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Oral statement to Parliament

## Statement on the Hackitt Review

Statement on the publication of Dame Judith Hackitt's final report following her Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety.

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From:

Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ministry-of-housing-communities-and-local-government>) and The Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP (<https://www.gov.uk/government/people/james-brokenshire>)

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Mr Speaker, with permission, I would like to make a statement on the publication of Dame Judith Hackitt's final report (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-review-of-building-regulations-and-fire-safety-final-report>) following her Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/independent-review-of-building-regulations-and-fire-safety-hackitt-review>).

Honourable and Right Honourable Members will be aware that my predecessor and the then Home Secretary asked Dame Judith to carry out this review following the Grenfell Tower fire.

We are approaching one year on from this tragic event and those affected are firmly in our minds.

I met some of the bereaved and survivors as soon as I could after I was appointed.

And this just strengthened my determination to ensure that they continue to receive the support they need.

And to ensure that we learn from this tragedy so nothing like this can ever happen again.

It's with this in mind that Dame Judith was asked to undertake her review of the existing system as part of a comprehensive response to the fire.

I want to pay tribute to Dame Judith and all those who contributed to this important report.

## **Hackitt Review and government response**

Mr Speaker, its publication is a watershed for everyone who has a stake in ensuring that the people living in buildings like Grenfell Tower are safe – and feel safe.

Dame Judith is clear that the current system - developed over many years and successive governments – is not fit for purpose.

She is calling for major reform and a change of culture, with the onus more clearly on everyone involved to manage the risks they create at every stage and government doing more to set and enforce high standards.

This government agrees with that assessment and supports the principles behind the report's recommendations for a new system.

We agree with the call for greater clarity and accountability over who is responsible for building safety during the construction, refurbishment and on-going management of high-rise homes.

The Hackitt review has shown that in too many cases people who should be accountable for fire safety have failed in their duties.

In future, the government will ensure that those responsible for a building must demonstrate they have taken decisive action to reduce building safety risks and will be held to account.

We agree that the system should be overseen by a more effective regulatory framework, including stronger powers to inspect high-rise buildings and sanctions to tackle irresponsible behaviour.

We agree that there should be no buck passing between different parts of the industry and that everyone needs to work together to change the system.

And, crucially – given the concerns raised following the Grenfell tragedy – we agree that residents must be empowered with relevant information.

They must be able to act to make their homes safer.

Mr Speaker, this review has implications for government as a whole.

I am committing today to bring forward legislation that delivers meaningful and lasting change and gives residents a much stronger voice in an improved system of fire safety.

Changing the law will take time.

But as Dame Judith acknowledges, we can – and must – start changing the culture and practice right now.

As a first step, we are asking everyone involved to have their say on how we can achieve this by contacting us by the end of July.

Their response will inform a more detailed statement to the House in the autumn on how we intend to implement the new regulatory system.

I will also update the House on progress before Summer Recess.

Mr Speaker, we all have a role to play.

For our part, this government has accepted and been implementing the recommendations that relate to us since Dame Judith published her interim report in December.

Firstly, we are consulting on significantly restricting or banning the use of “desktop studies” to assess cladding systems.

Inappropriate use of desktop studies is unacceptable and I will not hesitate to ban them if the consultation – which closes on 25 May – does not demonstrate that they can be used safely.

Secondly, we are working with industry to clarify Building Regulations fire safety guidance, and I will publish this for consultation in July.

Let me be clear, the cladding believed to be on Grenfell Tower was unlawful under existing building regulations. It should not have been used.

I will ensure that there is no room for doubt over what materials can be used safely in cladding of high rise residential buildings.

Having listened carefully to concerns, the government will consult on banning the use of combustible materials in cladding systems on high-rise residential buildings.

Thirdly, we will work with the industry to make the wider suite of building regulations guidance more user-friendly.

## **Building safety**

Mr Speaker, all of this continues our work to ensure that people are safe.

Since the Grenfell tragedy, my department has worked with fire and rescue services, local authorities and landlords to:

- identify high rise buildings with unsafe cladding
- ensure interim measures are in place to reduce risks
- and give building owners clear advice about what they need to do, over the longer term, to make buildings safe

In addition, I am issuing a direction (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/building-safety-programme-secretary-of-state-direction-to-local-housing-authorities>) today to all local housing authorities to pay particular regard to cladding-related issues when reviewing housing in their areas.

Remediation work has started on two thirds of buildings in the social housing sector and we have called on building owners in the private sector to follow the example set by the social sector and not pass costs on to leaseholders.

I find it outrageous that some private sector landlords have been so slow to cooperate with us on this vital work.

I am calling on them to do the right thing.

If they don't, I am ruling nothing out at this stage.

## Remediation announcement

As the Prime Minister announced yesterday (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-announces-it-will-fully-fund-unsafe-cladding-removal-in-social-housing>), the government will fully fund the removal and replacement of potentially dangerous cladding by social landlords with costs estimated at £400 million.

This will ensure that they can focus their efforts on making ACM cladding systems safe for the buildings they own.

We want to allocate this funding for remediation as soon as possible and will announce more details shortly, including how we will encourage landlords to continue to pursue other parties for costs where they are responsible or at fault.

We will also continue to offer financial flexibilities for local authorities who need to undertake essential fire safety work.

## Conclusion

Mr Speaker, we must create a culture that truly puts people and their safety first.

That inspires confidence and, yes, rebuilds public trust.

Dame Judith's review and the significant changes that will flow from it are important first steps... ...helping us ensure that when we say "never again", we mean it.

I commend this Statement to the House.

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