Gordon Gibb submission of 16 January
The Glasgow School of Art Response

In the executive summary of his 16 January submission Mr Gibb writes: “In summary, there was a fire suppression system in place in the building, 95% installed from 2014 and capable of functioning, that could have been commissioned very easily to provide fire protection all through the works undertaken by Kier from 2016 onwards....

For clarification, the previous High Pressure Mist System was in the process of being installed prior to May 2014. The central area pipework had not been installed, neither had the pumps. It had not been pressurised, tested and commissioned. The system was therefore not complete.

After the fire of 2014 a significant section of installed pipework within the west side of the Mackintosh Building was destroyed. The remainder of the pipework and system was damaged/corrupted by smoke and dust.

Nevertheless, the GSA did examine the re-use of surviving pipework in the follow-on scheme through its expert advisors. On their advice, and through the design process, it was established that:

- much of the original and surviving pipework was incapable of re-use in situ without almost complete re-figuration, re-fabrication, re-installation and re-design;
- to do so would have taken a comparable timeframe as installing an enhanced system. The Low Pressure Mist System - which in negotiations with our insurers and specialist consultants was determined to provide the optimum level of protection for the building - took into account the advances made in mist suppression technology
- it would not have been possible to try and rebuild the damaged system (which was extremely unlikely to achieve certification or warranty) in parallel with the installation of a new and improved system

In his main text Mr Gibb states: “If the original system had been commissioned, the building would have been saved, either by the High-Pressure mist system inhibiting the spread of the fire until such time as SFRS could attend, or by extinguishing it.”

The cause of the 2018 is not yet known. Therefore it is entirely wrong to speculate on what could or could not have saved the building. It is important to reiterate, that the site was run at all times in line with the provisions of the Joint Fire Code and Fire Prevention Plan as previously advised to the Committee.
In the main text Mr Gibb also refers to drawings which were included in Listed Building Consent applications.

The Listed Building and Planning Application drawings are proposal drawings, not completed ‘As-Built’ drawings. While they correctly showed where the pumps for the original High Pressure Mist Suppression system would have been located, at the time of the 2014 fire these had not yet been installed, and therefore were not in operation, as with other key parts of this system.

The system proposed after 2014 was a sophisticated, contractor-designed portion of the overall contract under which it is normal for the design to be finalised only once the said contractor is on site, and in close negotiations with the Local Authority Building Standards Officers, who must approve all fire safety on a project of this nature. This process is only possible once the system has been fully designed, and as part of the ongoing Building Warrant for the project.

Mr Gibb also refers to point 9.1 of the document “Fire Prevention on Construction Sites”, subtitled “The Joint Code of Practice on the Protection from Fire of Construction Sites and Buildings Undergoing Renovation”, (known as the Joint Fire Code), in the main text:

In accordance with the provisions of the Joint Code of Practice on the Protection from Fire of Construction Sites and Buildings Undergoing Renovation the GSA ensured that so far as was “reasonably practical, the project was designed and planned in conjunction with the contractor and their programming of the works to achieve the early installation and operation of the automatic sprinkler and other fixed fire-fighting installations where planned”. Accordingly, the Low Pressure Mist Suppression system would have been commissioned as soon as it had been completed, pressurised and commissioned (i.e. ahead of the completion of the project overall).

Mr Gibb states that “by removing the High Pressure Mist Suppression system, it left the building unnecessarily unprotected from August 2016 through to the fire on 15 June 2018.”

The removal of the high pressure mist suppression system is detailed above.

Under the terms of the CDM Regulations and the Joint Code of Practice the site would not have been permitted to operate if this were the case, and the Health and Safety Executive would have been capable of closing or suspending works under their powers.

The site was both compliant in terms of safety and protected under Kier Construction (Scotland) Ltd Fire Plan which, as has already been presented in evidence to the Committee by Kier, included:

- 24 hour manned security presence
- Hard wired smoke detection system
- Manual call points at each level
- Hot works policy
- Full H&S provisions including PPE for all visitors
- Scaffold alarm
- CCTV coverage
- Fire extinguishers at all levels
- Enhanced compartmentation including new fire doors to corridors and cross routes
- Induction processes for all visitors to site
- CSCS (Construction Skills Certification Scheme) certification for all permanent personnel including GSA staff