

Rhys Stanwix,
Old Glassingall,
Glassingall,
Dunblane,
FK15 0JG
19 June 2020

Mr Iain Brodie; Director, Scotland, The Health and Safety Executive,
Mr Michael Hampton; Environmental Protection Officer, Scottish Environmental Protection Agency,
Mr Brian Roberts; COO Infrastructure and Environment, Stirling Council

Dear Sirs,

URGENT - Unauthorised demolition of 1960's Glassingall House (stables, garage, kennels, changing rooms, pool room and squash courts) and the setting fire to the unsegregated debris

It is now six days since the fire at Glassingall House (see attached letter dated 14/06/20). Despite this lapse of time, to my knowledge, no authority with a public health and/or environmental remit has visited the site to assess the ongoing risks to public health and the environment.

My principal concern is to ensure that the safety of the public is restored as a matter of urgency. The Glassingall Estate continues to be popular with walkers and families taking their daily exercise during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Urgent site visit to assess the public health and environmental risk

The huge partially burnt debris pile contains many potentially hazardous materials, including broken sheeting that appears to be asbestos. It also includes electrical cable, plastic, bitumen and kerosene. There are also conventional safety hazards such as unprotected drops. The attached '**Site Debris Pile Photographs**' show these hazards.

To my knowledge, no one from the Health and Safety Executive, SEPA or Stirling Council's Environmental Health department has attended the site to assess the risk to the essential services, the general public and environment during the fire and the ongoing health risk from the remaining now unstable contaminants in the debris pile.

- **Health and Safety Executive (HSE) response**

My wife received a 'no reply' response from HSE stating that '*although HSE do have enforcement responsibilities for these premises, the correct enforcement authority, in this case the Fire Authority have attended site and dealt with the matter in hand.*'

I find this response astonishing. The developer and duty holder, Glassingall Estates Limited, had obligations under the **Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012**. They had a legal obligation to ensure that any building being demolished was free from asbestos. This required a full asbestos survey, the appointment of a suitably qualified contractor and removal of any asbestos prior to

demolition. None of these obligations appears to have been satisfied which we believe is a criminal offence.

In addition, the **Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015** (CDM 2015) govern the safe management of all aspects of construction, including demolition and site preparation. These state that demolition of structures must be carried out in such a way as to “prevent danger or at least minimise it to as low a level as reasonably practicable”. We consider that not removing the asbestos, leaving the electricity supply live, not properly fencing the area and deliberately setting fire to the unsegregated debris pile constitutes a breach of CDM 2015 and is also a criminal offence.

I would urge the HSE to use the powers that it has to conduct a full investigation of this matter.

I spent almost 10-years as Director of Development and Construction, responsible for building new power stations in the UK and Ireland. Some of these were brownfield sites where old asbestos was discovered. In all cases the Control of Asbestos Regulations and, more broadly the CDM Regulations, were taken seriously and fully adhered to.

Action must be taken if these important regulations are to have any credibility with the wider public. It is vital that all developers, particularly those that are well-funded professionals, are held to account.

If as HSE suggest, the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service have a responsibility to provide a report on the fire, I would suggest that a report additional to the usual IRS Fire Report is required.

- **SEPA response**

SEPA has responded to two online requests reporting an incident. SEPA has recognised that there was an issue and is carrying out an investigation. However, they do not appear to have sent anyone to site to investigate the matter.

We are grateful for SEPA’s prompt response but would urge that a proper assessment of the environmental and health risks cannot be made without a site visit. We urge that SEPA arrange for this to happen as a matter of urgency.

- **Stirling Council’s response**

When the fire was extinguished, Stirling Council erected Heras fencing around the area. However, the area is so extensive that the fencing only extends over a small part of the perimeter, with the remainder of the site being secured by lower hurdle fencing before petering out to warning tape on the north and east boundaries. The demolition site is not secure and already people (including two young children) have been searching in amongst the debris pile. The attached ***‘Site Fencing Photographs’*** show this.

I would urge Stirling Council to properly secure the site and erect Asbestos Warnings to stop people venturing on to the partially burnt debris pile.

I am not aware of anyone from Stirling Council’s Environmental Health department having visited the site. This is despite Stirling Council having a clear duty of ensuring a healthy and safe living and working environment for residents of the Stirling area.

I would urge Stirling Council to arrange for a survey of the debris pile to identify all hazardous materials, especially asbestos, and instruct the safe removal. As the material is now broken from the demolition and partially burned by the fire, this is a matter of urgency.

Stirling Council have confirmed that the developer had not sought or received permission to demolish the building. I understand that a retrospective warrant is in the process of being granted to the developer to allow them to come on to the site and presumably finish the job.

When three Glassingall residents spoke to Gary McCabe a director of Glassingall Estates Limited on-site days before the demolition and fire, Mr McCabe acknowledged that a warrant was needed prior to demolition. For the demolition and fire to happen within days, without a warrant must raise the question whether in these circumstances a retrospective warrant should now be granted to the developer.

This also does not bode well for any development going forward should this get planning approval.

Setting fire to the unsegregated debris

In terms of the fire itself, we have noticed a tweet to Alyn Smith MP, which suggested that that fire was caused because the contractor was careless enough to demolish the property whilst the mains electricity was still connected. Whilst it is true that the mains electricity was still connected, the fire started at the front of the building not the back, where the electricity connection was.

When a local off-duty fire officer, who happened to be in the area, viewed the site before the fire had taken hold, they discovered the contractors sitting on the patio wall making no attempt to put the fire out or remove debris from the vicinity of the fire. Shortly afterwards, a local police officer; Laura Robertson, attended the site and it was PC Robertson who had to call the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

The indications are that the setting of the fire to the unsegregated debris was deliberate. When the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service attended the site to put out the fire, the contractor got back in the digger and continued demolishing the outbuildings, ignoring repeated requests from the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service to stop.

I trust that all these matters will come out in the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service reports and the Police incident reports, relating to the demolition and fire.

Public Inquiry

This disregard for the Police, the safety of Fire and Rescue Service personnel and the health of Glassingall residents and the residents of Kinbuck, Ashfield and Dunblane is deeply worrying.

This requires proper investigation by all those concerned and I believe the circumstances merit a full Public Inquiry to investigate the demolition, the setting fire to unsegregated debris, and the ongoing public and environmental health risk that this poses. It is vital that public confidence is restored and appropriate measures are put in place to prevent the recurrence of such an event.

I would like to end this letter by expressing my deep gratitude to PC Laura Robertson, the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and Councillor Alasdair Tollemache.

Yours Faithfully,

Rhys Stanwix

Old Glassingall

Copied to:

Alyn Smith MP; MP for Stirling

Mark Ruskell MSP; MSP for Mid Scotland and Fife

Councillor Alasdair Tollemache; Green Councillor for Dunblane and Bridge of Allan

Richard Norman; Station Commander, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

Alan Gibson; Divisional Commander, Forth Valley Police.

David Prescott; Chairman, Dunblane Community Council

Ailsa Gray; Old Glassingall, Glassingall.

Johanne MacDonald; South Lodge, Glassingall.

Photographs

Site Debris Pile Photographs



Picture of the debris pile during the fire, emitting black, acrid smoke.



Smashed sheeting that appears to be asbestos in charred remains.



Sheet of what appears to be asbestos.











Site Fencing Photographs

