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Building Regulations and Fire Safety

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The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (James Brokenshire)

With permission, I would like to make a statement on the publication of Dame Judith Hackitt's final report following her independent review of building regulations and fire safety.

Members will be aware that my predecessor and the then Home Secretary asked Dame Judith to carry out the review following the Grenfell Tower fire. We are approaching one year on from that 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 that strengthened my determination to ensure that they continue to receive the support they need and that we learn from this tragedy, so that nothing like it can ever happen again. With this in mind, 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.

The report's 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 under 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. The Government agree with that assessment and support 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 ongoing 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 that they have taken decisive action to reduce building safety risks, and that they 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. 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.

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 the summer recess.

We all have a role to play. For our part, the Government have accepted and have been implementing the recommendations that relate to us since Dame Judith published her interim report in December. First, 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.

All 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 that 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 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 slow to co-operate with us on this vital work. I am calling on them to do the right thing. If they do not, I am not ruling anything out at this stage.

As the Prime Minister announced yesterday, 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 landlords can focus their efforts on making ACM—aluminium composite material—cladding systems safe for the buildings they own. We want to allocate this funding for remediation as soon as possible. We 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 that need to undertake essential fire safety work.

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 to ensure that when we say, “Never again”, we mean it. I commend this statement to the House.

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John Healey (Wentworth and Dearne) (Lab)

I thank the Secretary of State for the advance copy of his statement this morning. I join him in thanking Dame Judith Hackitt and her team for all the work that they have done on this review. This is, as she says, a complex and confusing area.

Our building safety system catastrophically failed the residents of Grenfell Tower and has proved to be comprehensively flawed when over 300 other tower blocks around the country are wrapped in the same dangerous, unsafe cladding. Dame Judith said this morning:

“This is a broken system and it needs to be fixed.”

But while there are some welcome reforms in her report, it will not do that. Why no ban on combustible cladding and insulation? It really beggars belief that the report continues to give a green light to combustible materials on high-rise blocks. I say to the Secretary of State: do not consult on it—do it. Seventy-two people died in Grenfell Tower. Australia had a high-rise fire in 2014; it now has a ban. Dubai had a high-rise

fire in 2015; it has a ban. We must do the same. We owe it to the Grenfell residents and we owe it to residents living today in other tower blocks with the same Grenfell-style cladding. The Secretary of State was here yesterday when MPs on both sides of the House argued for this. Even Dame Judith Hackitt was reported this morning as saying that that she would support the Secretary of State if he did this—just after ruling it out, of course, in her own report.

There are some steps that Dame Judith recommends that are welcome and that would help, such as clearer duties on those responsible for building safety and new ways for residents to have their concerns heard and acted on. I have to say, however, that too many sections of this report read like an industry insider urging reform without rocking the boat, referring to “culture change”, “clearer guidance”, a “less prescriptive system” and “greater responsibility” from some of those who have been cutting corners to cut costs in the current system.

I say to the Secretary of State that this is a missed opportunity to set clear-cut new standards that ensure that a disaster like Grenfell Tower can never happen again. With regard to what is not in this report, will he explain why and what he is going to do about those matters? They include not only having no ban on combustible cladding systems, but having no bar on desktop studies for safety clearance without testing, no plan for fitting sprinklers, no timetable for new safety regulations in legislation and no powers or tough enough sanctions to compel private block owners to get fire tests done and then get vital safety work done.

The Secretary of State cannot simply hold this report at arm's length and say it is out for comment and consultation. This review was commissioned by the Government, with a chair picked by the Government, working with support from Government staff. He says that in principle he accepts the recommendations. While I agree that he can endorse some of the recommendations, he must reject others that fall short and he must act where recommendations are missing. If all he does in practice is accept the recommendations, the division of opinion in this House will not be between his side and ours, but between both sides and his Front Bench. This is not a matter of party

politics; it is a matter of public safety, public confidence and, above all, a national response that measures up to the tragedy—the national tragedy—of the Grenfell Tower fire.

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James Brokenshire

While I welcome the right hon. Gentleman's kind comments on the words of Dame Judith and her team in what I think is a comprehensive report—looking at the end-to-end system and at culture, but also making recommendations on strong enforcement and criminal sanctions—I urge him to look at it very carefully before rushing to judgment on all its different sections. He may not agree with certain sections, and he is entitled to take that view, but I think he will recognise the real intent of someone who is independent and has significant health and safety experience to bring about a shift in a system that, as we mutually accept, is not fit for purpose.

This report will no doubt be subject to further debate, and it is important that there is time for feedback on each of the different recommendations and points that are made, because of the complexity, depth and detail of them, so that we get this right. With a shared sense of what is cross-party and what is cross-community, that is absolutely what we want to achieve. That is why it is important to get feedback on and input into the report's recommendations.

I underline this Government's seriousness of intent. That is why I have today said that we will consult on the banning of combustible materials—I look forward to bringing the details to the House in due course—and why I have said what I have about desktop studies. I want to inject a sense of pace into the process. I have acknowledged that the legislation that may flow from this will take time, and we want to work with parties across the House to ensure that it is got right. Equally, however, I recognise that there are steps that may not require legislation that we should get on and take, and I am committed to taking that forward as Secretary of State.

I encourage Members on both sides of the House to look carefully at Dame Judith's comprehensive recommendations. They should recognise that, on the issue of cladding systems, she acknowledges:

"A clearer, more transparent and more effective specification and testing regime of construction products must be developed. This should include products as they are put together as part of a system."

We also recognise that, and we are bringing forward the consultation I have announced in my statement today so that we can actually make the difference we all want by making these changes and ensuring that our system and our high-rise buildings are safe.

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Justine Greening (Putney) (Con)

I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement. I also welcome him to his new role, in which I know he will perform admirably.

Many of us representing constituencies in London, who were hugely shocked by what happened at Grenfell, have people living in high-rise blocks in our communities, who will be affected by the actions that now need to be taken. I welcome the announcement yesterday of the additional £400 million for local authorities and housing associations. Will he set out what processes are in place for getting that resourcing to local councils?

May I also encourage my right hon. Friend to look at the fact that many councils, such as Wandsworth, are spending much more resourcing than goes purely on the work that needs to be done to replace the cladding on buildings such as Sudbury House in my constituency, including the expense of sprinklers? As he said, it is important that as well as being safe, people also feel safe. Over the coming weeks and months, will he reflect on those costs and local authorities' liability for them?

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James Brokenshire

I am very grateful to my right hon. Friend for her question. I do understand the concerns that Members on both sides of the House, including those in London, understandably have following the appalling tragedy of Grenfell. I can tell her that we will be providing details for local authorities and housing associations about how they can access the funding. We are working at pace to ensure that the relevant information and guidance is given, because I am certainly very conscious that we want to allocate the funding for remediation as soon as possible. I will announce more details shortly.

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Mr Clive Betts (Sheffield South East) (Lab)

I thank the Secretary of State for his statement. As he knows, the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee is taking evidence from Dame Judith this afternoon. Once we have heard from her and had a chance to read the report in detail, I am sure the Select Committee will want to let him have our comments, and we will pass them on before the deadline of 25 July that he has set for such comments to be received.

May I ask about the specific issue of combustible materials used in cladding on high-rise buildings? Shortly after the interim report, the Select Committee called for such materials to be banned. We took up that issue with Dame Judith, and we wrote to the then Secretary of State and other Ministers about it. I welcome the fact that the Secretary of State is now going to consult on banning combustible materials. Will the consultation on a ban apply to regulations for new buildings and the refurbishment of existing buildings, or does he intend to apply the regulations retrospectively to all existing buildings, so that if the consultation goes in such a direction, combustible materials will be taken off all existing buildings to make people safe?

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James Brokenshire

I certainly recognise the importance of the contribution made by the Select Committee on these issues and of the hon. Gentleman's points. I note that Dame Judith is providing further evidence this afternoon, and I look forward to hearing from the Committee about its recommendations.

The point is that we firmly want to consult on the issue of combustible materials because of the concerns that the hon. Gentleman and others, including in the industry, have raised. I will come forward with further details, and I will obviously publish the details of the consultation's scale and extent. The clear intent is to ensure that there are not combustible materials on buildings—fire safety issues are of paramount importance in what we are doing—and I will certainly reflect further and carefully on the points that the hon. Gentleman has made.

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Mr Mark Prisk (Hertford and Stortford) (Con)

This is a technical report by a leading technician, but it has a glaring omission. For the public and indeed for the people in Grenfell to have confidence in any new system, all combustible materials in external cladding and insulation must be banned. Anything less will not do. I really welcome the tone and substance of what the Secretary of State has said, but I hope he will take this opportunity for a cross-party initiative to ensure that this kind of thing never happens again.

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James Brokenshire

I am very grateful to my hon. Friend for his comments. I am in no doubt about the strength of feeling that he expresses. Such strength of feeling exists not just in the House but outside, which is why I judge it right that we consult on this issue and take it forward in the way I have outlined. I look forward to advancing the consultation and to hearing the responses.

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Ms Karen Buck (Westminster North) (Lab)

Not only is it nearly a year since the Grenfell disaster, but it is nine years since the Lakanal fire, which should have set alarm bells ringing about the weakness of building regulation. The Hackitt review is strong in its critique of regulatory failure, but it is profoundly disappointing in the strength of the recommendations it makes. I do not understand—perhaps the Secretary of State will help us to understand—how Dame Judith can this morning be reported as saying that she would support a Government ban on the use of combustible materials, but the report does not actually include such a direct recommendation. Will he take this opportunity to mark the anniversary of Grenfell by making it clear, early enough, that there will be an unambiguous ban? Will he cut through the confusion, and make that a proper memorial to those who died?

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James Brokenshire

I understand the hon. Lady's point. Dame Judith is independent, but her recommendations set out the end-to-end cultural and systemic change that it is important to take forward. I have already pointed to her recommendations about looking for greater clarity on specification, and by consulting in the way I have set out, we are taking that forward and reflecting her concerns. I hope that the hon. Lady will acknowledge what I said about the need to clarify building regulations for fire safety guidance, and as I have said, we will be publishing revised and clarified versions of that guidance for consultation in July.

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Robert Neill (Bromley and Chislehurst) (Con)

May I welcome the positive and constructive tone of my right hon. Friend's statement? Knowing him, I know that he intends to deliver on it fully. As a former Fire Services Minister, may I associate myself with the former Housing Minister, my hon. Friend the

Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr Prisk), given where our experience leads both of us in relation to combustible materials? The Minister made a welcome comment about owners of private blocks who will not step up to their moral responsibilities and shoulder the cost, and I was glad to hear him say that he rules nothing out. Will he keep in close contact with those of us whose constituents, such as mine in Northpoint House in Bromley, may be faced with a situation where the owners will not, or financially cannot, fulfil those responsibilities, and will he see that leaseholders are not left without any recourse?

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James Brokenshire

My hon. Friend makes a powerful and important point about the private sector and remediation, and as I said, I find unacceptable the attitude that has been shown by a number of owners of private blocks. I intend to convene roundtables urgently to make that point crystal clear, and to hear the solutions that are being advanced. As I said, I rule nothing out.

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Helen Hayes (Dulwich and West Norwood) (Lab)

The lack of support in Dame Judith's report for a ban on combustible materials is profoundly disappointing. The Royal Institute of British Architects, whose members specify building materials, supports a ban and is clear that it is not incompatible with the wider change in regulatory framework recommended by Dame Judith. A ban is already in place in many other countries. Survivors of Grenfell, relatives of those who died, and thousands of residents who are currently living in fear in tower blocks across the country are relying on this report to deliver the step change to the construction industry that is needed to keep people safe and rebuild trust. A ban on materials that are developed to make a profit for their manufacturers, but that do not keep members of the public safe in their beds at night, is essential if we are to rebuild that trust. Will

the Secretary of State be unequivocal in his acknowledgment that the report as published does not do that job and is not acceptable? Will he ensure that a ban is introduced without further delay?

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James Brokenshire

I have made my position clear: the report does an excellent job in setting out end-to-end and regulatory issues, specifically in the point about clarification. That is why I made a clear statement of intent about the consultation on banning combustible material. I have listened carefully; I heard the debate in the House yesterday, where a number of these points were raised. It is important to take this step, get on with the consultation, and ensure that we follow this through.

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Mr Bernard Jenkin (Harwich and North Essex) (Con)

My right hon. Friend is obviously coming under a lot of pressure to ban combustible materials on high-rise buildings, but this excellent report does not do that because it would give a false assurance that that one shot would somehow make everything okay, when it would not. Combustible materials are used in all kinds of buildings and all kinds of capacities, but they do not necessarily mean that those buildings are dangerous.

This report represents the importing of an aviation safety culture into the buildings industry, which is probably long overdue. I look forward to a recommendation, perhaps in the Moore-Bick inquiry, that there should be independent incident investigations to ensure that lessons from incidents such as the Lakanal House fire are learned much more comprehensively than they have been in the past. Will the Minister assure the House that the legislation he brings forward will wait until the Moore-Bick inquiry has reported?

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James Brokenshire

My hon. Friend makes an important point about this not being some sort of box-ticking exercise, and about the need to assess—as the report does—different systems that operate around the world, including the benefits and weaknesses of prescriptive or outcomes-based frameworks. There is also the whole issue of safety cases, and about who bears responsibility all the way through the chain, and Dame Judith is right in understanding the need for an effective system. I want feedback from all sides of the House on how we take the issue forward, because it matters that we have a system that is effective and works.

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Clive Efford (Eltham) (Lab)

The Secretary of State is making the same sort of noises as were made after the Lakanal House fire. A date of 25 July takes us beyond the recess, and means that we will not get a statement about the end of the consultation until September at the earliest, or possibly October. Will he bring forward the end of his consultation so that we can hold his feet to the fire and ensure that we deal with this in a timely manner? The least we can expect is a ban on combustible materials as a testament to the people who died in that fire.

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James Brokenshire

I say firmly and fairly to the hon. Gentleman that I intend to make progress. I am certainly not intending to delay or drag things out, which is why I said that I intend to come before the House before the summer recess to give a further update. However, given the nature and complexity of the report, it is right that there is an appropriate time to get feedback on legislation and things that will take time, without delaying where we can actually make progress.

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Sir David Amess (Southend West) (Con)

The all-party fire safety rescue group is delighted that Dame Judith's report has now been published and we can get some action. I welcome my right hon. Friend's approach to this issue, but he knows only too well that our group will not shut up until the consultation period has closed and we get a ban on combustible cladding. He did not seem to say anything about sprinklers in the statement, so I wonder if he could address that.

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James Brokenshire

I am sure that my hon. Friend will continue to make powerful points on behalf of the APPG. I welcome that and the undoubted challenge and input that that will bring. Our advice on sprinklers is clear: for new blocks over 30 metres in height, statutory guidance states that sprinklers should be fitted. For existing buildings, it is for the building owner to decide whether to retrofit. Sprinklers can be an effective fire safety measure, but they are one of many such measures that could be adopted and, as Dame Judith Hackitt points out in her report, no single fire safety measure, including sprinklers, can be seen as a panacea.

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Andy Slaughter (Hammersmith) (Lab)

There is nothing wrong with what is in the Hackitt review; it is what is not in there. We do need a change to processes, systems and culture, but we also need to give confidence now to residents living in high-rise buildings where cladding is being replaced. Yes, we do want a ban on combustible materials and guidance on sprinklers and on means of escape. Dame Judith concludes that prescriptive controls alone are not adequate. That may be right, but we do need prescriptive controls, so in the consultation will the Secretary of State take advice from professional bodies not just on combustible materials, and will the Government listen to that advice and respond as quickly as possible?

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James Brokenshire

We will listen carefully to all inputs. The hon. Gentleman's fundamental point is about reassurance and people feeling safe in their homes. That point is certainly not lost on me. That is why I have said the things I have said today, welcoming and acknowledging the important steps outlined by Dame Judith in her report but equally commenting on a number of other issues as well and on how we are able to make further progress and deliver that overarching safety agenda to which the hon. Gentleman rightly points.

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Vicky Ford (Chelmsford) (Con)

Many of my constituents in Chelmsford travel to London every day and go to work in high-rise buildings. Can the Secretary of State confirm that any new measures for safety and its enforcement will be considered for high-rise office blocks as well as for residential blocks? People should be as safe at work as they are at home.

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James Brokenshire

Many of the report's recommendations are intended to apply only to high-rise residential buildings, but as Dame Judith says the ideas proposed in her report have a broader application, to a wider range of buildings. We will consider that further. I am sure that we will receive further feedback from stakeholders and consider that when we come to this in the autumn.

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Matthew Pennycook (Greenwich and Woolwich) (Lab)

Like others, I welcome the fact that the Secretary of State has made it clear that he will rule nothing out when it comes to forcing action on private freehold developments such as New Capital Quay in Greenwich. That represents progress. May I test whether he understands the urgent need to break the impasse on such developments? Leaseholders are living with not only the anxiety about the long-term costs of remediation, but the daily mounting costs of interim fire safety measures and the fear that they live in homes that are still surrounded by lethal material.

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James Brokenshire

I understand the point that the hon. Gentleman makes about the uncertainty and the cost of interim measures that may be put in place. One developer in Croydon has done the right thing: Barratt Developments has told residents of the Cityscape flats that it will cover fire safety and cladding costs. The message is that others should be doing the same.

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Adam Afriyie (Windsor) (Con)

I am conscious that it is very difficult to define combustibility in technical terms, so can my right hon. Friend reassure me that during the consultation he will be cognisant of the standards that underpin the words we use? One may say that something is non-combustible, but it can be combustible in certain circumstances. So we want to push towards a ban on our general understanding of combustibility, but that must be underpinned by a definition of the standards behind that.

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James Brokenshire

My hon. Friend makes a point about the complexity and technical nature of this issue. I am sure we will reflect carefully as part of the consultation.

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Jim Fitzpatrick (Poplar and Limehouse) (Lab)

While welcoming Dame Judith's recommendations, the new regulatory framework and the sanctions, criminal and otherwise, there is disappointment about some of the omissions this morning. The Secretary of State has done his very best to plug those gaps, but the Government have been promising to revise Approved Document B since 2011. Dame Judith recommends a revision of all the Approved Documents—A to Q. How much longer is this going to take? Will he consider suggesting the relocation of the fire safety regulation and enforcement team from the Home Office to his Department, where it can sit alongside the housing and building regulations section, which seems to be a much better fit?

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James Brokenshire

I am sure that a number of points will be raised during the consultation. The hon. Gentleman has just raised one. On Approved Document B, we have already consulted on changes to that. I can tell him that we intend to complete that work and publish a clarified version of the guidance by July.

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Mary Robinson (Cheadle) (Con)

I welcome the Secretary of State's statement and Dame Judith's report. The construction industry is quite wide and diverse. I note that in the report Dame Judith comments that minimum standards were sometimes seen as

“a high bar to be negotiated down”.

Does he agree that we need the construction industry to look at the report to see what it can do to implement the outcomes?

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James Brokenshire

I agree, which is why I made the point that there are responsibilities on all of us. I have set out a number of actions that the Government are taking but there is also a responsibility on the industry itself. Some of the very powerful comments Dame Judith makes in her report require action not just by the Government but by industry and others.

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Norman Lamb (North Norfolk) (LD)

Will the Secretary of State ensure that there are effective sanctions in building regulations to make sure that those who cut corners in the pursuit of profit are held to account and to provide an effective deterrent? Will he look again at the recent London Assembly report that recommended the installation of sprinklers? It is not good enough to leave it to owners of existing buildings to determine whether to take action. Why is it right that hotel guests are protected by sprinklers, where evidence shows they can eradicate the risk of death, while high-rise occupants are not so protected?

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James Brokenshire

I encourage the right hon. Gentleman to look at chapter two of the final report, which sets out a number of different steps on enforcement:

“Failure by relevant dutyholders to comply with either type of notice”—

there is a prohibition or stop notice and an improvement notice—

“would be a criminal offence.”

When he reads the report in detail, I think he will see the seriousness and robustness of Dame Judith’s recommendations and therefore the changes that need to happen.

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Kevin Hollinrake (Thirsk and Malton) (Con)

I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement and the fact that he has gone a significant step further forward than the Hackitt review recommendations on the key issue of combustibility. In a letter to the Chair of the Select Committee, Dame Judith explains that there are two ways to work with the current guidance: either using products of limited combustibility in cladding systems or undergoing a full system test. She says her clear view is that the former

“is undoubtedly the lower risk option.”

It is therefore surprising she is not recommending that approach. However, I welcome the Secretary of State's consultation. The issue with large-scale tests is that they do not reflect real world conditions, so we will need to consider that in the consultation. Can he confirm that the consultation will consider external cladding and insulation in terms of limited combustibility or non-combustibility?

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James Brokenshire

My hon. Friend makes some powerful and important points about the nature of a system, the external cladding, how that fits within certain other structures and systems and what that actually means. That is why it is right that we look at the consultation in that way. He points to important recommendations that Dame Judith makes. Equally, she has made clear statements about what system products can and cannot be used for, how they should be developed and their use made essential. When we look at the report, both in terms of its specificity and broad nature, it points to significant change. As he rightly says, I want to consult on combustibility and get on with this.

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Anneliese Dodds (Oxford East) (Lab/Co-op)

Fire safety regulations were wrongly covered by the one in, two out statement of new regulation. Will the Secretary of State commit today to excluding fire safety regulations from the statement's successor, the business impact target, which is currently being devised for this Parliament?

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James Brokenshire

What I would say directly to the hon. Lady is that we need to get this right. We have had a comprehensive set of recommendations from Dame Judith, which will require legislation. We are determined to look at that carefully to ensure that we are able to consult and get the right legislation before the House. That is my driving priority.

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Tom Pursglove (Corby) (Con)

I welcome the fact that the Government have committed to covering the costs of replacing cladding on local authority and housing association properties. Has that offer been formally articulated? I also agree with my right hon. Friend's comments on private developers. As far as I am concerned, they need to stand up, show responsibility and get on with it.

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James Brokenshire

I wholly endorse what my hon. Friend has said in relation to the private sector. On the public sector, as I indicated in an earlier response, we are formulating our detailed guidance and information to go to local authorities but my intent is to see that that money is deployed as quickly as possible.

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Matt Rodda (Reading East) (Lab)

I welcome Dame Judith's recommendations. Does the Secretary of State now recognise the need for clarity across the building industry? When will new standards be in place?

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James Brokenshire

We have talked about Approved Document B and other planning guidance. I want that to be out before the summer. We have had some consultation, but we need to make progress. I think that underlines my clear, driving desire to get on with things where we can but, obviously, where longer-term reform is necessary, to consider carefully to get it right.

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