# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **TITLE** | **Update on Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete in Welsh public estate** |
| **DATE** | **08 September 2023** |
| **BY** | **Jeremy Miles, Minister for Education and Welsh Language and Rebecca Evans, Minister for Finance and Local Government** |
|  |  |

On Monday (September 4), we confirmed two schools in Ynys Mon, which have Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) present in their buildings, would close temporarily to enable further safety inspections to be carried out.

Throughout this week, all local authorities, which have statutory responsibility for maintaining school buildings in Wales, have been reviewing their school estate to identify any areas suspected of containing RAAC.

No other schools in Wales have been identified as containing RAAC to date. Today we are publishing the latest position of each local authority, as the assessment work continues (see annex). We will have a complete picture by 15 September at the latest.

We would like to thank everyone working in the education sector and local authorities who have worked tirelessly since the UK Government’s Department for Education published its revised risk assessment for RAAC.

We know some parents and staff have been concerned. Our priority will always be to ensure the safety of learners and staff. We are acting at pace on the new information provided by the Department for Education.

Ynys Mon Council has been aware that the two secondary schools contained some RAAC since 2020 and have been undertaking annual surveys, in accordance with previously published advice and guidance. The County Council, together with the head teachers and staff at both schools quickly acted this week and their work must be commended.

Its response has resulted in Ysgol David Hughes partially re-opening on 7 September to years 7, 11 and 12, with year 8 joining today (8 September). Unfortunately, Ysgol Uwchradd Caergybi has not been able to open the school campus for pupils as further investigative work is being undertaken. However, pupils have been invited to online classrooms from Thursday.

These interim arrangements are a result of decisive action and effective collaboration. The results of the investigative surveys will determine how and when further progress can be made.

RAAC has been used in public buildings across the UK – this is an issue for all UK governments to manage. We must work collaboratively to ensure the safety of children, school staff and the public. On 4 September, we wrote to the Secretary of State for Education calling on an urgent meeting of the cross-government Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete Working Group. We welcome that this group has now met where further evidence was shared.

We also asked the Department of Education to be provided with the technical assessments related to the information provided to us on Sunday evening, and this has now also been supplied. The Institute for Structural Engineers has confirmed that its guidance is not changing on the basis of the new evidence.

Further and higher education

We are working closely with CollegesWales to ensure we have a full picture of the impact of RAAC in the sector. Over the past 10 years, the FE sector has benefitted from significant capital investment, with new campuses spread across Wales, reducing the likelihood of any RAAC. We are rightly proud of our long-standing school and college building record. Our Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme is delivering the biggest new school and further education building programme in Wales since the 1960s to address an ageing estate.

Preliminary assessments of the whole estate are being undertaken. Further education estates directors are working to complete assessments of the whole estate and they will provide an updated picture by 15 September, in line with schools. In the meantime, the safety of learners and staff remains paramount.

We are also working closely with HEFCW and Universities Wales to get a full picture of the impact of RAAC in the higher education sector. Universities will be making assessments, working with the Association of University Estates Directors (AUDE), which is conducting a survey of institutions.

Wider public estate

Ystadau Cymru, which leads on encouraging excellence in active management of the Welsh public sector estate through strategic collaboration and good practice guidance, has issued a new survey to identify RAAC in public buildings following the publication of the new information about RAAC in the English school estate from the UK Government’s Department for Education.

This is a two-stage process – the first stage will be to gather high level summary information from local authorities and other organisations with public property portfolios, 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; 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 will be available by 15 September.

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.

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, which was published this year, includes advice on assessing risk, remediation and management when RAAC is found to be present.

Annex

Anglesey Council – two schools affected by RAAC. [Website](https://www.anglesey.gov.wales/en/Residents/Schools-and-learning/Schools/Reinforced-autoclaved-aerated-concrete-RAAC.aspx)

Blaenau Gwent Council – no schools affected. [Website](https://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/en/news/update-on-raac-in-blaenau-gwent/)

Bridgend Council – no schools affected. [Website](https://www.bridgend.gov.uk/news/a-statement-from-bridgend-county-borough-council-no-raac-found-in-bridgend-county-borough-schools/)

Caerphilly Council – no schools affected. [Website](https://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/news/news-bulletin/september-2023/%E2%80%8Bno-raac-found-in-caerphilly-county-borough-counci)

Cardiff Council – majority of schools are not affected; checks continuing. St David’s Hall temporarily closed. [Website](https://www.cardiff.gov.uk/ENG/Your-Council/News/reinforced-autoclaved-aerated-concrete/Pages/default.aspx)

Carmarthenshire Council – preliminary results show no schools affected; more extensive surveys being undertaken on some schools. No other properties affected. [Website](https://newsroom.carmarthenshire.gov.wales/updates-folder/council-s-position-on-reinforced-autoclaved-aerated-concrete-raac/)

Ceredigion Council – no immediate concerns but further detailed assessments continuing. [Website](https://www.ceredigion.gov.uk/resident/news/2023/raac-ceredigion-statement/)

Conwy Council – no identified concerns. [Website](https://www.conwy.gov.uk/en/Spotlight/Press-Releases/Reinforced-Autoclaved-Aerated-Concrete-RAAC.aspx)

Denbighshire Council – no schools or other buildings affected. [Website](https://www.denbighshire.gov.uk/en/news/news-detail.aspx?article=b882a8b5-3803-450a-bf5b-bf65ac76fc16)

Flintshire Council – no RAAC reported in council-owned buildings. [Website](https://www.flintshire.gov.uk/en/Resident/Emergency-Planning/Reinforced-Autoclaved-Aerated-Concrete-RAAC.aspx)

Gwynedd Council – work is progressing to confirm the situation in Gwynedd; all schools are open as normal. [Website](https://www.gwynedd.llyw.cymru/en/Council/News/Press-releases/Medi-2023/Concrid-Awyredig-Awtoclafiedig-Atgyfnerthedig-RAAC.aspx)

Merthyr Tydfil – no schools or childcare settings affected. [Website](https://www.merthyr.gov.uk/news-and-events/latest-news/statement-on-reinforced-autoclaved-aerated-concrete-raac-inspections/)

Monmouthshire Council – no schools affected. Surveys of other buildings are continuing. [Website](https://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/)

Neath Port Talbot Council – no schools affected. [Website](https://www.npt.gov.uk/1410?pr_id=7280)

Newport Council – no immediate concerns. [Website](https://www.newport.gov.uk/en/Council-Democracy/News/articles/2023/September-2023/RAAC-in-council-buildings.aspx)

Pembrokeshire Council – no autoclave concrete identified in any council properties. [Website](https://newsroom.pembrokeshire.gov.uk/news/raac-update)

Powys Council – not aware of any schools affected but some additional inspections are being undertaken. [Website](https://en.powys.gov.uk/article/14761/RAAC-Reinforced-Autoclaved-Aerated-Concrete)

Rhondda Cynon Taf Council – no schools affected. [Website](https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Newsroom/PressReleases/2023/September/CouncilstatementonRAACconcreteinvestigations.aspx)

Swansea Council – no schools affected. [Website](https://www.swansea.gov.uk/article/24437/Swansea-Council-statement-about-RAAC-concrete)

Torfaen Council – no known issues at present. [Website](https://www.torfaen.gov.uk/en/News/2023/September/08-Statement-on-Reinforced-Autoclaved-Aerated-Concrete-RAAC.aspx)

Vale of Glamorgan Council – the council is reviewing all its property, including schools. [Website](https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/our_council/press_and_communications/latest_news/2023/September/Update-on-review-of-materials-used-in-construction-of-schools-and-public-buildings.aspx)

Wrexham Council – all buildings are being surveyed to identify any issues. All schools are open as normal. [Website](https://news.wrexham.gov.uk/update-reinforced-autoclaved-aerated-concrete-raac/)

This statement is being issued during recess in order to keep members informed. Should members wish me to make a further statement or to answer questions on this when the Senedd returns I would be happy to do so.