

GRENFELL TOWER INQUIRY

MHCLG POSITION STATEMENT ON ACTIONS TAKEN ON FIRE DOORS FOLLOWING THE GRENFELL TOWER FIRE

1. This statement is provided on behalf of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government ('MHCLG' or 'the Department') in response to the Inquiry's request dated 3 April 2020 requesting from the Department evidence under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006, about actions taken by the Department relating to fire doors following the Grenfell Tower fire.
2. The Department has agreed with the Inquiry that this evidence shall take the form of a position statement.

Summary of request

3. The Inquiry's request of 3 April noted that the Department has previously provided the Inquiry with several documents regarding the Department's investigation into fire doors after the Grenfell Tower fire on 14 June 2017. These included the Building Safety Timeline [CLG00019098] and associated exhibits.
4. The Inquiry requests that the Department extends the existing Building Safety Timeline to include information relating to any relevant actions taken by the Department and the Expert Panel in its fire door investigation, to include (but not exclusively) the following:
 - The Department's Glass Reinforced Plastic 'GRP composite fire door test results' document issued in February 2019 and an accompanying brief note regarding the background to the document and its purpose;
 - A summary of any agreement, including any subsequent changes, between the Department and the Association of Composite Door Manufacturers regarding the removal of composite fire doors from the market and the repair and replacement of fire doors; and
 - A summary of any agreement, including any subsequent changes, between the Department and the providers of composite door blanks to stop the production and sale of any blanks.
5. The Inquiry's request notes that a letter dated 31 July 2018 from the Department to the Heads of Local Authority Building Control [CLG10003085] stated that "the Department is taking a number of steps to address the situation" in relation to the failure of the fire doors supplied by five of six suppliers to pass fire performance tests for fire doors. The Inquiry request that the details of the steps taken and their outcome are included in the Building Safety Timeline.
6. The Inquiry's request notes that in a letter dated 26 April 2018 from the Department to the Inquiry [CLG10003021], the letter explained the purpose and procedure of its fire door investigations as well as the initial views of the Expert

Panel. A table was included setting out the test results on Manse Masterdor fire doors. The Inquiry request that the Department provide all test results, but not detailed reports, and summaries that were collated by the Department as part of its investigation into fire doors, and that this information can be provided in a table.

Summary

7. This statement sets out, in response to the Inquiry's Rule 9 request, a summary of the actions taken by the Department in response to findings of failures in fire doors following the Grenfell Tower fire. In addition to referencing and exhibiting internal MHCLG correspondence and correspondence, it also references and exhibits documents in the public domain, available on GOV.UK.
8. The statement explains the role of the Expert Panel and gives the background to the testing on fire doors conducted on behalf of the Department.
9. The statement expands on the Building Safety Timeline previously provided to the Inquiry, with an updated timeline. The statement also describes communications between the Association of Composite Door Manufacturers about the withdrawal of certain fire door products from sale.
10. The statement concludes by providing the fire door test results requested by the Inquiry.

Background to the Building Safety Independent Expert Advisory Panel

11. The Government appointed an Independent Expert Advisory Panel to provide advice to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, on immediate building safety measures, following the Grenfell Tower fire.
12. The independent Expert Panel was established to recommend to the Government any immediate action it thinks that the Government should take that will improve public safety and help to identify buildings of concern.
13. The members of the independent Expert Panel are experienced in fire and building safety, including testing processes, and draw in wider technical expertise as necessary to inform advice.

Background to the fire door testing

14. On 14 February 2018 the Metropolitan Police informed the Department that, as part of the investigation into the Grenfell Tower fire, they had tested a flat front entrance fire door taken from Grenfell Tower that had failed a 30-minute furnace test (BS EN1634-01: 2014, which requires doors to resist fire for 30 minutes) after approximately 15 minutes.
15. As soon as the Metropolitan Police informed the Department of the test result, the Department immediately sought advice from the independent Expert Panel as to consider whether there were wider public safety implications.

16. The Department consulted with the Government's Chief Scientific Advisor, the National Fire Chiefs Council, and the Office of Product Safety and Standards in the Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy. The Expert Panel also established a fire door technical group to provide them advise on the investigation, findings, and potential action.
17. The flat front entrance door taken from Grenfell Tower for testing was typical of those used for flat front entrances throughout the building and available widely across the fire door market. It is commonly known as a GRP (Glass Reinforced Plastic) composite fire door, as the door blank - the solid material that is cut to the door size without accessories or components such as hinges, locks etc., sometimes referred to as a door leaf, particularly in relation to timber doors - is produced from fibre reinforced polymer made of a plastic reinforced by fine fibres made of glass.
18. The Metropolitan Police identified the manufacturer of the fire door it had tested as Manse Masterdor, a company that had ceased trading in November 2014 and was in voluntary liquidation. The product line and operations had been purchased by the Synseal Group and established as a new subsidiary called Masterdor Ltd under new management.
19. The Expert Panel was clear that an investigation was required that included further testing to ensure that the fire doors sold by Manse Masterdor met the standards they were being marketed as achieving. The Expert Panel was also of the view that should significant issues be found, the Department should extend its investigation to consider the performance of other fire doors.

Updated timeline

20. The Inquiry's letter of 3 April requests that the Department "extend the Timeline to include relevant information relating to any relevant actions taken by the MHCLG in its fire door investigation".
21. The Department has done this, producing an additional timeline of actions taken in relation to fire doors [CLG10009803]. This new timeline may be read in conjunction with the timeline already submitted to the Inquiry [CLG00019098].

GRP composite fire doors test results

22. In its letter of 3 April, the Inquiry request:

"a. the MHCLG's 'GRP composite fire doors test results' document issued in February 2019, and an accompanying brief note regarding the background to this document and its purpose".

The document 'GRP composite fire door test results', published in February 2018, is attached [CLG10009805]. Page four of the document gives the background and the purpose of the document, an extract of which is reproduced below.

“Purpose

This test data is provided to inform building owners risk assessments and plans for fitting and repair or replacement of fire doors. Details within this note provide important context for the results supplied which represent only a sample of the market and are only relevant for the specific model of door set tested from the manufacturer. This note does not make any recommendations for fitting, repair or replacement. That is a matter for individual building owners and their advisers.

The sample of GRP composite fire doors failed for a range of reasons including but not restricted to performance at the glass/glazing, letter box and the door frame. There was some evidence of over-reliance on written assessments being used in lieu of primary tests for significant changes in hardware and ironmongery, and for the reverse side of the door. These findings clearly indicated broader failings within the industry.

It was concluded on the advice of the Expert Panel that there was a performance issue with GRP composite 30 minute fire doors across the market. Actions outlined below have been taken across the GRP composite market to raise standards. Test results presented are from the sample of the market tested.”

Background

1. The Metropolitan Police’s investigation into the Grenfell Tower fire involved a thorough examination of the tower, including front doors to flats. The Metropolitan Police informed the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) of a failed furnace test¹ for a GRP² composite glazed front fire door from Grenfell Tower. The test revealed that the door was installed as providing 30 minutes of fire resistance but failed the test after 15 minutes.

The manufacturer of the door was identified as Manse Masterdor, a company that had ceased trading in November 2014 and was in voluntary liquidation.

As soon MHCLG were informed of the test result the department immediately sought the advice from its independent Expert Panel, which was appointed following the Grenfell Tower fire, to consider whether there were wider public safety implications.

4. The Panel consulted with representatives from the Metropolitan Police, the Government’s Chief Scientific Advisors and the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC). Following this, the Panel advised that the risks to public safety remained low and that current fire safety

advice should not be changed, and that further investigations into fire doors from Manse Masterdor should be undertaken by MHCLG.

5. The Panel also advised that the investigation should seek to understand the scale of sub-standard fire doors through testing the wider GRP composite fire doors market.

1 BS EN1634-01: 2014

2 Glass Reinforced Plastic”

Association of Composite Door Manufacturers and providers of composite door blanks

23. In its letter of 3 April, the Inquiry requests:

“b. a summary of any agreement, including any subsequent changes, between the MHCLG and the Association of Composite Door Manufacturers regarding the removal of composite fire doors from the market and the repair and replacement of fire doors; and

c. a summary of any agreement, including any subsequent changes, between the MHCLG and the providers of composite door blanks to stop the production and sale of any blanks.”

24. Departmental officials prepared a note on 8 August 2018 [CLG10009802] giving the Expert Panel an update on fire doors investigation. This note records the action taken by the composite fire door industry following a meeting on 2 August 2018.

25. Specifically, the note states that:

“The composite door industry met on 2 August including: the three importers/distributors of composite glass reinforced plastic (GRP) door blanks; a number of manufacturers of fire doors and components. Overall the industry representatives were clear that this was a serious issue and they all bought into making the changes needed. There appeared to be genuine concern that they had been testing wrongly and a real desire to do the right thing.

The members have written following this meeting to confirm that all composite GPR fire doors have been removed from the market and reaffirm their commitment to a joint plan of action (a copy of the letter is attached). They plan to write to the department this week with their full proposal.

Separately, we agreed with the three importers/distributors of composite GRP door blanks that they will not provide any

manufacturers with their fire door blanks until consistency of performance can be proven. This has effectively stopped the supply of door blanks into the market. They have agreed to work with manufacturers to develop solutions quickly.”

26. Ben Penson, then Chair of the Association of Composite Door Manufacturers, wrote to the then Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, the Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP, on 3 August 2018 [CLG10009801], 10 August 2018 [CLG10009800] and 17 August 2018 (although that letter also bears the date 10 August 2018) [CLG10009795].
27. In his letter of 3 August Mr Penson describes the “immediate action required to stop the supply of fire doors that are inconsistent with the current building regulations”. His letter of 10 August gives an update on this: “Having agreed to cease supply (unless the fire doors in question can demonstrate consistent furnace test performance to the appropriate standard from both sides) of composite doors at the last meeting; the subsequent objective is to take urgent steps to get doors tested, and get them back on the market”.
28. The letter from Mr Penson of 17 August gives a further update, including “introducing composite fire doors back on the UK market”.
29. On 2 November 2018 the new Chairman of the Association of Composite Door Manufacturers, Andrew Fowlds, wrote to the Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP with the Association’s proposals for ‘the re-supply of the GRP fire doors to the market’ [CLG10009796].

Steps taken to address fire door performance

30. In its letter of 3 April, the Inquiry makes the following request:

“3. A letter dated 31 July 2018 from the MHCLG to the Heads of Local Authority Building Control, states that “ *the Department is taking a number of steps to address the situation*” in relation to the failure of doors supplied by 5 of 6 suppliers to pass fire performance tests for fire doors. Please include the details of the steps taken and their outcome in the Timeline.”
31. The Building Safety Timeline has been updated to include the steps taken [CLG10009803].

Manse Masterdor Information

32. In its letter of 3 April, the Inquiry makes the following request:

“4. In a letter dated 26 April 2018 from the MHCLG to the Inquiry [CLG10003021], the letter explained the purpose and procedure of its fire door investigations as well as the initial views of the Expert Panel. A table was included setting out the test results on Manse Masterdor fire doors. Please

provide all test results (not detailed reports) and summaries that were collated by the MHCLG as part of its investigation into fire doors. These can be provided in a table.”

33. Information on the results of tests carried out by the Department on GRP composite fire doors and on timber fire doors is attached.

34. This includes:

- Note on GRP composite fire door test results [CLG10009805].
- GRP composite fire door test data [CLG10009799].
- Timber fire door test results: covering narrative [CLG10009804].
- Fire door testing: timber fire door test results [CLG10009797].

35. Further information about the work of the Expert panel, and about fire door testing, can be found on .GOV.UK:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/building-safety-independent-expert-advisory-panel>

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/fire-door-investigation>

Index of exhibits

Document	Reference
MHCLG Position Statement on actions taken to address public safety following the Grenfell Tower fire	CLG00019099
Original Building Safety Timeline	CLG00019098
Letter dated 31 July 2018 from the Department to the Heads of Local Authority Building Control	CLG10003085
Letter dated 26 April 2018 from the Department to the Inquiry	CLG10003021
Updated Building Safety Timeline	CLG10009803
GRP composite fire door test results	CLG10009805
MHCLG note of 8 August 2018 to Expert Panel giving update on fire doors investigation	CLG10009802
Association of Composite Door Manufacturers letter of 3 August 2018	CLG10009801
Association of Composite Door Manufacturers letter of 10 August 2018	CLG10009800
Association of Composite Door Manufacturers letter of 17 August 2018	CLG10009795
Association of Composite Door Manufacturers letter of 2 November 2018	CLG10009796
GRP composite fire door test data	CLG10009799
Timber fire door test results: covering narrative	CLG10009804
Fire door testing: timber fire door test results	CLG10009797