



**REPORT TO: EDUCATION CHILDREN'S AND LEISURE SERVICES
COMMITTEE ON 28 NOVEMBER 2023**

**SUBJECT: FORRES ACADEMY REINFORCED AUTOCLAVED AERIATED
CONCRETE (RAAC) CONTINGENCY AND RECOVERY
PLANNING**

**BY: DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (EDUCATION, COMMUNITIES AND
ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT)**

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To advise Committee on work to date and future planning subsequent to the presence of Reinforced Autoclaved Aeriated Concrete (RAAC) in Forres Academy, part of the Learning Estate.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III (D) (1) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to all the functions of the Council as an Education Authority.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **It is recommended that Committee considers and agrees the following:**
- (i) acknowledges work to date to ensure the safety of all at the school; and**
 - (ii) acknowledges work planned to secure further teaching areas to allow school to operate until new building is completed.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Further to guidance issued by the United Kingdom (UK) Government in April this year, the Council has been following the recommended five stage process of assessing, investigating and developing a RAAC management and remediation strategy. The initial update highlighted the need for a further sixteen school site survey assessments together with the commitment to appointing a specialist engineer to assist the process of structural assessment which has now completed.

- 3.2 In July 2023 RAAC was identified in Forres Academy which resulted in a detailed inspection of the property by Structural Engineers and in August 2023, it was reported that investigations at Forres Academy had identified the presence of RAAC panels, with immediate temporary propping work undertaken to maintain access to science and art classrooms via a corridor. Following an assessment of critical or high risk, seven classrooms in the upper corridor were closed pending remedial work. This entailed the design and installation of steel support beams to underpin the potentially impaired concrete thereby providing a relatively simple but permanent solution to alleviate risk. In addition, an ongoing inspection of affected areas, in line with guidance, was prepared. Parents/Carers were written to prior to the return to school in August to inform them of the disruption on return and staff were given supported access to classrooms to retrieve teaching materials and resources. An updated timetable was implemented with reduction in practical lessons for pupils within the Broad General Education in order to give priority to those in the senior phase. Scottish Government and Education Scotland were updated with plans with ongoing communication in place.
- 3.3 The UK Government Department of Education published new guidance on managing RAAC in schools in England on 31 August 2023 which advises responsible bodies to vacate and restrict access to the spaces with confirmed RAAC. Spaces should remain out of use until appropriate mitigations are in place, even where they would have been deemed 'non-critical' previously, along with some information relating to RAAC panel failures. This guidance does not apply in Scotland and was not adopted by the Scottish Government with the Scottish Government confirming that Local Authorities should follow advice from the Institute of Structural Engineers when considering action and mitigation measures. These developments prompted consideration to be given by our structural engineers for a review of the investigation work they had undertaken. Following this review our structural engineers confirmed that detailed inspection of the location where some RAAC panels meet their supporting steel was not in line with the current Institution of Structural Engineers advice. It should be noted that the panels at Forres have not deteriorated in relation to this matter more that advice has changed since the time of construction to advise that more support should be provided at this location.
- 3.4 This resulted in further areas within the school being identified as affected which included the kitchen area on the ground floor, approximately twenty-one further classrooms on the first floor (extending to additional practical classrooms) as well as adjacent corridors and ancillary spaces, boiler room and water tank room.
- 3.5 Business continuity arrangements were then considered with Officers and the school leadership team and janitorial staff implementing an updated contingency plan. As there was no access to the upper floor of the main building, plans were immediately implemented to make use of all available rooms including gym halls, main hall, offices and other areas in order to avoid decanting pupils until the extent of the latest inspection and impact of the most up-to-date guidance was apparent. To allow plans to be put in place and spaces re-modified as teaching areas, additional closure days were requested from the Scottish Government and remote learning initiated.

During this time the Council ICT department and other schools responded quickly to the call for equipment including laptops, interactive whiteboards, stands and divider panels. To support parents and carers, a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) document was developed in order to allow them to understand the situation as well as be aware of the decisions taken in the best interests of all at the school. The FAQs were to be kept live and updated regularly as and when information or the situation changes and can be found on the Council Website:

http://www.moray.gov.uk/moray_standard/page_151787.html.

- 3.6 During this period in early September Officers continued to engage with professional groups and peers at other local authorities to better understand and learn from their approach in similar circumstances. The Scottish Government continue to be updated and similarly Education Scotland and the Scottish Qualifications Authority due to the disruption to learners and any resultant impact. The updated initial contingency plan was considered to be in place up to October to allow school leaders and Officers to move to a second phase contingency plan post October with the likelihood of further remedial works being necessary.
- 3.7 As a result of this a seconded Depute Head Teacher was recalled from the Northern Alliance in order to provide additional capacity to consider an options appraisal for decant of pupils to Elgin Academy, Elgin High School, Lossiemouth High School and Moray College UHI in order to support the delivery of practical lesson for those pupils in the senior phase.
- 3.8 The decant started week beginning 31 October 2023 and the school will undertake a review of the arrangements in order to assess any impact and consider potential mitigations.

4. EDUCATIONAL IMPACT OF DISRUPTION

- 4.1 During the period August to September, pupils across the school have lost some learning time due to closure days, a move to remote learning and restricted access to all curricular areas as well as practical classes. For science, technical and home economics, theory elements of all courses have been the priority. From October to December 2023 priority has been given to S4-6 to access certain practical elements of senior phase courses remotely. It is recognised that this has impacted on S1-3 however once areas of the school come back into use and repurposed rooms are available, senior leaders will ensure that S1-3 also have access to practical elements of course work and they will look at periods during study leave for preliminary and final examinations to see where there are opportunities for extended periods of learning in particular subjects for those pupils in the Broad General Education.
- 4.2 Senior leaders in the school will monitor and review the learning for those pupils who are travelling and will be proactive in looking at solutions and supports to mitigate any lost time or learning. Young people will be signposted to eSgoil, Scholar and wider Education Scotland resources as well as the national e-learning resource.

- 4.3 This is a period of disruption for all at Forres Academy and in particular for pupils who have shown great resilience at a difficult time. Staff are working in alternative classroom areas often in multiple classes and this too is having an impact on them, however all are to be congratulated on their agility and flexibility to support pupils and to ensure that learning continues. Disruption in unprecedented times calls for strong leadership and direction and the Head Teacher and staff have worked diligently to draw up contingency plans and to develop plans to ensure the school operates safely during the time that areas are inaccessible and building works continue. In order to support staff during a period of unprecedented disruption and with many moving classrooms regularly, it is proposed that 70 additional laptops are provided during the extended period until the new build is in place.

5. PHASE 2 BUILDING WORKS AND REPURPOSING

- 5.1 In parallel with the business continuity planning and implementation activity undertaken an assessment of building options has been completed taking into account the factors of time to deliver, disruption to users, value for money (given the plan for a new school by 2027).
- 5.2 A plan for remediation and repurposing works has been developed and agreed by joint team representing Property, Education, Learning Estates and the Forres Academy Head Teacher and Senior Leadership Team. It involves a number of phases of work which aims to recover teaching space to original levels prior to discovery of the RAAC issue. These phases are described below and detailed at **Appendix 1**.
- 5.3 Phase 2 was completed during the October holidays. This addressed the RAAC issue in the roof area above the connecting space between the main entrance corridor, the assembly hall and dining hall together with the corridor running adjacent to the main assembly hall providing access to the gym and music/drama auditorium.

6. PHASE 3 BUILDING WORKS AND REPURPOSING

- 6.1 Phase 3A is focused on the First floor T-block and Green Corridor area. It is targeted for completion for 8 Jan 24 and will recover larger areas of technical spaces including two science labs G16 and G17, two social subjects G18 and G20, Base G19 and B10, Gents Toilets, G12 Nurse, G13 Store, G14 ICT Suite, G15 Sys, together with two access stairs wells that are required to meet fire regulations and emergency escape.
- 6.2 Phase 3B targets the repurposing of current teaching and management spaces within the school not impacted by RAAC. It will recover teaching space that has been lost in the other areas of the first floor level where it is not seen as cost effective to undertake extensive and expensive mitigation works. This phase is currently in the detailed design phase and will be tendered as soon as possible. The latest target for completion of all works in this phase for the start of the summer term (15 April 24). Work includes the following ground floor works:

- One Technical room to be repurposed as a Home Economics practical area (with adjacent storage space)
 - Five small rooms to be repurposed as school management spaces to allow the current Head Teacher and School Leadership Team offices and Guidance room.
 - Gym repurposed to three adaptable art classrooms.
- 6.3 Phase 3C will address RAAC panel issues on the Ground Floor that will support reinstatement of a staff room and two classrooms (drama). These works are targeted for completion by 16 February 2024.
- 6.4 Phase 3D seeks to recover the remaining First Floor three science labs (Y12, Y18 and Y19). The recovery of these areas will support the full curriculum timetable for practical science periods for all year groups. It is targeted to complete this works for the commencement of the 2024/25 academic year, although planning is progress to recover much earlier.
- 6.5 Following a Management Strategy in compliance with the guidelines recommended by the Institute of Structural Engineers, RAAC Roof Panel Monitoring is in process of being implemented on a regular monthly rolling programme ensuring that all affected areas of the school are inspected every three months by way of an inspection and reporting methodology determined by the Structural Engineer being a safety measure as part of and Planned Preventative Maintenance.

7. PHASE 3 – FUTURE MEDIUM TERM CONSIDERATIONS

- 7.1 An assessment of any further teaching space requirements will be completed following completion of all Phase 3 works. It is anticipated that these will be relatively minor and can be undertaken during the 2024 summer holiday and managed within the planned Learning Estate budget assigned for planned Forres Academy 'sustainment' works.
- 7.2 It is expected that the planned utilisation of community spaces at Forres House Community House to facilitate examination prelim assessments and annual SQA examinations will continue beyond this academic year. The prelim assessments in January 2024 may identify building or services improvement issues that will be considered in February for implementation before the SQA examinations planned between April and June 2024.

8. LONG TERM - FUTURE FORRES ACADEMY

- 8.1 The Education, Children's and Leisure Services Committee meeting on 19 September 2023 (para 16 of minute refers) approved the release of project capital funding to appoint external consultants to support feasibility studies and development of outline business cases for both Future Forres Academy and Buckie High School projects. These activities are in progress and expected to complete for April 2024.

8.2 On 30 October 2023 the Scottish Government confirmed that the Future Forres Academy project was successful in its bid for Learning Estate Investment Programme Phase 3 funding. A criteria of the outcome based revenue funding model is that the school is to be operational by December 2027. The delivery project is currently targeting actual completion by August 2027.

9. **SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

(a) **Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))**

This report was informed by the priorities within the Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan and in particular to Our People, Our Place and Our Future and A Growing and Diverse Economy and Building a better future for our children and young people in Moray.

(b) **Policy and Legal**

The school is currently in a follow-through following inspection by His Majesty's Inspectors in Education (HMiE) earlier this year. A further visit is anticipated in Early 2024 and officers continue to work with the school to progress with the extensive post inspection action plan under our statutory duties to secure improvement under the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000 and the Education Act 1980.

(c) **Financial implications**

Phase 1 Initial Investigations, Reporting, Design & Remedial Works (Complete) Previously Reported

The estimated cost was circa £90k excluding VAT which comprised of:

Structural Engineer & Principal Designer	£28k
Temporary structural propping works	£5k
Construction works at classrooms	£45k
Corridor works/contingencies	£17k

Although exceeding the £50k threshold, the Head of Financial Services authorised the spend with a direct award to Structural Engineer Company and a construction Principal Contractor, both of whom are on the Council's Procurement framework ready to mobilise in order to minimise disruption to education and avoid transportation costs.

Phase 3 Remediation and Repurposing Works (In process)

Structural Engineer & Principal Designer	£15k
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Construction Costs

Phase 3A	Tendered at £200k
Phase 3B	Estimated at £100k
Phase 3C	Tendered at £73k
Phase 3D	Estimated at £100k (Tender pending)

RAAC Monitoring

Inspections and monitoring Reports £1585 per month (£19020 annual cost)

COSTS SUMMARY

Total Structural Engineering and Principal Designer Costs	£49k
Total Construction Costs	£556k
RAAC Monitoring Annual Cost	£19k

The estimated total capital costs to cover remediation and repurposing works planned over the identified 3 phases will be managed within planned FY23/24 underspend within the Learning Estate programme. The underspend relates to Forres Academy planned works that have had to be delayed together with contingency funds that have not been required to complete FY23/24 Condition B/ Suitability B upgrade works. The total underspend available to support RAAC remediation and repurposing work is estimated as £721k. The cost of providing 70 laptops is £25,000 and this will be capitalised and can be accommodated within the available capital budget.

Revenue Costs

The majority of additional revenue costs related to RAAC relate to the additional transport required to decant pupils and staff to other schools to support delivery of senior year's practical subjects (woodwork, science and home economics) at other Moray secondary schools. This additional cost is estimated to be £14,100 will be incurred for the winter term (October to December). With the planned recovery of the science labs for 8 January 2024 the requirement for additional transport will reduce to cover senior years' Home Economic practical lessons until 29 March 2024. The requirement and cost for this reduced support is still to be determined.

(d) Risk Implications

There are risks associated with the movement of pupils to external locations which result in lost teaching time and the school leadership team will be reviewing this arrangement and considering mitigations in order to support young people in preparing for examinations.

An additional risk is associated with those young people in S1-S3 who are not participating in practical elements of course work and once again, the school leadership team will look creatively at opportunities to mitigate against this including using preliminary examination time as well as study leave. However the repurposing of rooms will provide the school with access to specialist classrooms. Parental choice means that there is the risk of an increase in placing requests to other schools during the ongoing period of disruption.

(e) Staffing Implications

Staff absence, including those in leadership roles, has an impact on the ability to improve service offer.

(f) Property

The property issues have been outlined within the report.

(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact

The National Improvement Framework is aimed at reducing inequalities.

The quality of the learning environment can impact on learning and attainment by as much as 16%. The condition and suitability of our learning estate, and capacity challenges associated with both growth and population decline in some areas, give rise to unequal opportunity across Moray.

(h) Climate Change and Biodiversity Impacts

None.

(i) Consultations

The Head of Education Resources and Communities, Head of Financial Services, Head of Housing and Property Services, Head of HR, ICT and OD, Stewart McLauchlan, Quality Improvement Manager, Head Teacher Forres Academy, Business Support Team Manager, and Caroline O'Connor, Committee Services Officer have been consulted on this report and agree with the sections of the report relating to their areas of responsibility.

10. CONCLUSION

10.1 Committee is asked to acknowledge the work to date since RAAC was identified at Forres Academy, to be appraised of the disruption across the school and to learning, as well as plans to regain and repurpose areas to transition the school to the new build by August 2027.

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Background Papers:

Ref: SPMAN-1315769894-452 / SPMAN-1315769894-448