



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

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Dear All

We wanted to write to update you on important progress made since the summer concerning developments in response to the Grenfell Tower fire, including environmental monitoring and building safety. These will be important to you and others in the community, who have been so affected by this tragedy.

Environmental monitoring

In October the Government announced additional environmental checks will be carried out in and around the Grenfell Tower site. I hope this will reassure you, the bereaved, survivors and wider community, that any potential environmental risks to public health will be fully assessed and appropriate action taken.

This is an issue that we take very seriously. Officials in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government have been working closely with the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC), the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Environment Agency, NHS England and Public Health England to plan further environmental sampling of the site, including comprehensive soil analysis, to check for any signs of contamination.

The new checks will take place alongside the ongoing air quality monitoring which has been in place since the fire. So far, this monitoring has consistently shown the risk to people's health from air pollution around the Grenfell Tower site to be low. Public Health England will continue to monitor this and publish the results on a weekly basis - alongside an explanation of the data as this relates to potential impacts on health. This information is available at the following weblink: www.gov.uk/government/publications/environmental-monitoring-following-the-grenfell-tower-fire.

An expert multi-agency group which includes the Environment Agency, Public Health England, RBKC and NHS England has been set up to make sure the environmental checks around Grenfell Tower are comprehensive. As the Minister for Grenfell Victims, I chaired the first meeting of this group. We have started procuring the relevant expertise and aim to appoint independent environmental specialists from a network of leading experts within the next week. Their work will be overseen by the multi-agency group and the resulting analysis will be published on Gov.uk.

We are both fully committed to engaging you, local residents, with the investigation process from start to finish. That is why consultation workshops will begin in January to inform the scope and locations of the main site investigation and sampling.

Building Safety

We are determined to learn the lessons from the Grenfell Tower fire and bring about a fundamental change to ensure that residents of high-rise buildings are safe and feel safe. That is why we have started a programme of work to deliver that change by addressing the issues raised by Dame Judith Hackitt in her Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety.

Ban on the use of combustible materials

We recognised the strength of feeling on combustible cladding and having consulted, announced in October a clear ban on the use of combustible materials on the external walls of new buildings over 18m containing flats, as well as new hospitals, residential care premises, dormitories in boarding schools and student accommodation over 18m. Regulations were laid in Parliament on 29 November 2018 which will mean that the ban comes in to force on 21 December 2018.

As part of wider work on fire safety across government, we also welcome the Department for Education's commitment to ensuring schools over 18m built as part of their centrally delivered build programmes will not use combustible materials in the external walls, in line with the terms of the ban.

Remediation

The Government has also announced measures to support local authorities to take action where remediation plans in respect of high-rise residential buildings are not clear. This includes new guidance on the assessment of high-rise residential buildings with unsafe cladding, which will help local authorities to make robust hazard assessments. Alongside this the Joint Inspection Team, hosted by the Local Government Association, will provide support to local authorities in their assessments and give them confidence to take enforcement action. As the Secretary of State I have written to local authorities with buildings where the owner refuses to remediate unsafe ACM cladding, to offer them our full support to take enforcement action. This will include financial support where this is necessary for the local authority to carry out emergency remedial work. Where financial support is provided, local authorities will recover the costs from the building owner.

Grenfell Tower site

The Government has always been committed to working with you, the bereaved, survivors and the community, to create a fitting memorial. The Prime Minister gave her personal commitment that you will all have a voice in deciding what happens to the Grenfell Tower site in the longer term.

As part of this, we decided in August 2018 that the Government would take responsibility for the Grenfell Tower. We have now confirmed that Government is seeking to take ownership of the site and that Government will meet the costs of keeping the Tower site safe and secure. This delivers on our promise that RBKC will not have a role in making decisions about the Tower site.

Once ownership transfers, Government will make decisions, such as on safety and of the site, until its long term future has been decided by the community. The arrangements that we are putting in place will make sure that the Grenfell Tower site will continue to be managed effectively and sensitively as we work with you, the bereaved, survivors and the community, towards a fitting memorial for those who tragically lost their lives.

In taking responsibility for the Site, as the Secretary of State I will become responsible for decisions about the Grenfell Tower. I would like to reassure you on how I intend to approach this decision-making. The principles I commit to include that:

- Most importantly, you - the bereaved, survivors and community - will continue to be engaged at each step along the way to a lasting memorial;
- The health and safety of those living, working and at schools in the local area, as well those working on the site, will continue to take priority;
- Decisions that I take about the Tower site will be based on evidence and led by the advice of public authorities and technical experts; and,
- I will consult the Police and the Grenfell Tower Inquiry to ensure that decision-making does not interfere with the path to justice.

This is a further step on the path to reaching a community-led consensus, through the establishment of the Grenfell Tower Memorial Commission, for what should happen to the site in the future, and how the memorial will be owned and managed in the long term. The Government will transfer the land to the community if that is their wish, once an appropriate body has been established.

The process for establishing the Memorial Commission is under way. As the Minister for Grenfell Victims I have written to you, the bereaved and survivors, inviting nominations for the Commission's community representatives. I also met with some of you at the start of November to discuss the process and next steps. The deadline for submitting nominations is midnight on the 16th December. If you are interested in this, please contact GTMCSecretariat@communities.gov.uk.

We expect to write to you again shortly to update you further on other developments.



RT HON JAMES BROKENSHIRE MP



RT HON NICK HURD