

WITNESS STATEMENT OF ROBIN CAHALARN

1. I make this statement voluntarily to assist the Grenfell Tower Inquiry.
2. The matters in this statement cover the period during which I worked for the Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organisation ("TMO"). In preparing this statement, I have been shown the documents identified in the Inquiry's letter of 2 December 2019 (RC1).
3. I would like to start by giving my most sincere condolences to all those affected by the fire. The loss of life and the impact on the area is completely devastating.

4. I worked for the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea and then the Kensington & Chelsea Tenant Management Organisation (TMO) for 21 years from January 1991 until December 2012 when I was made redundant and retired. I have been fully retired since the date that I left the TMO and therefore the matters in this statement are at least seven years ago, sometimes significantly more. I have had nothing to do with lifts since I retired in December 2012.
5. I was first asked to give a statement by the Grenfell Inquiry in December 2019. Having retired so long ago, I had no concept that I might be required to give a statement or be able to provide assistance to the Inquiry. As mentioned, I have been fully retired since December 2012 but I have spent time thinking about the questions in the Inquiry's letter to me dated 2 December 2019 as I wish to assist.
6. I was employed by the TMO as a Lift Engineer. I joined the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea as a Lift Engineer but my employment transferred across to the TMO. The job was later retitled Senior Lift Engineer. The TMO employed Dave Steppel as the Principal Lift Engineer, later retitled Engineering Manager. Dave was my Line Manager.
7. My background is that I left school in 1963 and held administration roles working for a number of different organisations including Harrods, Regent Palace Hotel, True Flue and Canada Dry. In the late 1960s, I wanted to develop a trade and began training as a lift engineer for a company called Express Lifts on 31 March 1969. I worked for them until 1987. I joined them as a Mate and then advanced to a trained Fitter, Advanced Fitter, Senior Fitter, Supervisor and Assistant Manager.
8. When I left Express Lifts I worked for 3 years for the London Borough of Wandsworth as a Lift Inspector before joining the Royal Borough of Kensington as a Lift Engineer.
9. At the time of my redundancy and retirement in 2012, the TMO was taking a different approach to asset management of items such as its lifts, by replacing in-house technical staff with more administrative contract managers. Dave Steppel retired before me and I then reported to Keith Fifield, Senior Electrical Engineer. I then worked with Ricki Sams and a woman who I recall was from the North of

England but I cannot now recall her name. They were not technical staff and my role changed to be more of an administrator of the lift contracts.

10. For the purpose of producing this statement, I went into my loft where I knew I had a box of personal papers and have found two papers relating to my employment which may assist the Inquiry. The first document is my job profile as Senior Lift Engineer reporting to the Senior Electrical Engineer. There is no date on the document but I believe it is from my later time at the TMO. I produce a copy of this document as **RC2**. Engineering Manager was the title given to Dave Steppel in his later time at the TMO covering lifts, electrical, heating, gas. Initially, he was the Principal Lift Engineer.
11. The second document that I found that may be of assistance is a handwritten document I wrote for the purpose of dividing responsibilities between the Principal Lift Engineer, Dave Steppel, and myself as the Senior Lift Engineer. I produce a copy of this document as **RC3**.
12. In addition to my roles with the TMO, I was also a member on behalf of the TMO of the London Area Procurement Network (LAPN) representing the TMO.
13. The role that the TMO wanted me to hold was more one of management of third party consultants/contractors. Consequently, I managed the contract for Apex who were the lift contractor reportable to Butler and Young during the warranty for the renewal contract. After the warranty period, the lifts fell under the borough wide lift contract held by Independent Lift Services (ILS). Apex's scope of works included conducting monthly inspections of the Grenfell lifts during the warranty period. ILS' scope of works included monthly inspections of Grenfell after that warranty period expired, as well as the other the other 160 lifts in the portfolio.
14. I also liaised with our insurers, [REDACTED] concerning lift inspections. All 160 lifts within the TMO's portfolio were inspected by our insurers on a 6 monthly basis for the purposes of a Thorough Inspection to comply with the inspection requirements under the Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998. It was my role to review those inspections and identify any actions arising.

Design & Installation of two "new" lifts at Grenfell Tower

15. I was aware of the lift refurbishment project to the two lifts at Grenfell Tower. There is a difference between putting in new lifts and refurbishing existing lifts. This was a refurbishment as stated in the heading of the specification which has been shown to me for the purposes of producing this statement (**BUT00000003_0002**). "The Refurbishment of Two Electrical Passenger Lifts".
16. This can be distinguished on the Specification from the replacement of one hydraulic passenger lift at Grenfell Tower, which was done at the same time.
17. A lift refurbishment is where you keep the same guide rails in the lift shaft, the same crown bar to suspend the lift cars and car frame. The specification would have been produced by Butler & Young in conjunction with Dave Steppel for the TMO and the project manager Valerie Sharples.
18. I was aware of the project and can recall that Butler & Young were the Consultants employed to carry out the lift works set out in the specification. There was an external Project Manager Brodie Plant Goddard (BPG) working with the TMO Project Manager, Valerie Sharples. I recall the person dealing with it at BPG was Sarah Everson. At the end of refurbishment the lifts would have been passed over to the lift contractor, Apex. I anticipate there would have been a formal handover between Butler and Young and BPG.
19. As stated, it would have been Dave Steppel on behalf of the TMO who consulted with Butler & Young, concerning the refurbishment of the passenger lifts. I was not personally involved in the production of the specification but I would have expected any specification to require compliance with Building Regulations,

British Standards and associated guidance in force at the time. The main standards at that time were BS-EN5655 Lifts and Service Lifts and BS-EN 81-72: 2003 and BS-EN7255 Safe Working on Lifts. I cannot now recall the details of those specifications given the time that has passed since I retired.

20. I have reviewed the specification which has been shown to me for the purposes of producing this statement and note that at page 2A/41, there is a section headed 2A.70 Firemans Control. This states that activation of the fireman's control switch shall change the control of the lift to fireman's control. It explains that with the switch "on" the lift shall remain in service but that landing calls shall be cancelled and the lift shall return to the ground floor where the doors will remain open until the person who operated the switch places a call inside the lift car.
21. I did not draft the specification but do not believe that it required the lifts to be designed and/or installed as "firefighting lifts". It is a long time since I have looked at the British Standards but the wording of Question 11 suggesting that there was a "requirement" that the lifts be firefighting lifts is not correct from my recollection. My recollection is that the specification required the lifts to be fireman lifts. The British Standards referred to in the questions in the Inquiry were not from my understanding retrospective and, as stated, this was a refurbishment of the lifts.
22. My understanding is that firefighting lifts require a number of different things such as separate power sources etc. and at the time the industry view was that a fireman's lift was a perfectly appropriate lift for a building which should have compartmentation. To the best of my knowledge, the specification was always to require lifts to comply with British Standard 5655.
23. I would not know whether structural constraints were relevant to the installation of firefighting lifts. Butler & Young and Dave Steppel may be able to provide further information as both were directly involved in the specification. In relation to question 11C it would be Butler & Young who would communicate what was required and feasible to us, not the other way around.
24. I may have had some conversation and communications with Butler & Young and/or Apex regarding the refurbished passenger lifts but primarily this would have been Dave Steppel. Again, Butler & Young and BPG may be able to provide information as to whether consideration was given to the provision of a firefighting/protected lift lobby.
25. In answer to the Inquiry's question, no I did not approve the specification for the reasons stated above. To the best of my knowledge it would have been approved by Dave Steppel in the knowledge that it provided fireman lifts, which it was understood was the requirement for a building built at the time of Grenfell Tower.
26. The Inquiry asks whether I understood the proposed design for non-firefighting lifts diverged from the requirements, and if so what steps did I take to highlight this. As stated, although I did not produce the specification I do not believe there was any divergence.
27. The Inquiry asks whether these were new or refurbished passenger lifts. For the reasons explained this was a refurbishment of the passenger lifts as per the Specification and as stated above the lifts kept the same car frame, guide rails and crown bar and the specification clearly records it was a refurbishment.

Fire Control Switches

28. It is a long time since I went to Grenfell Tower but, as far as I know, it would have been a standard drop release key. In my role, I tried to visit each of the 160 lifts in the TMO portfolio every six months. Most of our lifts would have been a standard drop release key. As indicated, [REDACTED] carried out checks every six months and the maintenance contractor, ILS, every month, which would include using a standard drop release key.

29. My understanding of the functionality is that the lift would return to the ground floor.
At the ground floor it would become under the control of the Fire Brigade and the doors would remain open and only move when car call was inserted by the person who operated the switch.
30. I could not say what instructions were at Grenfell Tower for the fire control switch as I left five years before the fire, but generally, such instructions would be contained within the O&M manual. From my experience of other projects where there have been refurbishments, the consultants (in this case Butler & Young) would have written any instructions and put them in the O&M manual.
31. I have been asked to look at a document (CST0002037 "Grenfell Tower – Instructions for Operation of Lifts Fire Control"). I have been asked if I had any involvement in these instructions. I have only seen the emails. They show that this was in July 2013 which is after I left the TMO.
32. As stated, I believe it would have been a standard drop release key that was available for operation of the fire control switch at Grenfell Tower. I cannot say why this type of key was chosen, although that would be pretty standard. I would anticipate that Butler & Young would be the best organisation to ask. My understanding is that those that would have access to a standard drop release key for use at Grenfell Tower would be the engineers from Apex, the London Fire Brigade, BPG, Butler & Young and the concierge at Grenfell Tower.

Completion of Project 1

33. I was not involved in the handover to the best of my knowledge but I would expect the handover process to have been led by Butler & Young to BPG and Apex. This would be in around 2007. I believe there would be an O&M manual produced by Butler & Young. I have been asked to exhibit it but, as stated, I left the TMO eight years ago and have been in full retirement since and do not know where it is.
34. I do recall that when I left I ensured that all of my paperwork was up to date and I recall someone telling me that it was going to be archived in TMO archives or Ingelow House.

Definition of Firefighting Lift

35. I have been shown an email (CST001269). Having looked at this email, I believe that the reference to firefighting lifts in the first and second paragraphs should have been to fireman's lifts. As stated, it is a long time since I have ever thought about lift regulations and I do not remember this email.
36. However, my recollection is that it was understood by everyone including the LFB that it was a fireman's lift at Grenfell Tower. I am not aware that the TMO would adopt its own definition of a firefighting lift and do not understand this reference in the Inquiry's letter. My understanding is that the concept of the firefighting lift did not fully come into force until about 2015 and this seems to be confirmed by a document that I have found on the internet in preparation for this meeting which I exhibit as RC4. This seems to show that BS EN 81-72:2015 is the Standard that was the new Standard for fire-fighting lifts.
37. I have been asked at question 26(b) of the Inquiry's letter about the definition "adopted" by the TMO and whether this included some but not all the requirements of a firefighting lift. I do not understand this question refers to and cannot assist. This question would be much better referred to Butler & Young and BPG but my understanding was, consistent with the 160 lifts that the TMO had in its portfolio, that it was a fireman's lift and that the LFB, amongst others, was fully aware of that and content with it.
38. I do not understand again what it is being referred to at question 26(d) of the Inquiry's letter and the reference to the TMO adopting its own definition.

39. I have been asked to look at an email that I wrote on 28 February 2011 (CST00001781). I do not recall this email or the detail of the exchange within it with Janice Wray from the TMO. I cannot recall now what I meant by standards of firefighting lifts are becoming clearer, but as stated, my understanding is that the requirements were fully set out in the 2015 Standard which came into force after I retired.
40. In terms of the industry view at the time, my understanding is that fireman's lifts were seen as appropriate. In terms of possible upgrade, I do not recall the reference to the costs meeting the recommended standards and upgrade but from my knowledge at the time, I would anticipate that each lift within the portfolio would have cost more than £10,000 each to upgrade as well as involving significant inconvenience to residents and the requirements were not legally retrospective and people worked on the basis that a fireman's lift was appropriate. I would add that whilst I do not recall this specific discussion, I was never asked to carry out feasibility studies to upgrade lifts to fire-fighting lifts.
41. I cannot now recall other discussions with Janice Wray and/or Carl Stokes following this email. I was not concerned that the lifts at Grenfell Tower did not comply with the relevant standards as I believed that they did comply. Compliance was also checked on a regular basis by [REDACTED], Butler & Young during the refurbishment and Apex during the warranty period and then ILS. None of these said it should have been another type of lift.
42. I have next been asked to look at a Risk Assessment Meeting on 30 March 2011 (TMO10000871) concerning different FB drop keys. I do not recall this meeting or the discussion. Usually, it would be a standard drop key and this was consistent across the lift industry, not just within the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea.

Project 2

43. I have been asked for my knowledge of Project 2 but having sought clarification, I believe that this relates to a project which took place following my retirement and I have no knowledge or information about it.

Overall

44. I have been asked when, if at all, did I first become aware that the lifts at Grenfell Tower did not meet the criteria of the Building Regulations. My understanding is that they did comply with what was required and the requirements that have been referred to in the letter were not retrospective. My understanding was that it was always intended to be a fireman's lift. The rest of the Inquiry's questions appear to be irrelevant to me for the same reason.

I confirm this statement to be true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

I confirm that I am willing for this statement to form part of the evidence before the Inquiry and published on the Inquiry's website.

Signed: 

Dated: 7.1.2020

ROBIN CAHALARN