



RIAS | The Royal Incorporation
of Architects in Scotland

Press Release

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Edinburgh Schools Inquiry - an Urgent Call to Action

The author of the Inquiry Report into Edinburgh's PPP1 Schools, Professor John Cole, has kindly agreed to the release of the Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland's written submission to the Inquiry which is attached.

The Report on the Inquiry into Edinburgh's PPP1 Schools (the Cole Report) is a strong signal to all of Scotland's, indeed the UK's, public bodies to review the build quality of their recently commissioned properties.

The Report, written by independent expert, Professor Cole, highlights highly significant risks. The Report strongly signals that it is incumbent on every public commissioning authority to read this important, carefully written and considered report, consider its conclusions and act upon them. This will require significant expertise at substantial cost - however not to act may cost lives. Public bodies have a duty of care to protect public health and safety. While the problems highlighted may not be of their making, they are nevertheless responsible.

The Cole Report emphasises the potential danger from major latent defects in recently constructed buildings. The fact that the collapse of the wall bringing down nine tonnes of masonry at an Edinburgh Primary School in January 2016 did not result in infant deaths was, according to the report down to mere "timing and luck".

Professor Cole's Report highlights the diligence and care with which the City of Edinburgh Council and its PPP1 partners responded to this very serious incident. It also signals that it "would be naïve" to assume that the same issue may not affect other properties built around the same period (2000-2005) and under similar procurement regimes since, even up to the present, which may, as in the Edinburgh case, have lacked "properly resourced and structured scrutiny of the building work".

The President of the RIAS, Willie Watt, commented,

"When major inquiry reports are published there is a tendency for everyone to breathe a sign of relief, mutter "well that's that dealt with" and move on. That should not be the case with this, extremely well researched and deeply concerning report. The message is simple and the responsibility of all commissioning authorities is clear.

An early process of inspection by appropriately qualified experts should proceed as urgently as the various public commissioning authorities, local, health and governmental, can muster the skilled individuals who can do this work.

The Royal Incorporation's own submission to the Inquiry agreed strongly that without diligent and careful checking at every stage of the building process problems are almost inevitable. In this instance it was fortunate that nobody was injured, or killed."

RIAS Secretary, Neil Baxter, commented,

“This Report demands a response - and don't underestimate it - that response may save lives!”

Ends.

If you require further information please contact Neil Baxter, Secretary & Treasurer

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Notes to Editors

1. The Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland (RIAS) was founded in 1916 and is the professional body for chartered architects in Scotland. Including student members, Honorary Fellows and retirees, the Incorporation has over 5,200 members. The RIAS promotes excellence in architecture in Scotland.