HM Government

Grenfell community updates

# Grenfell environmental checks – Stage 2 soil sampling and next steps

## In summary:

- The Stage 2 soil sampling started on the **22 October** and finished on the **19 November.** In response to feedback from the community, the initial focus was on schools and nurseries during the half term holidays.
- Thank you to everyone for their support during the sampling – it would not have been possible without you. And thank you too for your help in keeping everyone safe, while we carried out the sampling.
- The samples are now being analysed and results will lead to a detailed health and environmental risk assessment. This will inform any changes to public health advice. We expect to be able to share this with you by April next year.
- In the meantime, the existing health advice from Public Health England remains in place.

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. The exploratory soil sampling and a pilot study 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 involves further investigation of the area including more detailed soil sampling. The results will be used to consider any possible risks to public health. You can find out more below.

## Stage 2 soil sampling

The Stage 2 soil sampling was carried out by AECOM, the independent specialists, over five weeks from 22 October to 19 November. The initial focus was on schools and nurseries, during the October half term.

We are grateful to all the residents and community growers who came along to observe the sampling and provide useful input on how the areas are used. It was good to meet new people too and update them on the environmental checks. Keeping everyone safe was our priority and we thank you for your support with this.

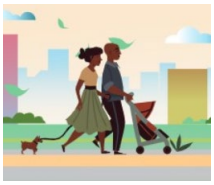
On three of the days, the independent suitably qualified person, Dr Paul Nathanail, observed and reviewed AECOM's work to ensure it was consistent with good practice. He will also check the data and results; this will enable him to sign off the work in accordance with the National Quality Mark Scheme.

## Sampling facts and figures

Samples were collected from **39** areas

**13**
Schools and nurseries

**6**
Allotments / community kitchen gardens



**10**
Public open spaces

**1**
Tower cordon

Plus **9** combined open spaces and community kitchen gardens

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In most areas **10** samples were taken
**440** samples were taken in total
Including **22** duplicates
Most samples were **2, 5** or **20**cm deep
Some samples were **50** to **60**cm deep
**4,856** sample jars were filled

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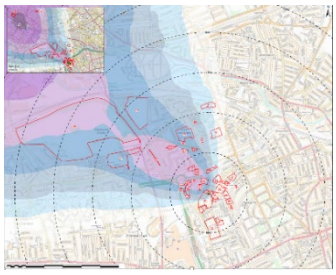

Most areas were within **500**m of Grenfell Tower
**12** areas were within **500**m – **1.5**km of the Tower
**3** areas were over **1.5**km away
The closest sample was taken **10**m from the Tower
The furthest sample was taken **4.8**km away in Brent

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The laboratory is using a **3-tier** approach to test the chemicals
Tier 1 – **All** samples tested for lead, PAHs and asbestos
Tier 2 – **2** in**10** samples tested for dioxins, furans and dioxin-like PCBs + antimony
Tier 3 - **18** samples combined from **3** areas tested for the wider range of potential fire effluents tested during Stage 1, + antimony

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In addition, we collected **59** crop and paired soil samples
Crops came from **11** different areas
Initially, **35** crop and soil sample pairs will be tested

## Sampling steps

Below are the 12 steps involved in taking a soil sample

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 
6. 
7. 
8. 
9. 
10. 
11. 
12. 

1. Identifying the exact location where the sample will be taken
2. Recording the sampling location using GIS mapping, ‘What 3 Words’ locating, and manual tape measurements
3. Preparing to take the sample – the plastic sheeting is changed after each sample
4. Collecting the soil using a trowel or a spade
5. Examining the soil – looking at and recording the different soil types as well as noting any man-made materials (brick, concrete) and potential contamination such as ash
6. Photographing the soil prior to sampling
7. Filling the sample jars with soil – each jar is labelled with the location, sample number and sample depth
8. Photographing all the filled sample jars alongside the sampling location
9. Sample jars are placed in bubble wrap to protect them
10. All equipment is cleaned, plastic sheeting and gloves thrown away
11. Samples are stored in a labelled bag and then in a cool box
12. Samples are ready to be sent to the laboratory for testing

## Next steps

All the soil and the crop samples are now with the laboratory to be analysed. The majority of the soil samples will be tested at Elements Materials Technology, a laboratory specialising in testing soil for environmental contaminants and accredited by the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS).

The crop samples, and a small number of soil samples are being analysed at Fera Science Limited, which specialises in food safety and was recommended by the Food Standards Agency (FSA). The FSA are members of the multi-agency partnership (MAP) – see below.

Once the soil samples have been analysed, AECOM will review the results and prepare a detailed report, which will include a health risk assessment. This will be used to consider any possible risks to public health and recommendations.

All this information will be reviewed by the MAP, who are overseeing the checks; the chief scientific advisers at MHCLG and Defra, who provide the day to day scientific advice and oversight of the checks, and the Science Advisory Group (SAG).

The SAG is chaired by the government's chief scientific adviser, Sir Patrick Vallance, and its members were selected by him based on their scientific expertise. Their role is to quality-check the scientific approach, testing process and analysis of the results.

In addition, the independent Suitably Qualified Person, Dr Paul Nathanail, will review all the information.

The above will take some time, and we expect to be able to share the report, the results and any recommendations with you in April next year. In the meantime, the existing health advice from Public Health England remains in place, this is based on general good practice, for example washing your hands after gardening, working or playing in soil and washing and peeling home-grown fruit and vegetables.

## Contact us

If you have any questions about the environmental checks please contact us on:

- Email the team on: environmental-checks@communities.gov.uk
- Download the Nextdoor app or visit www.nextdoor.co.uk and search for **Grenfell Community Updates – HM Government**.

You can also find lots of information on the environmental checks at: www.gov.uk/guidance/soil-and-environmental-checks

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