

Public tender notice published on the Government's e-tenders website to commission Fire Safety Audits

The Department of Education and Skills today (Friday) announced that it is publishing a public tender notice on the Government's e-tenders website to commission fire safety audits of a representative sample of up to 25 schools constructed over the last 20 years.

The tender for appointment of fire safety consultants will be completed by the mid October. It is expected that the first set of Fire Safety Audit Reports will be provided to the Department by the end of December 2017.

This is part of a process being undertaken as an added precaution by the Department of Education and Skills, prompted by recent concerns in Ireland and abroad regarding fire safety in public buildings. It is intended to give the Department a clear picture of whether there are any issues arising in respect of compliance with fire safety certificates in school building projects completed in the past 20 years or currently under construction.

Following the awarding of the tender, a fire safety consultant will provide specialist independent advice regarding compliance with the Fire Safety Certificate granted to the school and the Building Regulations. The competition is an Open Tender competition and all suitably experienced firms may submit a tender. The Fire Safety Consultants that will be appointed following this tender will inspect and prepare Fire Safety Report on selected school buildings covering all of the following:

- (a) Carry out a Fire Safety Review of the original Fire Safety Certificate application submission as the baseline for ensuring compliance with the Fire Safety Certificate granted at the time of design and construction.
- (b) Review all detailed Contract design drawings and specifications in relation to passive and active fire protection systems and confirm that documents reflect Fire Safety Regulation requirements as set out in the Fire Safety Certificate for the building.
- (c) To definitively establish in the case of each building, through testing and inspection of all the areas of the construction, any instances of installations and layout that are not compliant with the Fire Safety Certificate granted for the building and to carry out review and validation of completion/commissioning certificates for fire protection systems and passive fire protection elements (i.e. fire-stopping, fire door-sets, etc.)
- (d) Undertake the testing of the Fire Protection Systems to ensure compliance with the approved fire strategy.
- (e) If fire safety deficiencies are discovered in respect of the Fire Safety Certificate for the building to establish a scope of works and/or actions necessary to bring the complete building into compliance.
- (f) To ensure that compliance with the Fire Services Act 1981, Safety, Health & Welfare at Work Act 2005 and other relevant legislation/regulations is achieved in the management and operation of the facility, the Consultant will be required to review any available Safety File and Operation & Maintenance Manual. If fire safety deficiencies are discovered in these and/or in the operation of the building, these should be included in the report and suggestions offered as to remedial actions required.

- (g) The Consultant is required to review the existing Fire Safety Management manual for the school and report on findings. The Fire Safety Management manual for the school should address the following:
- i Fire safety policy statement;
 - ii Fire alarm response procedures;
 - iii Routine maintenance of fire protection systems. Consultant to review current maintenance contract arrangements and advise on how to address any identified deficiencies.
 - iv Routine fire precautions and housekeeping;
 - v Designation of duties of key personnel and staff training;
 - vi Evacuation procedures complete with Evacuation Diagrammatic Drawings;
- (h) Report back on the level of compliance with the Fire Safety Certificate granted for the school building and highlight any deficiencies found.

The Department of Education & Skills is also conducting a review of all major school building projects currently under construction in order to ensure that design teams and contractors are fully engaging in a complete and comprehensive way with the inspection and certification requirements of BC(A)R 2014, particularly with regard to certifying compliance with Part B (Fire Safety) of the Building Regulations 1997.

The amendments to the Building Regulations BC(A)R 2014 which came into force in March 2014 introduced a system of certification requiring those professionals involved in the design and construction of buildings to certify compliance with the Building Regulations before a building can be occupied. This includes certifying compliance with Part B of the Building Regulations 1997 which deals with Fire Safety.

This will cover all major school building projects currently under construction including where the Department is not the building owner.

Separately, the Department today published fire safety reports for each of five school buildings constructed in 2008 where issues have been identified in respect of the compliance with their fire safety certificates.

The school buildings in question are:

- Powerstown ETNS, Dublin, (Temp - Replaced in April 2017)
- Gaelscoil Clocha Liatha , Greystones (Permanent – extended 2016)
- Mullingar Educate Together NS (Permanent – being extended)
- Belmayne Educate Together NS, Dublin (Temp - to be replaced in 2018)
- St Francis of Assissi, National School, Belmayne, Dublin (Temp - to be replaced in 2018)

The buildings were all constructed by Western Building System Ltd. (WBS) under the Departments Rapid – Design & Build programme in 2008.

One of these, a semi-permanent building in Powerstown, Dublin, has since been replaced with a new school building completed earlier this year.

The two schools in Belmayne were constructed as semi-permanent accommodation pending the construction of larger permanent build schools on another site in Belmayne. These semi-permanent buildings are owned by Western Building Systems and are leased by the Department. Construction of the new 16 classroom buildings to replace the existing 8 classroom semi-permanent buildings is scheduled to commence shortly and will be completed in 2018.

Both Greystones and Mullingar are permanent schools and are owned by the Department. The Greystones building was extended by the Department in 2015 and the Mullingar building is currently being refurbished and extended.

Fire safety reports in respect of these schools were completed in July 2016. This followed concern regarding a number of building quality issues, including some fire safety compliance issues, which had arisen in respect of another school, Rush/Lusk Educate Together National School, which had been constructed by Western Building Systems in 2008. The Department carried out significant refurbishment works at that school in 2014 and all issues have been resolved.

In summary, the findings of these reports indicated issues of insufficient compliance with some requirements of the fire safety certificates in relation to fire retardation in those buildings. The reports found that while the designs which underpinned the Fire Safety Certificates required that the buildings would provide 60 minutes of retardation to facilitate evacuation, the actual quality of construction indicated a level of retardation less than this.

It is important to note – this is not a finding that the buildings are dangerous, it is a finding that the buildings do not comply with the detailed requirements of the Fire Safety Certificates.

It is also important to note that in the case of each of the schools, the Department has engaged extensively with the Fire Officers of the relevant Local Authorities. The Fire Officers have broadly welcomed the Department's proactive approach to dealing with the issues highlighted and have indicated their acceptance of the course of action being followed by the Department, including the identified remediation works and the fact that the schools continue to be occupied on a day-to-day basis.

In the four remaining schools where fire safety issues have been identified, remedial works are currently being carried out or will shortly commence. The timetable for these works to be completed is as follows:

- Two Belmayne schools – 17th September
- Mullingar ETNS – six weeks from today
- Gaelscoil na nCloth Liath, Greystones – end October

The Department has also engaged with the relevant school authorities and will keep each informed of the works as these are progressed.

The details in respect of each school and the works underway is outlined under Notes to Editor.

Notes to editor

Full Text of the Scope of Service in the Tender Notice

The amendments to the Building Regulations (BC(A)R 2014) which came into force in March 2014 introduced a system of certification requiring those professionals involved in the design and construction of buildings to certify compliance with the Building Regulations before a

building can be occupied. This includes certifying compliance with Part B of the Building Regulations which deals with Fire Safety.

The Department of Education and Skills, in publishing this tender notice, wishes to commission a number of Fire Safety Audits of school buildings completed prior to the introduction of BC(A)R 2014. A small number of post 2014 buildings may also be included as a benchmark.

The Department of Education and Skills (DoES) requires specialist independent advice from a fire engineering consultant to check that the school, as constructed, is in compliance with the granted Fire Safety Certificate and the Building Regulations.

The competition is an Open Tender competition and all suitably experienced firms may submit a tender.

It is intended to carry out approximately 15 – 25 audits over a period of approximately 6 months. The geographical spread of projects to be selected for audit will be national but concentrated in and around the main centres of population.

1. Scope of service

- (i) Carry out a Fire Safety Review of the original Fire Safety Certificate application submission as the baseline for ensuring compliance with the Fire Safety Certificate granted at the time of design and construction. (For each building copies of original Fire Safety Certificate with application report and drawings will be made available to Fire Safety Consultant.)
- (j) Review all detailed Contract design drawings and specifications in relation to passive and active fire protection systems and confirm that documents reflect Fire Safety Regulation requirements as set out in the Fire Safety Certificate for the building.
- (k) To definitively establish in the case of each building, through testing and inspection (including opening up as necessary) of all the areas of the construction, any instances of installations and layout that are not compliant with the Fire Safety Certificate granted for the building.
 - Carry out review and validation of completion/commissioning certificates for fire protection systems and passive fire protection elements (i.e. fire-stopping, fire door-sets, etc.) including carrying out on-site inspections and if necessary opening up of the fire protection elements such as fire doors, structural steel work fire protection, fire stopping, cavity barriers and fire walls / partitions. Consultant to include for making arrangements for invasive opening up of the building fabric and any additional testing of elements or materials that they deem necessary. Costs associated with these works will be paid in addition to Consultant's fee.
 - Undertake the testing of the Fire Protection Systems to ensure compliance with the approved fire strategy, i.e. smoke control, evacuation signalling, etc. It is noted that the detailed design, commissioning and certification of the protective systems may previously have been undertaken by the M&E Consultants and M&E Contractor but this must be reviewed and verified by the fire consultant appointed under this competition.
- (l) If fire safety deficiencies are discovered, to establish the likely risk to life safety within the building, bearing in mind its pattern of use and the occupant familiarity with the building, its layout and its escape routes.

- (m) If fire safety deficiencies are discovered in respect of the Fire Safety Certificate for the building to establish a scope of works and/or actions necessary to bring the complete building into compliance.
- (n) To ensure that compliance with the Fire Services Act 1981, Safety, Health & Welfare at Work Act 2005 and other relevant legislation/regulations is achieved in the management and operation of the facility, the Consultant will be required to review any available Safety File and Operation & Maintenance Manual. If fire safety deficiencies are discovered in these and/or in the operation of the building, these should be included in the report and suggestions offered as to remedial actions required.
- (o) The Consultant is required to review the existing Fire Safety Management manual for the school and report on findings. The Fire Safety Management manual for the school should address the following:
- i Fire safety policy statement;
 - ii Fire alarm response procedures;
 - iii Routine maintenance of fire protection systems. Consultant to review current maintenance contract arrangements and advise on how to address any identified deficiencies.
 - iv Routine fire precautions and housekeeping;
 - v Designation of duties of key personnel and staff training;
 - vi Evacuation procedures complete with Evacuation Diagrammatic Drawings;
- (p) Report back on the level of compliance with the Fire Safety Certificate granted for the school building and highlight any deficiencies found.

Background to the Fire Safety Reports

In October 2015, following the issues that arose in respect of Rush/Lusk ETNS, the Department made arrangements for the procurement of fire safety inspections of the five schools constructed in 2008.

A consultant, Michael Slattery Associates (MSA), was appointed to carry out the fire inspection audits of the schools. The initial fire safety investigations were carried out in January 2016. Draft Fire Reports were prepared in March 2016. In order to complete the reports it was necessary for the Fire Consultant to gather further information on the buildings including compliance reports, drawings etc. and to conduct further investigations and site visits. The Final Reports were received in July 2016.

The Department met with WBS and their Architectural Consultant in June 2016. It was agreed at the meeting that WBS would liaise with the Departments Consultant's and would carry out the required works in four of the schools.

- Belmayne ETNS,
- St Francis of Assissi, Belmayne,
- Gaelscoil Clocha Liatha , Greystones
- Mullingar ETNS.

Works were not required in Powerstown as its replacement was imminent (this building has since been replaced).

In August 2016 WBS advised that the priority works (i.e. immediate essential improvement works) had been carried out at the 4 schools.

Despite a number of requests by the Department, photographic reports and commentary on the works were sought following the works in August but information was not received until late September and early October 2016. The Department's Consultant issued a commentary on the information to WBS on 25th November 2016 expressing concerns.

In January 2017 the Department's Project Managers (KSN) advised WBS that following their reports in relation to the remedial works at the schools, commentary received from MSA had suggested that the reports provided did not address the original MSA reports in their entirety. They were requested to provide reference photographs for each item deemed to be attended to and for any items not yet completed to include a reason for not addressing and a proposed date for attending to same.

Further site visits to the schools were carried out by MSA in March/April 2017. This was a visual inspection of the previously advised completed items by WBS. The Draft Report which was received from MSA in May 2017 following this visit concluded that very little upgrade works which were previously advised had actually been carried out. Where works were carried out they were not to a satisfactory standard and there were issues identified within the MSA report of July 2016 which had not been addressed.

While it had been the Department's understanding that WBS had carried out the works in summer 2016 which had been highlighted in the MSA reports as being most urgent and important, it became apparent following review by MSA that this was not in fact the case.

On 5 May 2017 the Department met with WBS to discuss the findings of the reports of May 2017. WBS committed to visiting the schools in week commencing 8th May to review.

Since that date the progress in respect of each school is as follows:

Belmayne Schools

On 12th May 2017, the Department and its Consultants along with Consultants representing WBS met with the Dublin City Fire Brigade (DFB), as the relevant Fire Officer, to discuss the Belmayne schools. Copies of the MSA reports were provided to DFB. The Fire Officer was advised of the project to build larger permanent schools to replace the temporary schools by the end of 2018.

A detailed proposal on works proposed and conformity on the compartmentation of the building was submitted to DFB by Western Building Systems Fire Safety Consultant on 8th August.

WBS have confirmed that they commenced works in the schools on Tuesday 29th August

Remediation works on the Fire Doors commenced on Tuesday 29th August. WBS has confirmed that the remedial works to all fire doors in both schools was completed by Wednesday 30th August.

WBS have advised the Department that the enhancements to the fire stopping and the remedial work required to the fire collar fixings as well as the intumescent paint works will be carried out as weekend works. These are scheduled for the 9th & 10th Sept and the 16th & 17th Sept respectively.

On completion of the works these will be inspected jointly by the Departments and WBS consultants and a report will be submitted to the Dublin City Fire Officer.

Mullingar ETNS

The Department held a Meeting with the Fire Officer in Mullingar on 8th June 2017 to discuss the Mullingar ETNS. Subsequently a copy of the Fire Report prepared by MSA in July 2016 was issued to the Fire Officer. Works are currently being progressed by the Contractor on-site who is delivering an extension to the school.

The works to be carried out include fire-stopping upgrades, intumescent paint/steel protection, and plasterboard partitions, emergency lighting, fire door upgrades and renewing cavity barriers.

Michael Slattery Associates have provided a scope of works, which the main contractor is currently working through. The main areas are; improvements to fire-stopping / electrical / general works.

With respect to the improvements to fire-stopping, a sub-contractor has been appointed and they have inspected the building and have been issued with the MSA report. The Department expects the fire-stopping improvement works to begin within the next fortnight and that it will take approx. four weeks to complete.

With respect to electrical works, most items have been completed.

With respect to general works, some fire doors been identified that need to be replaced, and these doors have been ordered. There is approx. a three to four week lead-in time of new fire doors sets, and it will then take approx. two weeks to have all installed.

A meeting was held with the Westmeath Fire Officer on Thursday 31st August to update him on the works and progress to date as well as the programme of works yet to be completed.

On completion of the works these will be inspected by the Departments Consultant and a full report will be submitted to the Co. Westmeath Fire Officer.

Gaelscoil Na nCloth Liath - Greystones

A meeting was also held with the Fire Officer in Bray on 23rd June 2017 to discuss the Greystones School. Arrangements are being put in place for remedial works to be carried out at the school.

The works to be carried out include fire-stopping upgrades, intumescent paint/steel protection, and plasterboard partitions, emergency lighting, fire door upgrades and renewing cavity barriers.

Michael Slattery Associates has agreed the final scope of works with the Contractor. The Department intend to commence each element of work (which are similar to Mullingar above) as soon as each phase in Mullingar is completed. It is anticipated that all works should be completed by the end of October.

On completion of the works these will be inspected by the Department and a full report will be submitted to the Co. Wicklow Fire Officer.

A meeting has been arranged with the Co Wicklow Fire Officer for Monday 4th September to provide an update on the programme of works proposed.

See link to documents:

<https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/Building-Works/fire-safety-audit-reports/>

Guidelines on Managing Safety (including fire safety) in schools

A Detailed guidance document is in place to advise schools on Managing Safety and Health in Schools. This includes comprehensive advice on the issue of managing the risk of fire safety. The document is a publication of the Health and Safety Authority in collaboration with the Department of Education and Skills, the State Claims Agency and the School Development Planning Initiative.

These Guidelines were developed in response to a demand from the education sector for guidance and clarification in relation to the legal obligations and responsibilities that have been placed on schools. This demand, combined with the recognition that workplace safety, health and welfare needs to be managed and can be integrated into existing planning processes at school level, was at the core of the collaboration between the partners involved.

The Guidelines may be accessed at the following link:

http://www.hsa.ie/eng/Education/Managing_Safety_and_Health_in_Schools/Primary_Schools_Guidelines/Guidelines_on_Managing_Safety_Health_and_Welfare_in_Primary_Schools.pdf

The following is a brief extract in relation to the management of the risk of fire.

Fire drills should be completed as often as required. The frequency of fire drills must be determined by the school. Consideration must be given to school layout, ease of access and egress, and the general requirements of the students attending the school. It is good practice to test the fire alarm weekly on a set day at a particular time. Any defects in the alarm system must be prioritised by the board of management for repair or replacement.

Many questions arise around planning of fire drills. Whilst planning fire drills is important, it is not necessary to give advance notice to staff. Employees must be instructed on precautions for emergencies and evacuation procedures. The board of management or the principal must designate employees to implement the procedures in case of an emergency. The board of management must ensure that the designated employees have adequate training and equipment available to them to deal with the emergency. Escape routes must be kept clear and emergency exits unlocked or free to open by activation of push bar. The electrical system should be checked periodically by a competent person. The school must be equipped with appropriate fire-fighting and detection equipment. Further information and advice may be obtained from the Fire Services Section of the Local Authority or City Council.

The school may decide that advance notice of a fire drill is appropriate so as to minimise the risk of an accident during the drill. In every case the efficacy of the fire drill should be reviewed and assessed.

Checklist:

- Does the school have an emergency evacuation plan?
- Has it been communicated to all parties and is it on display?
- Does it provide for those with disabilities or other special needs?
- Are fire assembly points identified?
- Are fire assembly points clearly marked?
- Are directional fire signs displayed in the school?

- *Does the school have emergency lighting systems in place?*
- *Are fire exits kept clear?*
- *Does the school hold a minimum of two fire drills per year?*
- *Are these drills timed?*
- *Are outcomes of fire drills recorded and actions taken where necessary?*
- *Is the emergency evacuation plan reviewed regularly?*
- *Is fire-fighting equipment (fire hose reels, emergency lighting, fire extinguishers, fire blankets etc.) available?*
- *Are all fire installations and equipment inspected and serviced as per legal requirements?*
- *Have all staff received training in the use of fire-fighting equipment?*