



Grenfell environmental checks – last month’s virtual community event, next steps and opportunities to be involved

In summary:

- At our virtual community event on 20 July, residents had the opportunity to ask questions to the scientists who are carrying out, supporting or overseeing the environmental checks.
- You can watch a video of the event on YouTube at: <https://youtu.be/hxyfql-ePno>. You can also see a summary of the questions and answers from the event in this community update.
- We are making progress on Stage 2 and the next step will be the site ‘walkovers’ during the weeks of **17 and 24 August**, to survey the 34 locations identified for sampling.
- There will be opportunities for you to take part in the site walkovers and safety will be our priority.

Stage 1 of the two-stage environmental checks into potential land contamination around the Grenfell Tower site was carried out in spring and summer 2019. A [full report on the results](#) was published in October 2019.

Stage 1 involved a site survey, exploratory soil testing and a pilot study to inform the approach to Stage 2. The results of Stage 1 indicated that the levels of chemicals found in the soil were consistent with those generally found in London and that there was no increased risk to health from land contamination because of the Grenfell Tower fire.

To reduce uncertainty about any health risks, Stage 2 will involve an investigation of the area involving more detailed soil sampling. The results will be used to consider any possible risks to public health. The initial design for Stage 2 was developed by AECOM, the independent specialists, from the findings of the research, the sampling and the results from Stage 1. This was published on gov.uk as [Technical Note 18](#).

Stage 2 will focus on the chemicals where a potential ‘significant contaminant linkage’ was found under Stage 1. This means the link between the chemicals found in the soil, how people could come into contact with them and who or what may be affected as a result. These chemicals are lead and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), as under Stage 1 these chemicals exceeded screening levels in some areas. These contaminants are commonly found in urban areas and in most cases were within the normal background range for London, which means they could have originated from historic sources.

In addition, dioxins and furans will be investigated further as these chemicals are particularly associated with fires, and asbestos will also be investigated further.

Virtual community event

Our first virtual community event took place on Monday 20 July and the panel comprised of:

- Professor Alan Penn, Chief Scientific Adviser – Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
- Professor Gideon Henderson, Chief Scientific Adviser – Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
- David Dyson, Project Manager – AECOM
- Dr Paul Nathanail – the Suitably Qualified Person
- Suzanne Kochanowski, Deputy Director – MHCLG

Over 40 people took part in the event and the panel received 30 questions. If you were unable to attend you can watch the video of the event on YouTube at: <https://youtu.be/hxyfql-ePno>. You can find a summary of the questions and answers below, along with responses to the questions that we did not have time to answer. A full transcript of the question and answer session is available, please contact us using the details below if you would like a copy.

We would welcome your feedback on the community event and whether you think a follow up session would be helpful. We want to give you as much opportunity to hear directly from the scientists as we can.

If you do have a question for one of the scientists you can email the environmental-checks@communities.gov.uk inbox. Your email will be forwarded to the appropriate scientist for a response from them. The question and answer will also be shared in the next community update so that other residents can see it.

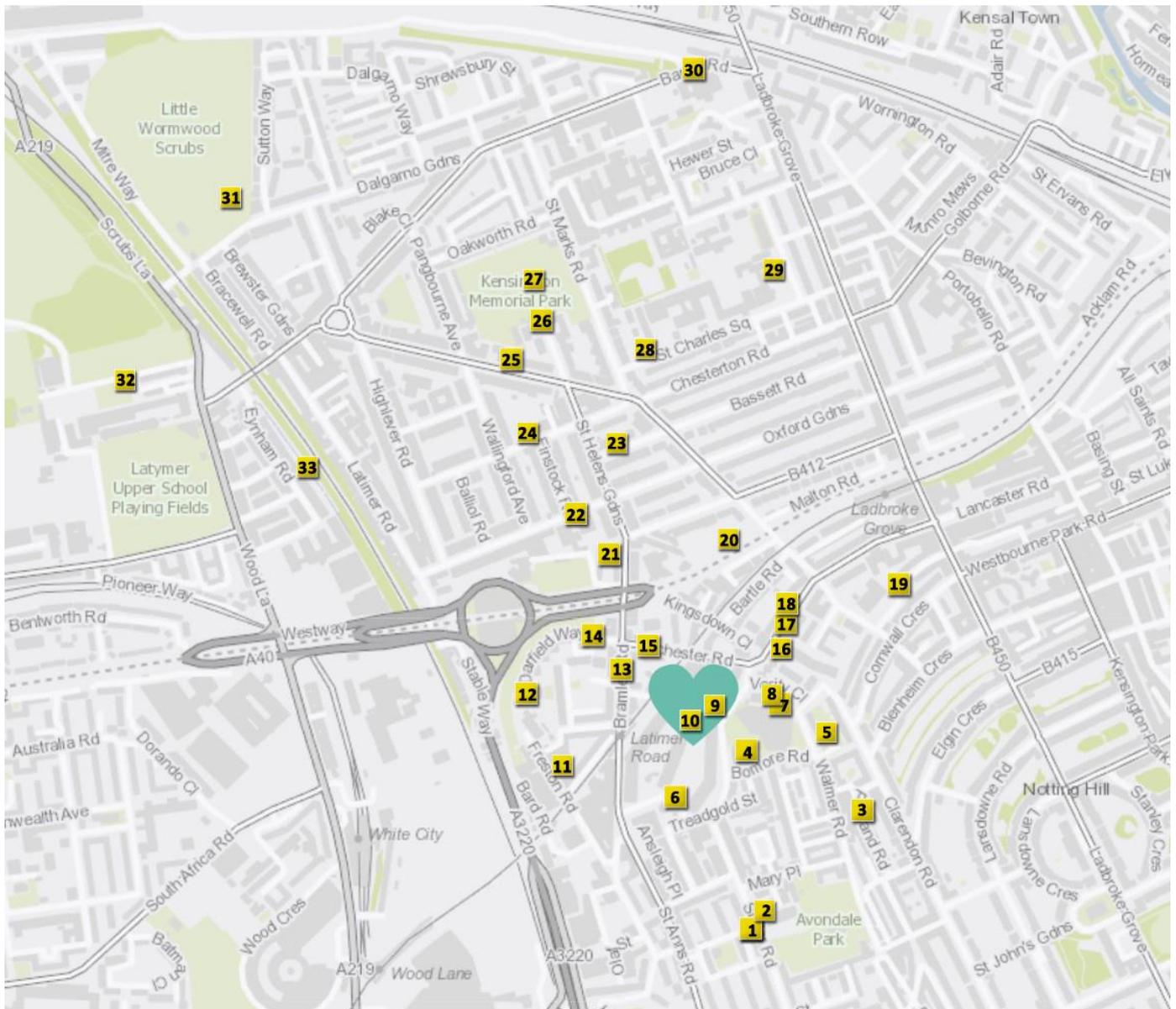
Next steps and opportunities to be involved

A timeline showing what will happen next and the opportunities to be involved during Stage 2 is below:



The next step will be the site walkovers, during which AECOM will survey the 34 locations identified in Stage 1 to check they are suitable. This will involve looking around each location to identify areas where samples could be taken and having discussions with the residents and schools about how the soil is used and any additional information that may be relevant. For example, if the soil has recently been changed. If a location is found not to be suitable, AECOM will identify an alternative location nearby.

Following community feedback during Stage 1 schools, nurseries and community gardens where fruit and vegetables are grown have been prioritised for potential sampling. The locations are primarily within an area up to 1km radius from Grenfell Tower in a north west direction and 500m in all other directions. This is based on where residents told us you found debris and the direction of the smoke plume. The locations are shown below:



Schools and nurseries

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| 2. St Anne’s and Avondale Park | 6. St Francis of Assisi |
| 11. Latymer Alternative Provision Academy | 16. Grenfell Creche |
| 19. Thomas Jones | 20. Kids on the Green/Maxilla Walk |
| 22. Oxford Gardens | 23. Bassett House/St Helen’s Church |
| 24. New Studio Pre-School | 29. All Saints Catholic College |

30. Barlby

32. Burlington Danes

Community gardens/kitchen gardens

1. Henry Dickens Court
4. Treadgold House
8. The Grove
14. Darfield Way
21. Robinson House
27. Kensington Memorial Park (St Mark's Park)

3. Portland Road
5. Allom and Barlow Houses
13. Bramley House
17. Morland House
25. St Quintin Gardens
28. Equal People

Open Spaces and other areas

7. Verity Close
10. Hurstway, Grenfell, Testerton and Barandon Walks
18. Wesley Square
31. Little Wormwood Scrubs
34. Longstone Avenue, Brent (not shown on the map)

9. Lancaster Green
12. Markland House
15. Whitstable House
26. Kensington Memorial Park
33. Eynham Road

We are currently progressing plans for site walkovers to take place safely during the weeks of **17 and 24 August**. We are working with residents' associations and community groups to agree arrangements and we are asking them to nominate participants for the walkovers. If you would like to be involved, please let your community group or residents' association know. Participants at each of the 34 locations will need to be limited to six people from different households (including two from AECOM) in order to comply with current government guidance on COVID-19.

Questions and answers

Thank you very much to all of you who submitted questions to the scientists at the virtual community event. Below is a summary of the questions and answers that we received on the day, which have been grouped under the following headings:

- Environmental checks
- Trust in the process
- Health
- Additional questions

Environmental checks

Q. How did you choose the locations for sampling in Stage 2?

The 34 testing locations that have been proposed for sampling during Stage 2 are based on AECOM's findings from Stage 1. The locations are primarily up to a 1km radius from the Tower to the north west, based on information on the smoke plume and wind direction and 500m in all other directions. This reflects the feedback from residents on where they found debris. There are two locations that are beyond the 1km radius, one in Hammersmith and Fulham and the other in Brent, which is a few kilometres away.

Following community feedback locations such as schools, nurseries and community gardens, where fruit and vegetables are grown are being prioritised for sampling during Stage 2.

Q. What chemicals will you test for in Stage 2?

The results from Stage 1 found that the levels of chemicals found across the area are typical of those generally found in London. Stage 2 will involve further sampling, mainly focusing on lead and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) as under Stage 1 these chemicals exceeded screening levels in some areas. These contaminants are commonly found in urban areas and in most cases were within the normal background range for London, which means they could have originated from historic sources.

In addition, dioxins and furans will be investigated further as these chemicals are particularly associated with fires, and asbestos will also be investigated further. This will lead to a detailed health risk assessment, which will inform any changes to public health advice, if needed

Q. Is the air safe to breathe?

Air quality in the area surrounding Grenfell Tower has been assessed and monitored since the fire on 14 June 2017. The initial risk assessments, which were carried out with partner agencies, focussed on the smoke plume which rose upwards rapidly and was carried in a north westerly direction by the wind. This meant that there was a low risk of impact on local air quality from the fire. Assessment of data from The [London Air Quality Monitoring network](#) was used to confirm the initial risk assessment that levels of particulate matter were low, and remained so over the next 10 days.

Public Health England (PHE) started additional monitoring of air quality close to Grenfell Tower on 24 June 2017 and has not identified any causes for concern. Reports on the air quality in the areas surrounding Grenfell Tower are published weekly.

Q. Is it safe to eat fruit and vegetables that are grown locally?

A. Yes, the advice on growing fruit and vegetables has been reviewed by the Food Standards Agency and has not changed. The advice remains to wash your hands after gardening, working or playing in soil, and wash and peel home-grown fruit and vegetables.

Q: The investigation is meant to be comprehensive so why has there been no indoor testing?

Indoor dust testing would not necessarily provide any information about the health risks due to uncertainty in exposure and intake of any chemicals in the dust. The science advisory group (SAG) examined this issue in detail and asked the multi-agency partnership (MAP) to investigate. SAG agreed with MAP not to do indoor testing as this testing and the analysis of the dust would be unlikely to provide any contaminant linkage between the fire and indoor dust and exposure. This is because of the mixing of any dust with household dust, for example from cleaning products or pets, and from other sources in the outdoor environment such as road traffic.

Q. Have you carried out any testing within the Tower and can we have the results?

The results from the initial soil sampling undertaken within the Tower cordon were included in the [Stage 1 results](#). There has been no testing inside the Tower as part of the environmental checks.

Q. During Stage 1 did you find any contaminants associated with flame retardants?

AECOM tested for flame retardants in all the samples and these were only found in a very few of the samples and not at concentrations that are considered to be a health risk.

Trust in the process

Q. Did you go through a procurement process to appoint AECOM for Stage 2?

A. Yes, following feedback from the community we went to an approved list of suppliers from the [Homes England Framework](#) to enable several appropriately qualified independent specialists to bid. However, there are a limited number of companies who have the necessary expertise and experience to deliver Stage 2. Following initial expressions of interest from ten companies, two of the ten companies responded to the sifting brief. Both were invited to submit a tender. However, only one company, AECOM, responded to the full tender. A thorough process to evaluate the bid took place and MAP and the group of residents who had been involved in the procurement process from the outset unanimously recommended that AECOM be appointed.

Q. Can residents trust the results of the environmental checks?

A high degree of independent scrutiny, going beyond the normal legal framework for a [Part 2A investigation](#), has been built into the programme so that residents can be assured that the work is carried out to the highest professional standards. This includes three levels of independent scrutiny: AECOM the environmental specialists carrying out the checks; the chief scientific advisers and the science advisory group, who are independent scientific experts who oversee the process and the suitably qualified person, who observes and reviews AECOM's work at each stage. (You can find out more about the scientists in our [meet the scientists](#) leaflet).

We have shared all the results from [Stage 1](#) with residents, including the results of every sample that was taken. Residents have also been involved in the environmental checks including informing the testing locations and observing the samples being taken. A small group of residents were also involved in the procurement process to appoint the Stage 2 environmental specialists.

Health

Q. Should we be worried about our health?

The primary objective of the environmental health checks is to identify any health risks that may exist. The levels of chemicals found across the area during Stage 1 are typical of those generally found in London and we do not, at this stage, consider there to be an elevated risk to anyone's health from potential land contamination because of the Grenfell fire. If you are concerned about your health at all, please contact your GP. They will assess your needs and refer you to the right specialist care and the NHS will fast track anyone affected by the fire.

Q. Is the long-term health of the community being monitored?

Yes, the health and wellbeing of residents is being monitored over the next ten years and beyond by gathering data from local GPs to understand and map out any emerging health trends across the community to monitor the long-term impacts of the Grenfell Tower fire.

In addition, the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea is carrying out an annual health and wellbeing survey for five years across the North Kensington wards. The purpose of the survey is to understand the health and wellbeing of the community, including the impact of the Grenfell tragedy. This will be used to inform health services on trends and needs in the community.

Q. Have you considered the community's request to conduct biomonitoring?

The science advisory group (SAG) did consider this request during Stage 1 and asked the multi-agency partnership (MAP) to investigate. SAG accepted MAP's recommendation that there was no scientific or clinical basis for implementing community biomonitoring.

Biomonitoring can identify whether a specific pollutant or set of pollutants are present in the body, but it cannot tell us where these pollutants have come from. We are constantly surrounded by chemicals in our environment, in the air, in the water, in food, products we use and clothes we wear, and biomonitoring results will depend on all of these. It also cannot identify or predict future ill-health.

Additional questions

There were a few questions asked at the event that we were unable to respond to on the day as we ran out of time. These questions and their answers are shown below:

Q. Will you be sharing information from the event?

A video from the event is available on YouTube at: <https://youtu.be/hxyfql-ePno> and the slide pack from the event has been shared with everyone on the environmental checks distribution list.

A summary of the questions and answers from the event is provided within this community update and a transcript of the question and answer session is available. You can request this using the contact details below.

Q. What safe limits for flame retardants were used?

A. The screening levels used were the US Environmental Protection Agency Regional Screening Levels. A range of sources are used for identifying screening levels and in this case the US levels were used as there are no UK values available.

Q. Will a specialised health hub, with experts, be provided in North Kensington to track resident's health?

A. The response to this question will be shared in the next community update.

Q. Have you taken into consideration Coroner Fiona Wilcox's letter with regards to toxicity, contaminates and our health?

A. The response to this question will be shared in the next community update.

Contact us

You can contact us to find out more about the environmental checks:

- Email the team on: environmental-checks@communities.gov.uk
- Call the team on **03034 449 086**
- Download the Nextdoor app or visit www.nextdoor.co.uk and search for **Grenfell Community Updates – HM Government**.
- The Stage 1 report, guide to the environmental checks and meet the scientists leaflet can all be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/soil-and-environmental-checks>