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Affairs and Culture Committee

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15<sup>th</sup> March 2022

Dear Clare,

Thank you for your letter of 7 February 2022 on behalf of the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee, noting the recommendations of its predecessor Committee and seeking an update following the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service's (SFRS) 2022 publication of their Investigation Report into the origin and cause of 2018 fire at the Glasgow School of Art (GSA) Mackintosh building.

I acknowledge the huge effort and dedication of the SFRS to complete an incredibly challenging and complex investigation, which was completed as quickly as possible.

As you are aware, the SFRS report concluded that due to the extensive damage sustained at the site and physical evidence destroyed in the fire, it was unable to determine the likely origin and cause of the fire. This is despite consideration of a number of credible hypotheses against all available evidence.

Now the SFRS report has concluded, I have asked officials to revisit the 2019 Committee's recommendations, and have asked them to work with Historic Environment Scotland (HES) in reviewing the existing advice and guidance for fire safety measures in historic buildings.

Following the outcome of the SFRS report HES expects its 'Managing Change in the Historic Environment: Fire Safety Management' guidance to be ready for consultation by the end of June 2022, aiming to publish the finalised document by Autumn 2022. HES's Fire Safety INFORM guide is expected to be updated by Autumn 2022, and a new technical Short Guide 'Fire Safety Management in Traditional Buildings' by 2023.

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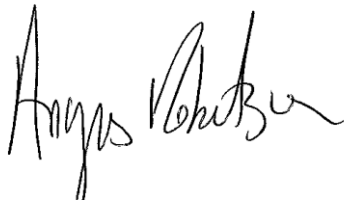


Additionally following consultation, HES have updated their Grants Framework and are working on revised guidance for their repair grant schemes, which is expected to launch this summer. A significant change is that, in addition to historic fabric repairs and consolidation, HES will now be able to offer grants which will fund installation of fire suppression systems to protect highly significant and vulnerable historic fabric in some cases.

Furthermore, you will be interested to learn that SFRS will work with the relevant bodies with responsibilities for fire safety, and in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, so the recommendations made in their report can be taken forward.

As suggested by the Committee, the Scottish Government continues to carefully consider the benefit of establishing a public inquiry. I will write again to the Committee once we have reached a decision on this matter.

Yours sincerely,



**ANGUS ROBERTSON**

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