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THE PRIME MINISTER

2 June 2020

Dear Sir Martin,

I wrote to you in January to confirm that the Government had accepted in principle all of the recommendations in your Phase 1 report. I am writing to you, six months on from the publication of your report, to update you on the Government's progress at turning those commitments into real and lasting change to building and fire safety.

Firstly, I would like to reassure you that, even in these unprecedented times, the Government's commitment to implementing your recommendations, as a priority, remains unchanged. As does my commitment to ensuring those most affected, the bereaved and survivors, continue to be engaged in discussions about policy development.

The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government has today published a statement, updating Parliament on our progress in response to your recommendations, which covers our work on banning the use of combustible materials in and on the external walls of buildings; speeding up the remediation of unsafe cladding systems; the introduction of the Fire Safety Bill to Parliament; the review of the stay put strategy and the wider review of Approved Document B; and our aim to publish a draft Building Safety Bill before summer recess. I am pleased to say that the Fire Safety Bill is progressing through Parliament. There is also news of a public consultation, to be issued soon, setting out the Government's proposed approach to your remaining recommendations that call for legislative change.

Many of the recommendations within the Inquiry's Phase 1 report were directed at non-Government organisations, and today's statement also highlights the work by the London Fire Brigade and the National Fire Chiefs' Council, to implement your recommendations and drive real change across the fire and rescue services.

I attach a copy of the statement to this letter.

The Grenfell fire was an unimaginable tragedy that must never be allowed to happen again. Your Inquiry is playing a vital role in providing justice for the victims and their families who have displayed such remarkable courage, resilience and dignity.

I was encouraged to hear that document disclosure, witness preparation and other analysis and investigative work of the inquiry continues in spite of the suspension of hearings and that you are exploring options to enable the evidential hearings to restart in July. I would be grateful if you could keep me updated on your plans and on their impact on the Inquiry's timetable.

I would like to confirm that the Cabinet Office has engaged the executive search company, Perrett Laver, to identify a shortlist of suitable candidates for the vacant panel member role. This work is progressing well.

I hope that you, the Grenfell community and the wider public are reassured that in spite of current events, Government action to address your recommendations continues at pace, and that, as Minister responsible for the Inquiry, my personal commitment to the Inquiry remains firm.

Best wishes  
Yours sincerely  
David

The Right Honourable Sir Martin Moore-Bick

## **WMS – Grenfell Update**

On 30 October 2019 Phase 1 of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry, which focused on how the fire started and spread and the emergency response, concluded with the publication of the Phase 1 report. In January 2020 the Government reaffirmed the acceptance, first given on the day of publication, to accept in principle, all the recommendations that Sir Martin Moore-Bick made for central government in that report.

Six months on from the publication of the Government's response to the Phase 1 report, I would like to update Parliament on the Government's progress at turning our commitments into real and lasting change to building and fire safety.

The Grenfell fire was an unimaginable tragedy that must never be allowed to happen again. Even in these unprecedented times, the Government's commitment to implementing the Inquiry's recommendations, as a priority, remains unchanged. As does the Government's commitment to ensuring those most affected, the bereaved and survivors – who have displayed such remarkable courage, resilience and dignity – continue to be engaged in discussions about policy development.

### **Ban on the use of combustible materials**

The Inquiry's report was clear that the use of Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) rainscreen cladding and combustible insulation on the exterior of the Tower was the defining factor in the rapid spread of the fire. The Government introduced regulations in December 2018 that banned the use of combustible materials in and on the external walls of specific types of new high-rise buildings. A public consultation was held between January and May 2020, to further explore and refine the scope of that ban – including a proposal to ban the use of ACM with unmodified polyethylene core and similar materials on all buildings in England. We are analysing feedback and will be publishing a response in due course.

### **Remediation**

Since the Grenfell Tower fire, MHCLG and the Home Office have identified over 450 buildings with unsafe ACM cladding, and we have worked with Local Authorities and fire and rescue authorities to ensure that appropriate interim safety measures are in place, while these buildings undergo remediation.

In March this year the Government announced that it will provide £1 billion to fund the removal and replacement of unsafe non-ACM cladding systems. This is in addition to the £600 million which Government has made available for remediation of the highest risk ACM cladding. The prospectus for this fund was launched last month and sets out the buildings and non-ACM cladding systems that are eligible for funding and registration is now open for potential applicants, in advance of the full application process opening by the end of July 2020. More information on the Fund Prospectus can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/remediation-of-non-acm-buildings#prospectus---outlining-eligibility-for-the-fund>.

This fund will meet the cost of remediating unsafe non-ACM cladding systems where building owners (or other entities legally responsible for making buildings safe) are unable to do so. Government are also providing additional, specialist project management capability to building owners or managing agents to speed up the development and implementation of building plans.

### **The Fire Protection Board**

The Government has also established a Fire Protection Board, chaired by the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), to provide greater assurance to central government of Fire and Rescue Service protection activity. The Board is leading a Building Risk Review Programme, supported by government funding to ensure that all high-rise residential buildings of 18m or above are inspected or reviewed by the end of 2021. We are also using a proportion of the additional £20m secured for fire and rescue services in the recent Budget to further support an uplift in protection capability.

### **Stay Put**

At the end of last year, a joint Home Office (HO) and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) steering group was set up to support a technical review of stay put. There are three strands to this work: an evidence review, assessing academic evidence on methods of evacuation; operational research to test evacuation strategies; and building design research. The first stage of this work has been commissioned and is underway whilst preliminary work is being carried out on the other strands.

### **Building safety**

At the heart of the Government's radical reforms to building safety is the new Building Safety Regulator, which we are establishing within the Health and Safety Executive. The Government set out plans in our response to the 'Building a Safer Future' consultation for the biggest change in building safety for a generation.

The new regulator will be responsible for implementing and enforcing a more stringent regulatory regime for higher risk buildings, as well as providing wider and stronger oversight of safety and performance across all buildings and increasing the competence of those working on building safety. This work complements the establishment of a new construction products regulatory role to strengthen national oversight and effectively enforce the new regulatory regime.

The Government will soon be publishing the draft Building Safety Bill for scrutiny before it is introduced in Parliament. This Bill will put in place this new and enhanced regulatory regimes for building safety and construction products, and ensure residents have a stronger voice.

In April, the Government published a workplan detailing the next steps for the wider review of Approved Document B, following the technical review that was started in December 2018. Research will be carried out in areas such as means of escape, compartmentation and toxicity. This work will build on the changes we have published in an update to Approved Document B last month, so that sprinklers and wayfinding signage will be provided in all new blocks of flats above 11 metres. The Government is also working with the NFCC on further tests of evacuation with a view to including guidance on provision of these systems in a later update to Approved Document B.

### **Fire Safety Bill**

The Inquiry's Phase 1 report also called for new duties on building owners and managers to share technical information with fire and rescue services and undertake regular inspections of flat entrance doors. It is our intention to take forward these recommendations for existing buildings under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 underpinned by the changes being introduced through the Fire Safety Bill.

The Fire Safety Bill, which was introduced in March and received cross-party support, clarifies that the scope of the Fire Safety Order covers external walls (including cladding and balconies) and flat entrance doors in multi-occupied residential buildings. It provides a firm foundation upon which to bring forward secondary legislation to implement the recommendations that require further changes to the law. The Bill is a significant further step to ensure better identification and management of fire safety risks in such buildings.

It is important that the Government's response to the Inquiry's recommendations has the support of those with experience in these matters, and those most affected by them. To ensure their views inform our response, a public consultation will be issued soon setting out the Government's proposed approach to the remaining recommendations that call for legislative change.

### **Fire and Rescue Services**

Many of the recommendations within the Inquiry's Phase 1 report were directed at non-Government organisations that are equally committed to the reforms. The report was clear that the London Fire Brigade (LFB) must learn and change to restore public confidence. Our request for regular progress reports from the LFB setting out how they are translating the recommendations into action are a key part of retaining focus and momentum on the need for change.

There remains much to do, but the Home Office is already seeing a commitment to revised policy and procedures backed up by the use of better equipment and technology to support high-rise fire fighting and fire fighting in London more broadly. The pandemic has created many challenges, but it has not affected the LFB's commitment to implementing the Inquiry's Phase 1 recommendations.

It is important that the lessons from Grenfell are learned beyond London. This is why the NFCC is working to ensure that the Phase 1 recommendations are implemented across all fire and rescue services. The Home Office is working closely with the NFCC on an improvement plan to help it drive real change across the sector.

In the three years since the Grenfell Tower fire, the Government has remained steadfast in its commitment to driving forward both cultural and legislative change so that no such tragedy can ever be allowed to happen again. Through implementation of the reforms highlighted in this statement, and wider work of Government and our stakeholders, we will move from the conditions that allowed a tragedy like the fire at Grenfell Tower to occur almost three years ago, to a system which ensures developers and building owners demonstrate greater responsibility for the safety of residents and which allows local authorities and fire and rescue authorities to enforce this. The Government is firmly committed to ensuring all residents are safe in their homes, now and in the future.