

Reference:	FOI.12612.23
Subject:	Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC)
Date of Request:	7 September 2023

Requested:

- 1) Where, if at all, has RAAC been identified within the health board?
- 2) Where identified, has any assessment been made of RAAC structural strength?
 - a) Please share these with us.
- 3) Have any risk assessments been completed in line with [Regulation 3 of The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999](#)? Please share these with us.
- 4) Who is the key officer or expert in the trust with whom we can further liaise directly about safety of the estate?
- 5) Where RAAC has been identified, what mitigations have been made and proposed? Please share with us a timescale of completed and planned works.
- 6) Where RAAC has been identified, what are the plans for evacuation? Please include what the trigger point for evacuation would be, and how would doctors will be affected under these plans.
- 7) Are there, or may there be, circumstances of danger which may be reasonably believed to be serious and imminent?

Response:

Hywel Dda University Health Board (UHB) has applied an exemption under Section 36(2)(c) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FoIA) to questions 2a and 3 of your request. This states that information being considered under this exemption, would or would be likely to, in the reasonable opinion of the UHB's qualified person, prejudice the effective conduct of public affairs. In the case of the UHB, the qualified person is the Chief Executive.

The UHB considers that the disclosure of the survey reports and risk assessments requested, would or would be likely to inhibit the effectiveness of the UHB's decision making and the free and frank exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation. As a public authority, the UHB has an effective risk management process in place and requires the discretion to assess risks posed and prioritise them thereafter.

The UHB is aware of the works required and has appointed Welsh Government approved experts, Curtins, to undertake the work. Due to the extent of the works and the level of detail requested, the UHB is withholding this information under Section 36(2) (b)(ii) and (c)(i) of the FoIA, to enable it to maintain the protection of its services and the welfare of its patients through their confidence in its service delivery, whilst providing assurance that any risks posed are under regular review with necessary works being prioritised to maintain health and safety. The position relating to the RAAC status and risk posed in UHB sites is ever-changing due to the fast-paced reactive works being undertaken to stabilise the areas concerned. Disclosure of the requested documentation may not be reflective of the current status and therefore could raise unnecessary concern within communities.

Section 36 of the FoIA is subject to the public interest test, applied as follows:

In favour of disclosure: There is a legitimate public interest in transparency and accountability of the ways in which public bodies operate and manage their services and operational functions. This includes enhancing the public's understanding of the UHB's plans and challenges, thus building trust between the public and the UHB.

Against disclosure: Disclosure of this information would be likely to cause substantial harm to the UHB's ability to effectively manage and mitigate risks. A significant amount of worry could be caused, thus impeding the UHB's ability to safely treat its patients, due to the focus being drawn to the maintenance works. The UHB must be able to protect and preserve its operational security, and patient and staff safety.

Decision: The UHB considers that the public interest in withholding the information is greater than the interest in disclosing it. It believes that there is wider established public interest in the Board's ability to make decisions, to plan and implement any required works as these are deemed necessary, whilst working closely with Welsh Government on remedial actions.

It has therefore been decided that releasing the information under FoIA, to which the UHB is subject, would be likely to impair the UHB's operational planning.

Additionally, as some of the information requested is already within the public domain, Hywel Dda University Health Board (UHB) has applied an exemption under Section 21 of the FoIA, as the information is accessible by another means.

The UHB has published information on its news page on its website that will answer questions 1, 2, 5, 6 and 7 of your request. Recent interviews with news channels and the UHB's Chief Executive, Steve Moore also contain information relevant to your request.

For ease of reference, please click on the attached links, which will take you directly to the UHB's news, BBC and ITV webpages:

[RAAC - Hywel Dda University Health Board \(nhs.wales\)](#)

[Raac: Withybush Hospital partially shut for most of 2024 - BBC News](#)

[Raac crisis: Inside Withybush Hospital where wards are shut and props hold cracked ceilings up | ITV News Wales](#)

Furthermore, the UHB's committees have also received a number of papers, which highlight the latest position of the RAAC and the current works being undertaken. For ease, direct links to each of the latest papers presented to UHB committees have been provided below:

[Health and Safety Committee \(11 September 2023\)](#)

[Strategic Development and Operational Delivery Committee \(21 August 2023\)](#)

[Quality, Safety and Experience Committee \(5 October 2023\)](#)

[Public Board \(28 September 2023\) – Report of the Chair](#)

[Public Board \(28 September 2023\) - Operational Update and Progress Report](#)

Please be advised that the work is being undertaken in a staged process and therefore, the current available papers detail part of the required works. Future papers will be published to detail the further works, as the project progresses. Each of these papers will be available in the near future and accessible via the UHB's website. Accordingly, a Section 22 exemption of the FoIA has been applied to information that is not yet available. Regular updates will be provided to the UHB's committees, and the papers will be available on the UHB's website; the link has been provided below:

[Board committees - Hywel Dda University Health Board \(nhs.wales\)](#).

However, whilst operating in accordance with the Code of Practice under Section 45 of the FoIA, the UHB has a duty to provide advice and assistance and therefore provides the response to question 4 below.

- 4) Correspondence relating to RAAC can be directed to the UHB's Corporate Correspondence Team via email: corporate.correspondence.hdd@wales.nhs.uk