

## **Briefing for the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee on PE2113: Provide support to RAAC affected communities, submitted by Wilson and Hannah Chowdhry**

### **What is RAAC?**

RAAC, an acronym for Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete, is a type of building material used in the UK between the late 1950's and late 1990's. RAAC is prefabricated in a factory and delivered to building sites in the form of panels, which can be used in roofs, walls, and floors.

RAAC panels have two key elements:

1. **Aerated Concrete:** This is made by adding aluminium powder to a lime or cement based concrete mix, which does not contain any aggregate larger than sand. This mix is cast in a mould. The aluminium powder reacts with the lime/cement and water to produce millions of tiny gas bubbles, substantially increasing the volume of the material. The product is then cured in an autoclave for between eight and 15 hours at high temperature and pressure, to control shrinking and encourage the formation of strongly binding molecules within the concrete.
2. **Reinforcing:** RAAC panels are given added strength by lattices of steel reinforcing rods, which are covered in an anti-corrosion coating. Reinforcement is placed into the mould before the concrete mix is added.

### **Why use RAAC?**

In the UK, RAAC was used as it is lightweight, has good thermal insulating properties, is relatively cheap, and quick and easy to install.

### **Potential RAAC defects**

RAAC, if it is manufactured, installed, and maintained correctly, poses no more danger to building users than most other construction products. However, concerns that RAAC elements of some buildings could be liable to fail under certain circumstances have [been recognised for decades](#). The Institution of Structural Engineers [categorise potential RAAC defects](#) under

three headings, performance, manufacturing, and construction, with a more general concern that the manufacture of panels was highly inconsistent and the quality control poor, meaning there can be quite wide variations in the quality and physical characteristics of panels, even within a single building.

## **RAAC in Scottish homes**

[Scottish Housing Regulator statistics](#) published in March 2024 indicate that RAAC is present in 1,994 socially rented homes, with a further 8,311 homes under investigation. While RAAC is not thought to have been widely used in privately owned homes, [the Scottish Government reports](#) that it is present in 140 such properties in the Balnagask area of Aberdeen – which were sold under the right to buy.

## **Support for homeowners**

The Scottish Government is not currently providing financial support to homeowners or local authorities for RAAC remediation work.

The Scottish Government previously operated a scheme to support those who had bought a home designated as having inherent structural defects, typically these were pre-cast reinforced concrete homes that had been sold under the right to buy. This scheme operated under Part XIV of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987, which was repealed [in 2018](#).

It is worth noting that it is a long-standing legal principle that property owners are responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of their property.

## **Buyer beware**

The starting point in the law governing property sale/purchase is one of “buyer beware” (often referred to using the Latin phrase “caveat emptor”), with the buyer in principle taking the risk in relation to the purchase.

For example, the Stair Memorial Encyclopaedia (encyclopaedia of the law of Scotland) states in relation to land or buildings (i.e. “heritage” or “heritable property”) that:

“As the law stands at the moment the principle caveat emptor applies in full force to sales of heritage. Unless the missives provide otherwise the seller gives no warranty or guarantee of any sort in relation to the condition of the property or its fitness for any particular purpose.”

Elements of the house buying/sale system, such as the exchange of missives between the buyers and sellers’ solicitors, property searches, and property surveys, help reduce the buyer’s exposure to potential risks – but do not eliminate them completely.

## Scottish Government Action

The Scottish Government established a [Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete \(RAAC\) Cross Sector Working Group](#) in August 2023, which provides a forum for stakeholders to work together to tackle RAAC related issues. The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice gave [a statement to the Scottish Parliament](#) about RAAC on 7 September 2023.

## Scottish Parliament Action

The issue of RAAC in Scotland's homes and public buildings was considered by the Scottish Parliament's Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee at its meetings of [3 October 2023](#) and [16 April 2024](#).

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22 August 2024

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Published by the Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe), an office of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP