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Your Ref:  
Our Ref: amod/lc/msp/dornan

22 May 2017

**By Email**

James Dornan MSP  
Convener  
T3.40  
Education & Skills Committee  
The Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP

Dear Mr Dornan

**RE: EDUCATION AND SKILLS COMMITTEE - SHORT INQUIRY ON SCHOOL BUILDINGS ACROSS SCOTLAND**

Thank you for your correspondence of 15 May 2017 regarding Glasgow City Council's response to the unfortunate events in Edinburgh last year.

With specific regard to the information you have requested, we would respond as follows:

1. *Inspection and remedial work of the current estate since January 2016*

To what extent:

- has the school estate been inspected;
- have faults been identified; and
- has remedial work been undertaken and the impact of this?

Following the events that took place in Edinburgh, along with the other local authorities in Scotland, Glasgow committed to undertake inspection works within their school estate in order to satisfy themselves that the buildings constructed or extended by the authority in the period since 1996 until present, were free of any defects that could result in significant structural failure of the building elements. A group of senior officers from the Council with the relevant knowledge, skills and experience, were identified to form a working group that would coordinate this undertaking.

Glasgow City Council's Education Estate can be broadly divided into two distinct categories:

1. The PPP estate – comprising 29 Secondary Schools and 1 Primary School.
2. The Pre-12 estate – comprising 138 establishments located in a wide range of building types from Victorian Period properties to recently constructed new-build properties.

**Glasgow** commissioned its PPP partner 3Ed/Semperion to undertake invasive structural surveys of all the buildings constructed or extended as part of the PPP contract.

With regard to the remainder of the school estate, a total of 42 buildings were identified as having been constructed since 1996 by various main contractors. The working group referred to above, agreed that a representative sample of the buildings would be selected and inspected/surveyed invasively using the same scope as the buildings within the PPP estate. To ensure continuity and consistency of results, the same group of engineers that were involved in the Edinburgh investigation and the surveys of the PPP estate were used.

A total of 8 buildings were selected for survey, which included 2 other public buildings which did not form part of the Education Estate, but had been identified as having similar construction methodologies to the buildings in question, and which had been constructed contemporaneously with the other buildings selected.

As a result of all of the survey work undertaken within both the PPP estate, the Pre-12 estate and the 2 other public buildings, no defects were identified that would give any significant cause for concern. Some very minor defects were identified, in line with the findings in the Edinburgh Schools with regard to wall ties, but to a much lesser degree and within what the working group agreed to be an acceptable level of tolerance.

Despite the minor defects discovered being within an acceptable tolerance and causing no reason for concern, the decision was taken to undertake remedial works to provide a robust and high level of comfort for the Council that our buildings are structurally sound. The remedial works have been undertaken on a rolling programmed basis during holiday periods to minimise disruption to learning and teaching and on the basis that this work was classified as “business as usual” in terms of routine maintenance.

## 2. *Quality Assurance Practices*

- How quality assurance is undertaken on current capital projects on the school estate;
- whether the quality assurance of school capital projects has been reassessed since 2016; and
- whether there are, or were, particular issues depending on the funding model and the lessons to be learned?

Glasgow City Council has – in the main – procured its new primary school projects using a more traditional methodology. Glasgow has its own design team which carries the vast majority of design disciplines, and in the majority of cases, designs our new build projects internally. Even when circumstances dictate the use of an external design team, our own design team leads, will have a monitoring and oversight role in the design process.

With regard to the actual construction of our new build projects, once again, in the majority of cases, our own ALEO department – City Building Glasgow LLP (CBG) – undertakes the construction work. Of the 43 completed new-build schools within the Pre-12 estate (not including those currently under construction by CBG), 27 of them have been constructed by CBG.

Notwithstanding the above, in all cases, Glasgow City Council has always appointed a clerk of works to oversee the quality control of the construction process. Invariably, the clerk of works is an employee of the Council and is part of the Project Management & Design department.

We strongly believe that the fact that we did not find any significant construction defects within those buildings which were surveyed, was – in large part – due to the engagement of a clerk of works in the process, along with the rigour that our internal design team employs during both the design and construction phase of these contracts.

Having reviewed the matter as part of the working group's scope, we do not propose any changes to the arrangements which are already in place for quality control during the design and construction process.

With regard to the times when Glasgow chooses to step outside of its default procurement process (i.e. internal design and tender award to CBG under the principles of Teckal), we remain committed to ensuring that the same standards of rigour are applied with regard to the quality control of both the design and construction phases of the work. For example, Glasgow is currently developing proposals for the construction of 2 new primary schools via the SFT DBFM finance model. These plans are well advanced and construction is due to commence in September.

The internal team that is overseeing this process is led by our Education Estate Manager who is a former construction manager from the schools sector and member of the chartered institute of building. Also part of the team is our internal design group manager from the schools team, and a schools construction liaison officer from the estates team. In allocating a team with a significant level of technical and construction management expertise, we believe that quality of both design and construction will be a tenet of these 2 projects. In addition, whilst there is no financial provision within the DBFM procurement process for the allocation of a clerk of works, Glasgow has made the decision to fund the appointment of a clerk of works to undertake a quality control role in the 2 construction projects.

In summary, having undertaken a large scale programme of invasive surveys in our existing secondary PPP estate and in a representative sample of our new-build primary estate, Glasgow has received sufficient reassurance that our buildings are of sound construction and contain only minor defects that are within an acceptable level of tolerance for this type of construction. We believe that the absence of significant defects is – in large part – due to the rigour we apply at all stages of a new-build project, and particularly at the construction phase with the oversight of a highly qualified design team and the appointment of a clerk of works. In addition, it would be remiss not to mention the role that our partner CBG plays in ensuring the quality of the construction within those buildings constructed by them. CBG also has a highly skilled and experienced construction management team and a well-trained and highly skilled team of construction trades operatives.

I trust the information above sufficiently answers the questions in your letter and is helpful in terms of the wider enquiry.

Yours sincerely

**ANNEMARIE O'DONNELL**  
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE**