



Ein cyf/Our ref: DB-PO-0328-23

Delyth Jewell MS
Chair
Culture, Communication, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee
SeneddCulture@senedd.wales

5 October 2023

Dear Delyth,

Existence of Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC)

Thank you for your letter of 18 September which seeks clarification on, and implications of, the confirmation of existence of RAAC in cultural and sporting venues across Wales.

As you have noted, St David's Hall is currently closed whilst further investigations take place. We continue to recommend that existing guidance from the Institution of Structural Engineers is used to investigate and assess the presence of RAAC in public buildings. Its supplementary guidance published this year includes advice on assessing risk, remediation and managing where RAAC is found to be present.

In terms of your comment regarding Amgueddfa Cymru and the National Library of Wales, these are Arm's Length Bodies, and it is therefore their responsibility to assess the existence of RAAC in their buildings and any related risks. I note that you will be writing to them separately however, last month, colleagues at the National Library of Wales confirmed that a full and thorough site survey has been carried out and that there is no RAAC installed in the library buildings.

Amgueddfa Cymru officers also carried out an initial assessment of their sites last month. They have informed my officials that most of their buildings were not built within the period concerned. They are currently focusing on the areas they have identified as having a small risk and they are being assessed as a priority. Colleagues at the Museum will be updating my officials on the outcome of these further investigations. I would expect any concerns about risks to the national collections to be raised at this point.

Arts Council Wales (ACW) has confirmed with Theatr Clwyd that there are no issues in relation to RAAC in the building. This is the largest capital project it is currently involved in funding. ACW has prepared a single question survey which is being sent to all arts venues

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
0300 0604400

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Gohebiaeth.Vaughan.Gething@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Vaughan.Gething@gov.wales

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

asking them to confirm their status in relation to RAAC and any perceived remedial costs. This is due to be circulated in October and ACW will share the results back with Welsh Government in order to provide specific advice. The Head of Capital Projects in WG Culture Division is aware that ACW is collecting this information.

Sport Wales has confirmed that RAAC is not present at its National Centres in Sophia Gardens and Plas Menai.

Across my portfolio, officials have also contacted all local museums who take part in the Museum Accreditation scheme. The 24 responses received (four from local authority run museums, the remainder from independent, regimental and university run museums) covered approximately 30 sites. None reported RAAC in any of their buildings.

A desk top review of the buildings and structures at Cadw sites was undertaken by Cadw's in-house conservation team, in early September. The review identified a small number of sites for further investigation, this further investigation is now largely complete. Cadw have one remaining site where details of the construction are still actively being determined but the risk of RAAC having been used is considered low.

In respect of your question regarding wider public sector buildings, the Welsh Government has set up a cross-government group to oversee its response to this complex issue, affecting buildings across the public sector – including Leisure Centres. Ystadau Cymru, which encourages excellence in active management of the Welsh public sector estate through strategic collaboration and good practice guidance, has issued a survey to identify RAAC in public buildings following the recent information about RAAC in the English school estate from the UK Department for Education on 31 August. This survey captures buildings within my Ministerial remit.

This is a two-stage process:

- Firstly, gathering summary information so we have a clearer picture of what work has been done and what needs to be done to ensure all of our public estate remains safe. This information will include establishing when RAAC surveys or inspections were last undertaken; the results of those surveys and information about the extent and type of properties where RAAC might be or has been found to be present. This information was requested by 15 September, so that we had an initial high-level assessment of RAAC in public buildings in Wales.
- The second stage will take the form of a request for more detailed information on each property where RAAC has been identified or suspected to be present, which will include the property's use for example offices, theatres, leisure facilities. This information will be available within 28 days. It will then be analysed to determine what work needs to be undertaken. To date based on the returns from LA's, officials have not been specifically advised of RAAC in leisure centres.

As with all health and safety risks, the responsibility for any risks and costs associated with RAAC rests with the building owners and/or estate owners, landlords and/or those responsible for managing the premises. This includes the costs associated with identification and management of RAAC in their premises, any surveys and structural engineers to investigate the presence and condition of RAAC. Whilst there are currently no plans for a support fund, The Welsh Government provides ongoing investment in the public estate through strategic capital programmes such as the Sustainable Learning for Communities Programme and the NHS All Wales Capital programme.

I hope that you will find this information helpful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dawn Bowden'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'D' and a long, sweeping underline.

Dawn Bowden AS/MS
Dirprwy Weinidog y Celfyddydau, Chwaraeon a Thwristiaeth
Deputy Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism