



UK Raac Campaign Group

4th June 2025

To:

**The Rt Hon John Swinney MSP, First Minister of Scotland
Paul McLennan MSP, Minister for Housing**

Subject: Request for Scottish Government Support for a Statutory Public Inquiry into RAAC Crisis

Dear First Minister Swinney and Minister McLennan,

I am writing to urge the Scottish Government to take immediate action by calling on the UK Government to establish a statutory Public Inquiry into the historic approval, promotion, and widespread use of Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) in public housing and infrastructure across the United Kingdom. Mounting evidence indicates that the adoption of RAAC was not simply a matter of engineering misjudgment, but rather a profound failure of public oversight, transparency, and accountability.

To this day, thousands of UK residents—including a significant number in Scotland—remain displaced, at risk, or caught in limbo due to structural failures associated with RAAC. However, the roots of this crisis run deeper than the material itself. The public deserves answers as to how this dangerous substance came to be so widely used despite early warnings. Notably:

- **Costain Group conducted research for the British Research Establishment (BRE), which directly influenced the approval of RAAC for use in system-built housing.**
- **Richard Costain facilitated visits for UK politicians to Sweden to promote RAAC technology and partnered with the Edinburgh Research Unit (ERU) to develop the first Siporex towers in Scotland.**
- **The ERU later created an automated building design system directing councils and the Scottish Special Housing Association (SSHA) to use specific pre-approved construction systems—such as Skarne, Jespersen, and Bison—all of which incorporated RAAC.**
- **During this period, Albert Costain MP, a former Costain Group director and shareholder, promoted system-built housing in Parliament—raising serious questions about conflicts of interest and influence over public procurement.**
- **Following the Ronan Point disaster, a safety review into system-built housing was mandated—but it was conducted by the BRE, an institution that had previously promoted these**

systems. Alarmingly, Scottish housing was excluded from that review, allowing structural risks tied to Siporex and RAAC to go unexamined.

Further troubling evidence includes:

- In 1987, Edinburgh Council acknowledged RAAC-related roof risks by commissioning steel reinforcement over asbestos roofs at 159–163 Crewe Road North (Edinburgh Evening News, 22 June 1987). Later council claims that these works had no relation to RAAC have proven misleading.
- A 1989 article in The Glasgow Observer revealed that homes in Livingston saw their value slashed by two-thirds after structural surveys condemned RAAC roofs. Although Siporex-related defects had already emerged in Basildon, Mr Gordon Davies, technical director of Livingston Development Corporation, assured the public that similar risks were unlikely in Livingston. This proved untrue, yet homes continued to be sold to unsuspecting buyers.
- A 1967 article in the Reading Evening Post described Siporex as a remarkable new material that “floats”—even comparing it to cheese that could be “sawn” or “nailed.” In reality, RAAC is dangerously water-sensitive and disintegrates when wet. Such promotional misinformation helped normalize the use of an inherently unstable product.
- A 2005 City of Edinburgh Council report confirmed the use of Siporex in non-traditional housing, based on a structural survey by Curtins Consulting—who now manufacture the very steel support systems being installed in Dundee to address RAAC risks. This suggests long-standing awareness and potential conflicts of interest.
- In 2017, the Lanarkshire Valuation Joint Board classified Siporex as RAAC in official guidance, identifying its widespread use in Cumbernauld during the 1960s and 70s. This contradicts subsequent denials by North and South Lanarkshire Councils that they knew of its presence or dangers.
- A 1989 Evening Chronicle article shows Newcastle City Council had already identified serious RAAC defects in homes with “Siporex roofs” by that time—further confirming that the risks were known and documented decades ago.
- As early as 1959, Siporex was marketed in Scotland as a revolutionary material, claimed to be “non-combustible” and comparable to stone. Crucial information about its moisture vulnerability and long-term deterioration was conveniently omitted.

Taken together, these failures—technical, regulatory, and ethical—have left a trail of destruction: structural instability, financial devastation, and psychological trauma for countless families. Piecemeal responses and deflections of responsibility are no longer acceptable.

The demand for a full statutory Public Inquiry continues to grow. We have amassed over 6,000 signatures on a UK Government petition [<https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/701337>] and nearly 2,500 signatures on a Scottish Parliament petition [<https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE2113>], demonstrating broad public support and concern. The Scottish Government cannot ignore this groundswell. The people of Scotland are watching, waiting, and hoping that their government will stand up for them.

We therefore respectfully ask the Scottish Government to:

- 1. Formally and publicly call upon the UK Government to launch a statutory Public Inquiry into the history, promotion, and continued risks associated with RAAC;**
- 2. Acknowledge the growing public support for such an inquiry through our petitions and the lived experiences of Scottish residents who are still without answers or justice;**
- 3. Commit to exploring independent action if the UK Government fails to act—including launching a Scottish-led investigation, enhancing local accountability, and providing direct support to those affected in Scotland.**

This matter demands urgent and transparent action. Public confidence in the safety of our homes—and in government decision-making at every level—cannot be restored without full disclosure, accountability, and justice.

I would welcome an opportunity to meet with you both in person to present the evidence we have collated and to discuss the urgent need for a Public Inquiry. I would also be keen to contribute further documentation and testimony in support of any investigation process.

Yours sincerely,

Wilson Chowdhry
Chair, UK RAAC Campaign Group
07375241553
wilson@aasecurity.co.uk