

**Witness statement of: Ben Dewis**

**No. of statement: One**

**Exhibits: 29**

**Date of statement: 20 August 2019**

**GRENFELL TOWER PUBLIC INQUIRY**

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**WITNESS STATEMENT OF BEN DEWIS**

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I, Ben Dewis, will say as follows:

1. This is the first statement I have made for the purposes of the Grenfell Tower Public Inquiry ("the Inquiry"). I give this statement following a request to the London Fire Brigade ("LFB") from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry dated 5 June 2018. It is one of a number of statements by current and former officers of LFB in response to that request. Specifically, I outline my dealings as a fire safety Investigating Officer with the KCTMO and Grenfell Tower prior to its refurbishment.
2. To assist me in the preparation of this statement, I have had access to documents in the possession of the London Fire Brigade (LFB). The documents I have referred to in order to assist my recollection of events, I identify as follows:

<b>Exhibit reference</b>	<b>Document Description</b>
BD1	Confirmation of Competence Certificate dated 24/09/2015
BD2	Ben Dewis – Personal Training Record
BD3	Fire Safety Information and Guidance Note 423
BD4	Minutes of KCTMO Meeting dated 05/01/2016
BD5	Email Chain between Edward Daffarn and Ben Dewis re: Fire safety Lancaster West Estate, dated 17/03/2014 - 18/03/2014
BD6	Email from Edward Daffarn to Ben Dewis re: Fire safety Lancaster West Estate, dated 30/03/2014
BD7	Email Chain between SM Hallissey, Janice Wray and Ben Dewis re: Grenfell Tower, dated 01/04/2014
BD8	Email chain between Edward Daffarn and Ben Dewis re: Fire safety Lancaster West Estate, from 01/04/2014 to 07/04/2014
BD9	Email from Ben Dewis to Rebecca Burton FW: Fire safety Lancaster West Estate, dated 08/07/2014
BD10	Email from Rebecca Burton to Ben Dewis re: Fire safety Lancaster West Estate, dated 08/07/2014
BD11	Email chain between Ben Dewis and Janice Wray re: Grenfell Tower, dated 08/07/2014

<b>Exhibit reference</b>	<b>Document Description</b>
BD12	Email chain between Rebecca Burton and Ben Dewis re: Grenfell Tower, dated 09/07/2014
BD13	Email from Ben Dewis to Janice Wray re: Grenfell Tower, dated 09/07/2014
BD14	Email from Ben Dewis to Edward Daffarn re: Fire safety Lancaster West Estate, dated 09/07/2014
BD15	Email from Ben Dewis to FSR Admin re: Record of Conversation, dated 09/07/2014
BD16	Email from Ben Dewis to Daniel Hallissey re: Fire safety Lancaster West Estate, dated 16/07/2014
BD17	Email from Edward Daffarn to Ben Dewis re: Grenfell Tower- Ongoing concerns!, dated 20/08/2014
BD18	Email from Ben Dewis to Daniel Hallissey Fw: Grenfell Tower- Ongoing concerns!, dated 26/08/2014
BD19	Email from Ben Dewis to Janice Wray re: Grenfell Tower, dated 04/09/2014
BD20	Email chain between Edward Daffarn and Ben Dewis re: Fire safety at the KCTMO dated 15/02/2017
BD21	Email from Ben Dewis to Matthew Ramsey re: Fire safety at the KCTMO, dated 15/02/2017

<b>Exhibit reference</b>	<b>Document Description</b>
BD22	Email from Matthew Ramsey to Ben Dewis re: Fire safety at the KCTMO, dated 15/02/2017
BD23	Email from Ben Dewis to Matthew Ramsey re: Fire safety at the KCTMO, dated 15/02/2017
BD24	Email from Ben Dewis to Rebecca Burton Fw: Fire safety at the KCTMO, dated 15/02/2017
BD25	Email chain between Ben Dewis and Edward Daffarn re: seriously exposed newly installed gas pipe line throughout the entire staircase of Grenfell Tower poses extremely serious health and safety Risk, dated between 20/03/2017 and 22/03/2017
BD26	Email from Ben Dewis to Rebecca Burton Fw: Seriously exposed newly installed gas pipe line throughout the entire staircase of Grenfell Tower poses extremely serious health and safety Risk, dated 20/03/2017
BD27	Email chain between Edward Daffarn and Ben Dewis re: Fire in Hazelwood Tower 2015, dated 19/04/2017 to 24/04/2017
BD28	Email from Ben Dewis to FSR-Admin Support dated 22/03/2017
BD29	Email chain between Edward Daffarn and Ben Dewis dated 19/04/2017 to 24/04/2017



## Role and Responsibilities

1. I joined the London Fire Brigade ("LFB") on 11 November 2013 as a Fire Inspecting Officer posted to the Kensington & Chelsea and Hammersmith & Fulham ("KCHF") Fire Safety Team. The team was based at Kensington Fire Station until 5 October 2015 when we moved to Paddington Station. I had a brief period when I was detached out to Camden Fire Safety as Acting Team Leader in 2016.
2. I am currently the Fire Safety Team Leader for KCHF, having successfully applied for that role, effective as of July 2018. I had been Acting Team Leader from 4<sup>th</sup> July 2017. I replaced Rebecca Burton, who had been my line manager and who had transferred to be the Fire Safety Team Leader within the Central Regulatory Enforcement Group. She was my line manager at the time of the Grenfell fire. Rebecca Burton has since become my line manager again as the Area Fire Safety Manager. Nick Comery was my first line manager within the LFB until he retired from the role on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 and was replaced by Rebecca Burton.
3. The duties of a Fire Inspecting Officer include:
  - Carrying out programmed and reactive fire safety inspections to check for compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 ("RRO").
  - Carrying out building consultations in accordance with current regulations.
  - Where necessary, advising responsible persons about their obligations under the RRO and agreeing the steps necessary to achieve compliance with the legislation.
  - Carrying out specialist functions and roles as required. For example, the role of Brigade Duty Officer ("BDO").
  - Responding to Alleged Fire Risks ("ARFs") raised by members of the public directly with the LFB.
  - Responding to concerns raised by other LFB personnel.
  - Providing technical advice and support on fire safety regulations and guidance documents to Fire Safety Advisors, Fire Safety Regulation staff and other internal and external stakeholders as required.

- Supporting operational crews to develop their knowledge in Fire Safety Regulation in order for them to understand risk in the built environment.
4. My duties now as a team leader include but are not limited to:
- Leading a team of Fire Safety Inspecting Officers.
  - Assigning work loads to Officers.
  - Vetting their inspection reports and assist with the drafting of Enforcement Notices.
  - Oversight of development of fire safety inspecting officers/advisors who are on development.
  - Maintaining relationships with internal and external stakeholders, including the local authority.
  - Managing the team budget and approving expenses.
  - Identifying areas for the team to target through 'Active Risk Targeting'.
  - Assisting with prosecution case files.

### **Qualifications and Training**

5. Prior to the joining LFB, I was a fire safety engineer for a private company for two years. During that time, I completed numerous training courses including:
- The British Approvals for Fire Equipment (BAFE) exam.
  - In house training CPD for fire extinguisher installation and maintenance.
6. When I first joined the KCHF team in November 2013, I underwent a period of development, which involves training, shadowing more senior officers and completing assessments in order to gain competence to fulfil the tasks of an Inspecting Officer. There is no fixed timescale for this process, although it is generally completed in about 18 months. I was signed off as competent by Rebecca Burton on 24<sup>th</sup> September 2015. I exhibit as exhibit **BD1** ( ) my development sign-off confirmation.



7. I exhibit as **BD2** ( ) my individual training record.

**Working within the KCHF Fire Safety Team as an Inspecting Officer (prior to Team Leader role)**

8. In terms of how work is assigned to individual inspecting officers, jobs (fire inspections/building control consultations etc.) come in from the administration department. These include programmed inspections of particular premises, which come up on a cycle as per the risk database. Jobs are also identified when there has been a fire at a premises, usually where sleeping risk is involved. Jobs are also raised by Inspecting Officers when complaints or reports are received by members of the public or external or internal stakeholders, including operational fire crews. This may include AFRs (Alleged Fire Risks), which is a notification from an individual reporting their concerns about the fire safety arrangements at a particular premises. Where that report indicates that there are persons at risk, then an inspection of the premises should be undertaken within a maximum of 3 hours. If there are no persons at risk to warrant immediate attendance or no attendance is required, then the incident should no longer be considered an AFR. I exhibit as Exhibit **BD3** ( ) Fire Safety Information & Guidance Note 423 ("FSIGN 423"), which provides information and guidance on how to deal with alleged fire risks.
9. Tasks/jobs are assigned by the line manager at his/her discretion by uploading them onto an individual inspecting officer's workload system called Farynor. Inspecting Officers are not designated particular premises or a particular geographic area. So, for example, I might have been assigned 20 different jobs at a time, including audits, site visits etc. I would then decide how I would manage that workload. On occasion, officers may be proactive and actually take jobs from the line manager's workload or, if necessary, raise their own jobs. The team works in an open-plan work environment in which we can easily speak with each other and share information.

10. Each day, we also check BOSS, which is an electronic incident log to see what fires have been logged and make decisions on whether any action is required by us. If, for example, there has been a fire in a single private dwelling, then we would not need to do anything as the RRO does not apply. But if, by way of further example, there had been a fire in a shop, we might call the premises and ascertain whether there is anything requiring a response or action by us. If a fire occurred in sleeping premises then we make arrangements for a post-fire audit.
11. In addition, we get calls and emails from the local community. Generally these come into the Brigade Duty Officer (BDO), who is rostered on at the Brigade Headquarters at Union Street, who filters out the calls to the relevant fire safety team. Or we may be contacted directly. Depending on the substance of the communication, they may or may not amount to an AFR, which requires an inspection. For instance, it may be that the calls relate to operational matters or matters within the remit of the Responsible Person for a particular premises or that the information does not indicate that there are persons at risk. Such matters would not trigger the need for an inspection. Rather, the information may be passed on to the relevant operational team or Responsible Person, as appropriate. In contrast, reported concerns about, for example, a locked fire exit, a missing or broken fire door, or a build up of combustible material, would amount to an AFR which could require an inspection. These decisions are judgment calls to be made by the person dealing with the information.
12. As Team Leader, I have monthly meetings with the Borough Commander – Spencer Sutcliffe and his two station managers - Brett Loft (Chelsea) and Ben King (Kensington and North Kensington) - to discuss any fire safety-related concerns. For example, if there are premises that I have particular concerns about, I will update them about those concerns and they will share with me any concerns that their crews have raised with them. It is not a formal, minuted meeting but it is just something that we have decided between ourselves would be a useful way of sharing knowledge and building a working relationship between the two teams. I understand that my predecessor, Rebecca Burton, used to have similar meetings.



### Dealings with the KCTMO

13. My recollection is that I only attended one meeting with the KCTMO, on 5 January 2016. I went to the meeting with Rebecca Burton. I do not recall why I was asked to attend that meeting on that day and, as can be seen from the minutes of that meeting, which I exhibit as **BD4** ( ), I had very little involvement.
14. I did communicate with Janice Wray, the KCTMO Health and Safety Facilities Manager, both by telephone and email about various issues regarding Grenfell Tower and other tower blocks managed by the KCTMO, which were raised by Edward Daffarn of the Grenfell Residents Association. I exhibit and summarise those emails below.
15. I have also had dealings with the KCTMO as a result of being tasked with carrying out the Fire Safety Investigation into a fire at Adair Tower on 31 October 2015, in relation to which the KCTMO was identified as the Responsible Person. Initially, Fire Safety Inspecting Officer Matthew Ramsey conducted a post fire inspection and issued an Enforcement Notice. I then carried out an investigation into possible breaches of the RRO. Fire Safety Inspecting Officer John Simmons has also been involved with the investigation as he took the lead from me when I was promoted to Acting Team Leader for Camden fire safety for a short period of time in 2016.

### Dealings with Grenfell Tower

16. I only carried out two site visits to Grenfell Tower. The first was on 12 March 2014, about four months into my career and before I gained competency. I went there with Matthew Ramsey, who had suggested that I come with him to observe and learn. I do not have any recollection as to why that site visit occurred at that time and I may not even have been privy to the reason. I also do not have any clear recollection of the

substance of the visit itself as everything was still very new to me and I was developing my understanding of the fire safety regulations, terminology and issues.

17. The second visit was on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2014. I went to Grenfell with Robert McTague, who was Watch Manager B posted into fire safety. He was my deputy team leader, who would cover Rebecca Burton in her absence. My recollection is that some concerns had been raised by some firefighters about access to Grenfell Tower and some other issues and we went along and met with them to discuss the concerns. It was quite an informal meeting and it was not documented as far as I can remember as nothing needed to be actioned by anyone. I cannot recollect who we met on the day, however I have since checked the Watch Calendar on our intranet and I know it was Blue Watch who was on duty.
18. I have had no involvement in any of the building consultations relating to Grenfell Tower.
19. Between March and August 2014 and then between February and April 2017, I received numerous emails from a man called Edward Daffarn of the Grenfell Residents Association. He expressed his concerns about fire safety at Grenfell Tower. When dealing with his emails, particularly in 2014 when I had not attained competence, my general practice was to get advice from Rebecca Burton or another senior colleague as to how best to respond and then respond accordingly. Looking back over the correspondence, Mr Daffarn's concerns related either to operational issues or matters within the remit of the Responsible Person (the TMO) and were not considered to be AFRs warranting an inspection of the premises. I responded to him as I deemed appropriate but for the most part I viewed myself as a messenger for his concerns – passing on the information either to the relevant operational team or the Responsible Person. As is apparent in some of my emails with my colleagues, I did become somewhat frustrated with the email correspondence at times but I always responded to him as helpfully as I could.



20. I have been able to identify and retrieve from my email account the following email correspondence of mine relating to Grenfell Tower in 2014:

- 20.1 Email dated 17/03/2014, 20:20, which is within a chain of emails exhibited as Exhibit **BD5** ( ) – Edward Daffarn emailed me a list of concerns, including the May 2013 power surges that caused residents' television sets to catch fire. His email suggests that we had had a conversation earlier that morning. I have no particular recollection of meeting with him but, given that I attended Grenfell Tower on 17/3/2014 with Robert McTague, I may well have met Mr Daffarn then.
- 20.2 Email dated 18/03/2014, 10:04, which is within Exhibit **BD5** ( ) – I thank Edward Daffarn for raising the concerns in his 17/03/2014 email and confirm we will inspect premises in line with our risk based database. Given that I had not yet obtained competence at this time, I believe that I would have discussed Mr Daffarn's email with somebody more senior and been advised as to how best to respond. However I do not have a note or email to document that. I understood from discussions with my line manager that the premises were being managed adequately by the KCTMO and that there was no need to carry out an inspection outside what was scheduled in our database.
- 20.3 Email dated 18/03/2014, 21:49, which is within Exhibit **BD5** ( ) – Edward Daffarn responds and expresses his concern about the attitude of the TMO to issues raised about fire safety. It does not appear that I responded to this email but my recollection is that I did not deem it necessary to do so given that it appeared to be a reiteration of the concerns raised by Mr Daffarn in his email earlier that day to which I had already sent a response.
- 20.4 Email dated 30/03/2014, 17:55, which I exhibit as Exhibit **BD6** ( ) – Edward Daffarn raises new concerns on firefighting and operational access.



- 20.5 Email dated 01/04/2014, 12:32 which is within a chain of emails exhibited as Exhibit **BD7** ( ) – I email SM Hallissey regarding the firefighting access concerns raised by Mr Daffarn and ask whether he would like me to do a station notification or whether all the watches know about the concerns. A station notification is simply a form which is completed to log the nature of the information that has been communicated to the station.
- 20.6 Email dated 01/04/2014, 12:35, which is within Exhibit **BD7** ( ) – SM Hallissey replies and copies in Janice Wray (TMO). He confirms all watches are aware of the issues and also that they have been asked to do familiarisation and pre-planning visits.
- 20.7 Email dated 01/04/2014, 13:15 which is within Exhibit **BD7** ( ), – Janice Wray emails SM Hallissey noting that Edward Daffarn raises concerns regularly. SM Hallissey forwards the email to me.
- 20.8 Email dated 01/04/2014, 12:33 + 0100, which is within a chain of emails exhibited as Exhibit **BD8** ( ) – I email Edward Daffarn to confirm that his concerns will be dealt with by the Station Manager in the appropriate way.
- 20.9 Email dated 07/04/2014, 08:28, which is within Exhibit **BD8** ( ) – Edward Daffarn raises further concerns regarding firefighting access after the closure of rights of way to the west and north of Grenfell Tower. He seeks an assurance that LFB will monitor the current changes on Lancaster West Estate and asks where residents should assemble in the event of a fire.
- 20.10 Email dated 08/07/2014, 09:25, which I exhibit as Exhibit **BD9** ( ) – I forward Mr Daffarn's concerns to my line manager Rebecca Burton.

- 20.11 Email dated 08/07/2014, 09:42, which I exhibit as Exhibit **BD10** ( ) – Rebecca Burton replies to me, copying in SM Hallissey and WM(B) McTague CC, confirming crews are aware and are making arrangements to carry out a familiarisation visit. She explains that we are not in a position to audit at present but that she is confident the premises are being managed adequately. She advised me to forward the email to Janice Wray, which I did.
- 20.12 Email dated 08/07/2014, 10:08, which is within a chain of emails exhibited as Exhibit **BD11** ( ) – Email I sent to Janice Wray forwarding Mr Daffarn's concerns and asking her what fire safety measures are being taken during the refurbishment works.
- 20.13 Email dated 08/07/2014, 17:12, which is within Exhibit **BD11** ( ) – Email response from Janice Wray advising that there has been no change in the fire strategy at the block, which is 'stay put' and outlining the action proposed to remind residents of this strategy and other steps being taken by the KCTMO in regards to concerns raised. She explains that this will be outlined in the July Newsletter.
- 20.14 Email dated 09/07/2014, 10:01, which is within a chain of emails, which I exhibit as Exhibit **BD12** ( ) – I forward Janice Wray's response to my line manager, Rebecca Burton.
- 20.15 Email dated 09/07/2014, 11:29, which is within Exhibit **BD12** ( ) – Email response from my line manager Rebecca Burton directing me how to respond to Mr Daffarn's email in the light of Janice Wray's response and commenting that she knew that Janice Wray would be "all over it".
- 20.16 Email dated 09/07/2014, 10:02, which is within a chain of emails, which I exhibit as Exhibit **BD13** ( ) – I email Janice Wray to thank her for her response.



- 20.17 Email dated 09/07/2014, 11:35, which I exhibit as Exhibit **BD14** (.....) – I email Edward Daffarn to confirm I have spoken to the local authority and confirmed that Grenfell Tower has a stay put policy and that the local fire station is in the process of carrying out familiarisation visits to the site.
- 20.18 Email dated 09/07/2014, 11:37, which I exhibit as Exhibit **BD15** ( ), I forward email correspondence with Mr Daffarn in early July to the Administration team asking for it to be uploaded to the electronic fire safety files, which we refer to as the portal.
- 20.19 Email dated 16/07/2014, 10.29, which I exhibit as Exhibit **BD16** ( ) – I reply to Daniel Hallissey, who had asked for an update regarding the July correspondence with Mr Daffarn and Janice Wray. I outlined that I had spoken to Janice Wray, who confirmed that residents have their July edition newsletters outlining the works going on and reminding them of stay put policy. I noted that crews were carrying out familiarisation visits, as I had been told, and they could report back anything unsatisfactory for us to deal with.
- 20.20 Email dated 20/08/2014, 19:48, which I exhibit as Exhibit **BD17** ( ) – Edward Daffarn emails his concerns there is only one fire exit to Grenfell Tower and that improvement works have made it a firetrap.
- 20.21 Email dated 26/08/2014, 12:35, which I exhibit as Exhibit **BD18** ( ) – I forward email (Exhibit BD17 ( )) on to SM Hallissey and note that I will also forward it to Janice Wray. I have not been able to find an email from me to Janice Wray forwarding Mr Daffarn's email. Given my approach to Mr Daffarn's concerns, I believe that I would have communicated the content of this email to her in some way but have no distinct recollection of that communication.



- 20.22 Email dated 01/09/2014, 11:19, which is within Exhibit **BD13** ( ) – Email from Janice Wray requesting information on whether Edward Daffarn had responded and what the content of that response was, as he continues to raise fire safety concerns with the KCTMO.
- 20.23 Email dated 04/09/2014, 09:52, which I exhibit as Exhibit **BD19** ( ) – Email Response from myself to Janice Wray to confirm that Edward Daffarn had not raised any new concerns and explaining that when he does raise a concern, I pass it on to her as I trust that she has everything under control and that there is no need to carry out an inspection.
21. Based on an examination of the emails I have retrieved, it appears that I did not have any further correspondence with Mr Daffarn until February 2017. I outline the 2017 correspondence, which I have been able to identify and retrieve from my email account, as follows:
- 21.1 Email dated 15/02/2017, 10:03, which I exhibit as part of a chain of emails as Exhibit **BD20** ( ) – Edward Daffarn thanks me for listening to his concerns regarding fire safety relating to the KCTMO. He forwards a blog post to me, expressing concern that residents of tower blocks in North Kensington have not been told what to do in the event of fire. He provides a detailed list of concerns. He asks LFB to ensure that KCTMO meet their fire safety obligations, particularly with regard to Whitestable House, Dixon House, Markland House and Frinstead House.
- 21.2 Email dated 15/02/2017, 10:09, which is within a chain of emails exhibited as Exhibit **BD20** ( ) – Email from me to Edward Daffarn stating that I will pass his concerns onto the KCHF team leader.
- 21.3 Email dated 15/02/2017, 10:11, which I exhibit as Exhibit **BD21** ( ) – I forward Mr Daffarn's email to Matthew Ramsey.

- 21.4 Email dated 15/02/2017, 10:29, which I exhibit as Exhibit **BD22** ( ) – Matthew Ramsey responds.
- 21.5 Email dated 15/02/2017, 10:35, which I exhibit as Exhibit **BD23** ( ) – I respond to Matthew Ramsey and note that I gave Mr Daffarn the brush-off. That is an unfortunate use of language, which is reflective of a degree of frustration about becoming, as I saw it, the messenger for Mr Daffarn's concerns again.
- 21.6 Email dated 15/02/2017, 16:05, which I exhibit as Exhibit **BD24** ( ) – I forward Mr Daffarn's concerns to Rebecca Burton.
- 21.7 Email dated 20/03/2017, 11:30, which is within a chain of email exhibited as Exhibit **BD25** ( ) – Edward Daffarn raises concerns about gas pipes.
- 21.8 Email dated 20/03/2017, 11:46, which I exhibit as Exhibit **BD26** ( ) – I forward concerns to Rebecca Burton.
- 21.9 Email dated 22/03/2017, 10:00, which is within Exhibit **BD25** ( ) – I email Edward Daffarn to advise to contact the Gas Authority as LFB is not the enforcing authority when it comes to gas installations.
- 21.10 Email dated 19/04/2017, 23:47, which is within a chain of emails exhibited as Exhibit **BD27** ( ) – Edward Daffarn requests information about the fire at Trellick Tower and also enquires about the enforcement notice for Hazelwood Tower. He forwards email correspondence from the KCTMO stating that Adair Tower was regularly audited by the LFB and

that no recommendations were made in relation to the design of either the staircase or the lift lobbies; recommendations were made after the fire.

21.11 Email dated 22/04/2017, 10:01, which is within a chain of emails exhibited as Exhibit **BD28** ( ) – I email Admin Support asking them to upload my email trail with Edward Daffarn regarding the newly installed gas pipe.

21.12 Email dated 24/04/2017, 07:12, which is within Exhibit **BD29** ( ) – I email Edward Daffarn to thank him for drawing attention to out of date information on the public register regarding Hazlewood Tower. I also explain that it is the responsibility of the KCTMO to carry out a suitable and sufficient Fire Risk Assessment for their buildings.

#### Statement of truth

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true. I confirm that I am willing for the statement to form part of the evidence before the Inquiry and be published on the Inquiry website, save for redactions applied by the Inquiry.

Signed:



Print name:

BEN DEWIS

Date:

20/08/2019