part of the £3.5 billion affordable housing fund managed by Housing Minister Paul McLennan.**
- 2. unlocking some of the unused £97.1 million allocated for cladding remediation.**

Public Inquiry

Our focus is on investigating the failures of councils and the Government who utilised visibly weak RAAC and lost oversight and continued to sell under the Right-to-Buy scheme.

Several councils implemented secondary roofing projects in the early 2000s—adding new roofs over existing RAAC roofs. Was this an attempt to shield RAAC roofs from water ingress rather than addressing fundamental safety issues?

Why did Clackmannanshire Council begin community regeneration plans prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, which may have included demolition of homes containing RAAC, neglect reported leaks, lack an active maintenance plan despite acting as the factor, and de-register as factors for mixed-tenure buildings without informing owners?

Aberdeen City Council's (ACC) decision to offer market valuations for properties, citing the "best value solution" under the 2003 Local Government Act, needs scrutiny. The Act calls for improvement and cost-effectiveness, but councils must also consider the socioeconomic impacts on deprived communities. "Best value" should go beyond finances to include community well-being, equity, and fairness.

The Fairer Scotland Duty within the Equality Act 2010 legally requires public bodies in Scotland to actively consider how to reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage when making strategic decisions. Local authorities should also integrate [the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) into their strategic planning. Relevant goals include No Poverty, Zero Hunger, Good Health and Well-being, and Reduced Inequality.

Section 10 of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 requires public authorities to involve the public in decision-making, including resource allocation. Despite this emphasis on transparency and public involvement, ACC withheld

information about the nature of voluntary agreements, resulting in skewed survey results.

The "best value" approach adopted by ACC avoids paying a fair price to homeowners, driven by budget constraints. Moreover, the proposal to demolish and rebuild, despite the lack of funds for construction, seems like a strategic move to avoid the same failures faced by [West Lothian Council, who lost their Compulsory Purchase Order \(CPO\) in 2010](#) due to:

“... two serious shortcomings (1) the council has no formal or approved redevelopment scheme for the Order land and (2) there is no planning permission in place, apart from that for the redevelopment of 190 and 192 Deans South.”

Councils appear to obstruct homeowners' efforts to retain properties by not using the full range of provisions included in Section 71 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 to provide financial assistance, which were highlighted in correspondence the petitioner received from the Housing Minister. Many affected, often elderly, homeowners face homelessness due to difficulties securing new mortgages or employment, worsening the local housing crisis.

Councils may be using RAAC as a pretext to demolish unattractive buildings, raising public concern. Clackmannanshire Council's engineer recommended minor repairs and a crash deck, contradicting demolition plans. A public inquiry is needed for transparency and to prevent authorities from concealing vital information.

Updating Legislation

We welcome the review of the Home Report. Future reports should specify all construction materials used and potential risks for transparency, and law should impose stricter penalties on solicitors/surveyors to speed up arbitration and lower costs for homeowners.

[Liam Kerr MSP, prompted by my daughter, lodged question S6W-26174](#) –

“To ask the Scottish Government what its position is on whether a survey report, as provided for in schedule 1 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 (Prescribed Documents) Regulations 2008, should contain an assessment of the presence or otherwise of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete in the subject building.”

The response to Mr Kerr's question was –

“...The identification of RAAC usually involves a specialist survey, which often involves invasive investigation techniques and which is completed by a suitably qualified surveyor who is experienced with this type of construction.”

A High-Risk Register, beyond just RAAC, is essential. It would streamline inspections, allowing surveyors easy access to data and improving transparency. Creating a national register of high-risk buildings in Scotland requires minimal resources, as councils already use integrated systems like Idox. Aberdeen's Corporate Landlord confirmed that relevant data is available and could support this.

It would also prevent issues like the recent auction of a RAAC-affected home in Craigshill, which bypassed a homebuyer report

The Grenfell and Barking & Dagenham tragedies highlight the need to centrally record construction issues, like RAAC and cladding, to ensure proactive measures and prevent future tragedies.

Please respond.

Chair, UK RAAC Campaign Group