

Grenfell environmental checks – next steps

In brief

- a Multi-Agency Partnership has been established to oversee delivery of the environmental checks and advise on the findings
- the Environment Agency has developed a strategy to enable independent specialists to be commissioned to carry the checks
- the Government Chief Scientific Adviser has established an independent Science Advisory Group to review the science and ensure it is robust
- commitment that residents will be able to influence the design and implementation of the investigation through input to the initial assessment and consultation workshops to inform the scope and locations of the sampling
- draft timescales are outlined below

Background

On Friday 26 October, the Government announced that additional environmental checks are to be carried out in and around the Grenfell Tower site. This is to reassure the bereaved, survivors and wider community that any environmental risks to public health will be fully assessed and appropriate action taken.

Here, we set out the next steps, including expected timescales and how the North Kensington community will be involved.

Key questions answered

Who is responsible for delivering the additional environmental checks?

The Government will lead this programme of work.

It is being coordinated by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and involves the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) and the Government Chief Scientific Adviser.

A Multi-Agency Partnership has been established to provide the relevant expertise to design and deliver the additional environmental checks, assess risks to public health and advise health partners on any additional health monitoring and treatment options for residents, should these be required.

The Multi-Agency Partnership is comprised of Public Health England, the Environment Agency, the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, the Food Standards Agency, the Grenfell Tower Site Management team and NHS England.

Independent specialists will be contracted on behalf of the Multi-Agency Partnership to carry out the checks, with funding from the Government.

What will the checks involve?

The Environment Agency, with input from other members of the Multi-Agency Partnership, has developed a strategy to investigate potential contamination of land and water resulting from the Grenfell Tower fire. The investigation will use a phased approach comprising:

Stage 1 – initial risk assessment

This stage will involve collating all relevant background information to identify the areas where the main stage of sampling should be undertaken. It will involve:

- a site survey to define the site area and record any relevant observable information
- exploratory sampling in priority areas
- research to identify what substances are likely to have been released from the fire, where they have likely fallen to ground and how they may have been subsequently dispersed
- background research to identify other potential sources of contamination that might affect the results, such as from a past historical use

The aim is to understand historical sources of pollution, any potential impacts from the fire, and to develop a more detailed specification for the main stage of the site investigation and sampling. A report will be published at the end of Stage 1 setting out the analysis, initial findings and approach to Stage 2.

Stage 2 – site investigation and sampling

This stage will involve carrying out a detailed risk assessment, comprising the site investigation and majority of the sampling. Our expectation is that the site investigation will focus on fire-related debris found outside Grenfell Tower, and shallow soils in public open spaces, gardens and schools. This will be determined by the findings of Stage 1 and community consultation workshops to inform the scope and locations for sampling. Further sampling may be carried out at specific locations if needed, to sample deeper soil, dust from inside buildings, surface water and home-grown fruit and vegetables.

The results from the site investigation will be used to consider the potential risks to public health. A final report and non-technical summary will be published at the end of Stage 2. This will include confirmation of whether any further investigation or

assessment is required, including more detailed investigations of specific land areas or over a wider geographic area.

How quickly will the results be available?

We expect the timescales for the environmental checks to be:

- we have started the procurement of independent specialists to carry out Stage 1. Our aim is that they are in place in early December. They will be appointed based on their environmental expertise and chosen from a network of leading experts. Their work will be overseen by the Multi-Agency Partnership
- stage 1 to be completed (including analysis and verification) with initial findings published in spring 2019
- the conclusions of Stage 1 will inform the timings for Stage 2, but we anticipate that the final report will be published in late summer 2019

How will you ensure that the checks are delivered by independent experts?

Independent specialists will be contracted on behalf of the Multi-Agency Partnership to carry out the checks, with funding from the Government.

To provide independent scientific assurance, the Government Chief Scientific Adviser has established an independent Science Advisory Group to quality-check the scientific methodology, testing process and analysis of results at each stage of the process.

Membership of the Science Advisory Group is:

- Patrick Vallance - Government Chief Scientific Adviser, Government Office for Science
- Lindsay Bramwell - Research Associate in Toxicology, University of Newcastle
- Alexandra Freeman - Executive Director, Winton Institute, University of Cambridge
- Len Levy - Emeritus Professor of Environmental Health, University of Cranfield
- Ragnar Löfstedt - Professor of Risk Management, Kings College London
- Robert Mokaya - Professor of Materials Chemistry, University of Nottingham
- Paul Nathanail - Managing Director, Land Quality Management
- Anthony Newman Taylor, Professor of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, Imperial College London
- Munir Pirmohamed, David Weatherall Chair in Medicine, University of Liverpool

- James Rubin - Reader in Psychology of Emerging Health Risks, Kings College London
- Anna Stec - Professor of Fire Chemistry and Toxicity, University of Central Lancashire
- Chris Whitty - Chief Scientific Adviser, Department of Health and Social Care and Deputy Chief Medical Officer

How will the North Kensington community be involved?

We are committed to engaging local residents with the investigation process from start to finish. We want to understand residents' concerns and local intelligence so that the investigation focuses on these. We commit to ensuring that the community is able to influence the design and implementation of the investigation.

This will include:

- weekly drop-in sessions at The Curve every Tuesday afternoon with Government officials to discuss the programme, ask questions and meet the independent specialists
- opportunities to contribute information and areas of concern to inform the Stage 1 assessment via an online inquiry form and residents survey consultation workshops to inform the scope and locations of the Stage 2 main site investigation and sampling.

Where can I find out more?

Information and regular updates will be made available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/soil-and-environmental-checks>

If you prefer not to attend the drop-in sessions, you can contact environmental-checks@communities.gov.uk or telephone 0303 444 0078 with any concerns or questions you may have.

What should I do if I am concerned about my health because of the Grenfell Tower fire?

If you have any concerns regarding your health, please contact your GP for an appointment or NHS 111.

The local NHS is offering extra health checks for any local resident who wants one. You should arrange this with your GP.

The NHS has also arranged drop-in health advice clinics for anyone affected by the Grenfell tragedy. More information can be found at: <https://www.grenfell.nhs.uk>

The additional environmental checks will inform the assessment of risk to public health and whether any additional action is necessary.

Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea Council and the local NHS are also drawing up plans to review the health records of local people to see if there are any trends which might be a cause for concern.