



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref: MA/P/JJ/6051/19

John Griffiths AC/AM
Chair
Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee
National Assembly for Wales
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13 January 2020

Dear John

Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee Response Letter

Thank you for your letter dated 20 December in response to the evidence paper discussion at committee on 5 December.

We are working towards an improved and comprehensive building safety system, from the design and construction of buildings to their occupation. This will create real improvements to the safety of high rise residential buildings in Wales.

Many of these reforms are complex and will create long-term changes that will require new primary legislation. We will continue to work as quickly as possible to develop and ensure appropriate safeguards are in place while ensuring we get these changes right.

A ban on combustible cladding was introduced at a different time in Wales as that in England. As my official, Francois Samuel, set out at the committee meeting, there were some specific reasons for this.

Firstly, the consultation responses raised a number of very detailed and technical points about the proposed ban. These points needed to be addressed before a final decision was reached and, due to their technical nature, specialist fire engineers provided advice about the points raised.

The proposals were subject to the Technical Standards Directive (2015/1535/EU). The aim of the directive is to prevent new technical barriers to trade being created and requires member states to inform the European Commission, and other member states, about their

technical regulations, at a draft stage. A standstill period of three months must be observed before the draft technical regulation (except for urgent, fiscal and financial measures) is adopted. This period ended at the beginning of November.

Dame Judith Hackitt's review recommended the starting point was to cover high rise residential buildings over 10 storeys or 30m. Our work with existing buildings has focused on buildings 18m or over, as this aligns with Part B Approved Document guidance – 18m is the height at which other fire-related provisions are required – for example, dry risers. I therefore consider it consistent, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, that a ban on combustible cladding should apply to buildings with a floor level 18m or over in height. I am aware of the views expressed by the Fire Brigades Union that the ban on the use of combustible cladding should apply to all residential buildings regardless of height, but I believe standards should reflect relevant risks based on available evidence. I would support the need for review where there is sufficient evidence but at this time the evidence presented does not support a lower threshold.

As we explained in committee, the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 can only be amended or replaced by primary legislation. The UK Government has included a proposed Parliamentary Bill to make limited but important amendments to the Order, in particular to clarify and extend its application to blocks of flats. These proposals appear sensible and necessary, and we will be discussing with the Home Office the possibility of extending them to Wales. This would, of course be subject to the Senedd's legislative consent.

Officials have been working with CHC to co-produce a 'transparency offer'. This will initially be used by social housing landlords to guide the way in which they engage with their residents in relation to a broad range of building safety issues, including fire. It covers good practice guidance about the information to provide to residents as well as formal processes and procedures for residents to escalate concerns. The recent TPAS conference was an opportunity to discuss the offer with residents. More engagement will take place ahead of it being launched. It is my intention that this best practice will be rolled out to all tenure types ahead of legislation requiring the provision of information to residents.

In more general terms, officials will ensure that residents are directly engaged in the consultation on proposed legislation through targeted information provision and road shows in due course. Such engagement will include all tenures. This will allow us to directly hear from residents of high rise buildings.

I am aware the UK Government's expert panel advice about failed GRP fire doors remains that the risks to public safety are low but we will continue to engage with the UK Government. The Association of Composite Manufacturers is developing an industry led action plan to remediate the highest risk composite fire doors.

As we said in committee, I am happy to consider the place of so-called level four destructive tests in the new building safety regime we will introduce. Any safety measures must be appropriate and proportionate to the risks they aim to mitigate. In this case, destructive testing is clearly vital where there are other reasons to suspect serious defects in building compartmentation and we will need to reflect that in the new system. Requiring it where there are no such suspicions could provide a further level of assurance but it could also mean significant costs to landlords and tenants and delays to re-letting properties that become vacant. All of this will need careful further analysis.

My officials are developing a proposal for a loan to fund the retrofitting of sprinklers. I have not yet received that advice but will write to the committee with further information, once I have considered the proposal.

Wherever possible, we will look to ensure that Help to Buy-Wales supports good practice in the house building industry. We have already changed the way it can be used to reduce the misuse of leasehold and I remain open to considering how any new scheme which is developed may contribute to better outcomes for prospective and current purchasers.

As your letter notes, I intend to publish a written statement about the work required to take forward the recommendations of the task and finish group on residential leasehold reform. I have already made a commitment to pursuing a voluntary accreditation scheme for managing agents, however it is not possible to say at this stage when it will be introduced. I intend to provide more clarity on this in my written statement.

I have noted your comments about Celestia Development and will continue to update the committee about this matter.

In relation to the specific actions arising from committee on 5 December, I have responded below.

- *You offered for the Deputy Minister to update the committee about the discussions had with Chief Fire Officers regarding the actions to be taken in Wales following the publication of the Phase 1 Grenfell Tower Inquiry report.*
- *You agreed to provide a breakdown of the Welsh Government's position on each of recommendations made in the Phase 1 Grenfell Tower Inquiry report as they relate to Wales.*

Hannah Blythyn met the three Chief Fire Officers on 13 November. They gave an assurance they would consider and implement all the phase one recommendations as a priority. Our Chief Fire and Rescue Advisor is now following this up in detail and the attached table shows the current position. I am happy to update the committee and the Senedd as appropriate.

- *Agreed to share with the committee the correspondence sent by the Minister for Education to higher education institutions in Wales stating their obligations around fire safety and the collation of accurate data.*

The Education Minister wrote to all higher education institutions in Wales on 20 November. A copy of the letter issued to Bangor University is attached.

- *Agreed to share with the committee documentation sent out to managing agents demonstrating how the government disseminates information with stakeholders.*

I wrote to managing agents and owners on 20 November. A copy of the letter is attached.

Yours sincerely



Julie James AC/AM

Y Gweinidog Tai a Llywodraeth Leol
Minister for Housing and Local Government

Grenfell Tower Public Inquiry

Phase 1 Report Recommendations

The recommendations are in Chapter 33 of the Phase 1 Report, which is available here: <https://assets.grenfelltowerinquiry.org.uk/GTI%20-%20Phase%201%20full%20report%20-%20volume%204.pdf>. Some of the recommendations, and our responses to them, are unavoidably detailed and use potentially unfamiliar acronyms and technical terms. These include the following:

BA	Breathing apparatus (as worn by firefighters)
CFO	Chief Fire Officer
CFRA	Chief Fire and Rescue Advisor (for Wales).
FRA	Fire and Rescue Authority
FRS	Fire and Rescue Service
FSG	Fire survival guidance. Advice and support given by control room staff to callers who are unable to escape from a fire.
FSO	The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
HRRB	High-rise residential building
JESG	Joint Emergency Services Group. A Wales-wide forum for all emergency services and other partners to discuss issues of common interest.
JESIP	Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles. A set of principles governing how the emergency services across the UK can and should work together at an incident.
LAS	London Ambulance Service
LFB	London Fire Brigade
MPS	Metropolitan Police Service
NFCC	National Fire Chiefs Council
NOG	National Operational Guidance. Standardised approaches to firefighting operations promulgated by the NFCC .
NPAS	National Police Air Service
OIC	Officer in command (at an incident)
PEEP	Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan. An arrangement which sets out how a person who may not be able to escape from a fire unaided (eg because of mobility or sensory impairments) should be assisted to do so.
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures. An FRS 's detailed procedures for each type of incident, usually derived by applying NOG to local circumstances.
SSRI	Site-specific risk information. Detailed information gathered by an FRS about the characteristics of a building with a high risk of fire.

	Para	Recommendation	Type	Current position in Wales
HRRB materials				
1	33.10a	The owner and manager of every high-rise residential building [should] be required by law to provide their local fire and rescue service with information about the design of its external walls together with details of the materials of which they are constructed and to inform the fire and rescue service of any material changes made to them	Policy	This is partly the practice now as FRAs are consulted on applications for building regulations approval, which will include all of these details at the point a building is constructed and when it is significantly renovated or adapted. There may be an issue about FRAs' retention of information about buildings constructed in the more distant past; however, it is equally possible that owners of such buildings may not have retained such information either. FRAs have powers in art.27 of the FSO to require responsible persons to provide information. However, it is not clear whether these would embrace the information in this recommendation, for instance because the FSO does not currently cover the external walls of an HRRB. We would be happy to consider correcting this in new legislation.
2	33.10b	Fire and rescue services [should] ensure that their personnel at all levels understand the risk of fire taking hold in the external walls of high-rise buildings and know how to recognise it when it occurs.	Operational (all FRSS)	We understand that SOPs in all three of our FRSSs already cover this, but have asked for confirmation, and our CFRA intends to follow this up.
Firefighting information				
3	33.11a	The LFB [should] review, and revise as appropriate, Appendix 1 to PN633 to ensure that it fully reflects the principles in GRA 3.2	Operational (LFB only)	While these recommendations refer to LFB's specific policies and procedures, they may nonetheless have wider implications. In essence, they call for integration of SOPs with the process of gathering site-specific risk information (SSRI). Put simply the SOPs should set out the generic hazard and risk controls to provide basic knowledge to all operational personnel. The SSRI and associated operational plan should build on this with operational information specific to the premises. The public inquiry identified clear and serious deficiencies in LFB's practices in this area, so we need also to be assured that similar issues would not arise here. Our CFRA intends to follow this up with our FRSSs.
4	33.11b	The LFB [should] ensure that all officers of the rank of Crew Manager and above are trained in carrying out the requirements of PN633 relating to the inspection of high-rise buildings		
Plans				
5	33.12a	The owner and manager of every high-rise residential building [should] be required by law to provide their local fire and rescue services with up-to-date plans in both paper and electronic form of every floor of the building identifying the location of key fire safety systems;	Policy	The comments under recommendation 1 about building regulations approval and FRAs' powers to require information are also relevant here. If those could not be used to require the provision of plans,

	Para	Recommendation	Type	Current position in Wales
6	33.12c	The owner and manager of every high-rise residential building [should] be required by law to ensure that the building contains a premises information box, the contents of which must include a copy of the up-to-date floor plans and information about the nature of any lift intended for use by the fire and rescue services		then we would be happy to consider correcting this in new legislation.
7	33.12	All fire and rescue services [should] be equipped to receive and store electronic plans and to make them available to incident commanders and control room managers.	Operational (all FRSs)	Floor plans are an integral component of SSRI and are necessary in order to complete robust searches during an incident. We understand all three of our FRSs are already capable of doing this, but the CFRA will follow this up with them.
Firefighting lifts				
8	33.13a	The owner and manager of every high-rise residential building [should] be required by law to carry out regular inspections of any lifts that are designed to be used by firefighters in an emergency and to report the results of such inspections to their local fire and rescue service at monthly intervals.	Policy	The essence of this may already be caught by the FSO, and in particular art.13, which requires responsible persons to provide appropriate firefighting equipment. However, there is nothing specific in there about firefighting lifts, or about their periodic testing. We would be happy to consider correcting this in new legislation. We will also establish the extent to which our FRS would be able to disseminate this information to responding crews to inform contingency planning.
9	33.13b	The owner and manager of every high-rise residential building [should] be required by law to carry out regular tests of the mechanism which allows firefighters to take control of the lifts and to inform their local fire and rescue service at monthly intervals that they have done so.		
Control – incident communication				
10	33.14a	The LFB should review its policies on communications between the control room and the incident commander	Operational (LFB only)	These recommendations are addressed only to LFB, and concern its specific procedures and training programmes. We have asked our Chief Fire Officers to consider how far they might also be relevant here, and the CFRA will follow this up with them.
11	33.14b	All officers who may be expected to act as incident commanders (i.e. all those above the rank of Crew Manager) receive training directed to the specific requirements of communication with the control room;		
12	33.14c	All [control room operators] of Assistant Operations Manager rank and above [should] receive training directed to the specific requirements of communication with the incident commander		

	Para	Recommendation	Type	Current position in Wales
13	33.14d	A dedicated communication link [should] be provided between the senior officer in the control room and the incident commander		
Emergency calls				
14	33.15a	The LFB's policies [should] be amended to draw a clearer distinction between callers seeking advice and callers who believe they are trapped and need rescuing	Operational (LFB only)	These recommendations are addressed only to LFB, and concern its control room policies and training programmes. We have asked our Chief Fire Officers to consider how far they might also be relevant here, and the CFRA will follow this up with them.
15	33.15b	The LFB [should] provide regular and more effective refresher training to [control room operators] at all levels, including supervisors		
16	33.15c	All fire and rescue services [should] develop policies for handling a large number of FSG [fire survival guidance] calls simultaneously	Operational (all FRSs)	These recommendations are aimed at the risk of FSG calls – which can last a long time – consuming all or most control room capacity. That in turn could mean other callers could not get through. While the chance of multiple simultaneous FSG calls is low, the consequences could be serious. The CFRA will follow this up with our three FRSs.
17	33.15d	Electronic systems [should] be developed to record [fire survival guidance] information in the control room and display it simultaneously at the bridgehead and in any command units;	Operational (all FRSs)	All three of our FRSs currently have this facility as regards incident command units. A system which could be deployed quickly and reliably at the bridgehead will, though, take some time to develop and implement. The CFRA will follow this up with them.
18	33.15d	Policies should be developed for managing a transition from “stay put” to “get out”.	Operational (all FRSs)	This concerns tactical decisions at an incident to evacuate a building to which a ‘stay put’ approach had previously applied – eg when it is clear that compartmentation has been or may have been breached by fire. This is a reasonably foreseeable hazard at a high rise incident, and the appropriate control measure is partial or full evacuation. The related measure knowledge and tactics need to be developed through NOG and then embedded within FRS doctrine. The NFCC is leading work in this area, but has indicated that further research is needed to understand the most effective way of conducting an evacuation in these circumstances. There are, for instance, balancing risks of inducing panic and/or impeding the firefighting effort.
19	33.15e	Control room staff [should] receive training directed specifically to handling such a change of advice and conveying it effectively to callers		
20	33.16	Steps [should] be taken to investigate methods by which assisting control rooms can obtain access to the information available to the host control room	Operational (all FRSs)	There are two FRS control rooms in Wales – one in Bridgend, which is shared by South Wales FRS, Mid and West Wales FRS and South Wales Police; and one in St Asaph, which is shared by North

	Para	Recommendation	Type	Current position in Wales
				Wales FRS and North Wales Police. They provide mutual assistance to each other as needed, and we will follow up how far they are able to meet this recommendation.
21	33.17	The [London Ambulance Service] and the [Metropolitan Police should] review their protocols and policies to ensure that their operators can identify [fire survival guidance] calls (as defined by the LFB) and pass them to the LFB as soon as possible	Operational (LAS / MPS only)	This recommendation is addressed only to the London Ambulance Service and the Metropolitan Police, and relates to how they communicate with the London Fire Brigade. However, it is possible that similar problems could exist in other control room arrangements, so JESG is undertaking an exercise also to assure themselves and us that any such problems have been corrected.
Command and control				
22	33.18a	The LFB [should] develop policies and training to ensure better control of deployments and the use of resources	Operational (LFB only)	These recommendations are addressed only to LFB, and concern its policies and systems for collating, managing and communicating information at an incident. However, they may have wider implications. It is as much about BA search techniques as it is about communication techniques. Basically there are two methods of search: directional (left or right hand orientation) or room clearance. The GTI report implies a lack of consistency in their use on the night of the fire. That would make it almost impossible for an OIC to have any confidence that a floor had been cleared The CFRA will follow this up with the 3 FRSs to understand the extent of their training and doctrine in this area.
23	33.18b	The LFB [should] develop policies and training to ensure that better information is obtained from crews returning from deployments and that the information is recorded in a form that enables it to be made available immediately to the incident commander (and thereafter to the command units and the control room).		
24	33.19	The LFB [should] develop a communication system to enable direct communication between the control room and the incident commander and improve the means of communication between the incident commander and the bridgehead.		
25	33.20	The LFB [should] investigate the use of modern communication techniques to provide a direct line of communication between the control room and the bridgehead, allowing information to be transmitted directly between the control room and the bridgehead and providing an integrated system of recording FSG information and the results of deployments		
Equipment				
26	33.21a	The LFB [should] urgently take steps to obtain equipment that enables firefighters wearing helmets and breathing apparatus to communicate with the	Operational (LFB only)	These recommendations are addressed only to LFB, and concern its communication equipment. We have asked our Chief Fire

	Para	Recommendation	Type	Current position in Wales
		bridgehead effectively, including when operating in high-rise buildings;		Officers to consider how far they might also be relevant here, and the CFRA will follow this up with them.
27	33.21b	The LFB [should] urgently take steps to ensure that the command support system is fully operative on all command units and that crews are trained in its use		
Evacuation				
28	33.22a	The government [should] develop national guidelines for carrying out partial or total evacuations of high-rise residential buildings, such guidelines to include the means of protecting fire exit routes and procedures for evacuating persons who are unable to use the stairs in an emergency, or who may require assistance (such as disabled people, older people and young children);	Operational (all FRSs)	We fully agree that there should be a standard set of procedures and approaches to conducting an evacuation should that prove to be necessary. However, we are not convinced that government is best placed to develop and promulgate these. We have only limited expertise on fire and rescue procedures. It is probably better for this to be taken forward as part of the NFCC's NOG programme. The comments on recommendations 18-19 are also relevant here.
29	33.22b	Fire and rescue services [should] develop policies for partial and total evacuation of high-rise residential buildings and training to support them		
30	33.22c	The owner and manager of every high-rise residential building [should] be required by law to draw up and keep under regular review evacuation plans, copies of which are to be provided in electronic and paper form to their local fire and rescue service and placed in an information box on the premises;	Policy	This is already covered in part by art.15 of the FSO, which requires the responsible person to draw up appropriate evacuation procedures. However, like the FSO generally, this is designed to apply to workplaces, and covers matters such as fire drills which cannot sensibly apply to an HRRB. Equally, it would be arguable that no such procedures would be appropriate in premises where 'stay put' applies. We would be happy to consider correcting this in new legislation.
31.	33.22d	All high-rise residential buildings (both those already in existence and those built in the future) [should] be equipped with facilities for use by the fire and rescue services enabling them to send an evacuation signal to the whole or a selected part of the building by means of sounders or similar devices;	Policy	There is no current provision for this in the FSO. At present, where a temporary evacuation policy is in place, the responsible person would need also to have some means of implementing it, but this is likely to involve simply knocking on doors or using a loudhailer rather than any permanent automated system. We would be happy to consider correcting this in new legislation. We should also have to consider issues of cost and possible malicious misuse of such a system, and invasion of privacy.
32.	33.22e	The owner and manager of every high-rise residential building [should] be required by law to prepare personal emergency evacuation plans (PEEPs) for all residents whose ability to self-evacuate may be compromised (such as persons with reduced mobility or cognition).	Policy	There is no current provision for this in the FSO. We would be happy to consider making one in new legislation, although there would probably need also to be a corresponding duty on residents with relevant needs to notify the responsible person (or an exclusion from the responsible person's duty for any resident who had not given such notice).

	Para	Recommendation	Type	Current position in Wales
33.	33.22f	The owner and manager of every high-rise residential building [should] be required by law to include up-to-date information about persons with reduced mobility and their associated PEEPs in the premises information box.		
34.	33.22g	All fire and rescue services [should] be equipped with smoke hoods to assist in the evacuation of occupants through smoke-filled exit routes	Operational (all FRSs)	South Wales FRS is currently trialling smoke hoods at all four fire stations in Cardiff, and all three in Newport. Subject to an evaluation of that trial early in 2020, smoke hoods may then be made available elsewhere in Wales. They are, though, unlikely to be needed in areas with no high-rise buildings, as the need to use a long escape route will probably not arise.
Internal signage				
35.	33.27	In all high-rise buildings floor numbers [should] be clearly marked on each landing within the stairways and in a prominent place in all lobbies in such a way as to be visible both in normal conditions and in low lighting or smoky conditions	Policy	This would assist the FRS greatly but there is no current provision for this in the FSO. We would be happy to consider making such provision in new legislation.
36.	33.28	The owner and manager of every residential building containing separate dwellings (whether or not it is a high-rise building) [should] be required by law to provide fire safety instructions (including instructions for evacuation) in a form that the occupants of the building can reasonably be expected to understand, taking into account the nature of the building and their knowledge of the occupants	Policy	As noted against recommendation 30, there are already broad requirements on responsible persons to draw up evacuation procedures. There is a duty in art.19 of the FSO to inform employees of these procedures, but nothing which applies to residents. We would be happy to consider correcting this in new legislation.
Fire doors				
37.	33.29a	The owner and manager of every residential building containing separate dwellings (whether or not they are high-rise buildings) [should] carry out an urgent inspection of all fire doors to ensure that they comply with applicable legislative standards	Policy	Doors wholly within a common area (eg between a landing and a stairwell) are already covered by the FSO. While the Order does not specify any particular testing regime, the importance of this is generally very well-known both by responsible persons and the FRS.
38	33.29b	The owner and manager of every residential building containing separate dwellings (whether or not they are high-rise buildings) [should] be required by law to carry out checks at not less than three-monthly intervals to ensure that all fire doors are fitted with effective		However, such doors are of lesser importance in preventing the spread of fire than the front doors of flats themselves, as a fire is much more likely to break out in a flat than in a common area. The FSO does not clearly state whether the door to a flat forms part of the common area (in which case it would be covered by the FSO), or of the flat itself (in which case it would not be). We believe that it

	Para	Recommendation	Type	Current position in Wales
		self-closing devices in working order		
39.	33.30	All those who have responsibility in whatever capacity for the condition of the entrance doors to individual flats in high-rise residential buildings, whose external walls incorporate unsafe cladding, [should] be required by law to ensure that [fire] doors comply with current standards		is the former, and that is also the prevailing view within the FRS. But this issue has never been tested in court, and it will need to be addressed in new legislation. In many leasehold blocks, front doors are the property of residents rather than responsible persons. We would have to consider also imposing duties on those residents in such cases.
Co-operation between emergency services				
40	33.31a	Each emergency service must communicate the declaration of a Major Incident to all other Category 1 Responders as soon as possible	Operational (all Cat 1 responders)	These recommendations are concerned with how emergency services communicate with each other, and simply restate the principles within JESIP. JESG is undertaking an exercise to assure themselves and us that these issues have been addressed.
41	33.31b	On the declaration of a Major Incident clear lines of communication must be established as soon as possible between the control rooms of the individual emergency services.		
42	33.31c	A single point of contact should be designated within each control room to facilitate such communication		
43	33.31d	A "METHANE" message should be sent as soon as possible by the emergency service declaring a Major Incident.		
44	33.32	Steps [should] be taken to investigate the compatibility of the LFB systems with those of the MPS and the LAS with a view to enabling all three emergency services' systems to read each other's messages	Operational (LFB/MPS/LAS)	This recommendation is addressed only to LFB, the London Ambulance Service and the Metropolitan Police, and relates to the compatibility of their communication systems. However, it is possible that similar problems could exist elsewhere, so JESG is undertaking an exercise to assure themselves and us that any such problems have been corrected..
45	33.33	Steps [should] be taken to ensure that the airborne datalink system on every NPAS helicopter observing an incident which involves one of the other emergency services defaults to the National Emergency Service user encryption	Operational (NPAS)	This is an operational matter for the National Police Air Service, which falls outside devolved competence.
46	33.34	The LFB, the [Metropolitan Police], the [London Ambulance Service] and the London local authorities [should] all investigate ways of improving the collection of information about survivors and making it available more rapidly to those wishing to make contact with them	Operational (LFB/MPS/LAS)	This recommendation is addressed only to LFB, the London Ambulance Service and the Metropolitan Police, and relates to how they collect and share information about survivors.. However, it is possible that similar problems could exist elsewhere, so JESG is undertaking an exercise to assure themselves and us that any such problems have been corrected..



Professor Iwan Davies
Vice Chancellor
Bangor University
Bangor
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LL57 2DG

20 November 2019

Dear Professor Davies

Universities in Wales have been proactive in the management of their estate and student accommodation since the Grenfell disaster. I am grateful for the information that you have provided to my officials regarding private student accommodation in response to a request from the Welsh Government in the wake of Grenfell.

However, the shocking scenes witnessed in the student accommodation in The Cube in Bolton has once again focused minds on what can go wrong if the perils of cladding that is flammable are not addressed. Advice Notes have recently been issued in relation to a number of types of cladding ([ACM](#), [non-ACM](#), [HPL](#), [Balconies](#)) and I would urge you and your commercial partners to look at these.

The Minister for Housing and Local Government recently issued a [Written Statement](#) offering advice to those residing in high rise residential buildings that you should share widely, if you have not done so already.

I am writing to ask that each University (along with their commercial partners) urgently review the fire safety procedures, including evacuation policies, and safeguards across residential, teaching and research accommodation.

I would be grateful if this information¹ could include an update on the status of any building that contains cladding that is considered to be flammable, what remediation plans are in place and their progress. I am asking HEFCW to co-ordinate the response and to provide a report to me at their earliest opportunity. As part of this work, it would be helpful to specify whether any structures in Wales were built by the same construction company involved in

¹ **Information to collect**

Size (e.g. height, storeys, footprint, number of dwellings, students housed)

Confirmation that fire doors meet relevant building standards

Information on sprinkler systems and where fitted (common areas or individual dwellings), information on façade and structure

Details of the responsible person, freeholder and managing agent

The date of the last Fire Risk Assessment for each building and any significant finding if relevant.

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
0300 0604400

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CF99 1NA

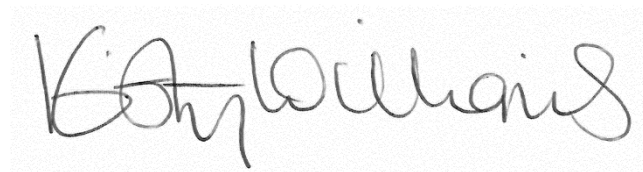
Gohebiaeth.Kirsty.Williams@llyw.cymru
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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

The Cube, and a list of the student accommodation in Wales managed by Valeo Urban Student Life.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kirsty Williams', is centered on a light gray rectangular background.

Kirsty Williams AC/AM

Y Gweinidog Addysg
Minister for Education

cc: David Blaney, Chief Executive/Prif Weithredwr, HEFCW
David Allen, OBE, Chair/Cadeirydd, HEFCW



Ein cyf/Our ref MA-JJ-05180-19

Managing Agents and Owners
of High Rise Residential
Buildings in Wales

20 November 2019

To whom it may concern,

The unfortunate events of last weekend in Bolton are a timely reminder to us all of the need to ensure the highest levels of attention are paid to fire safety in residential property, and in particular in higher rise properties with multiple occupants.

There will no doubt be lessons to learn as investigations into the fire at 'The Cube' progress but what is already apparent is that dynamic management of potential risk is key to ensuring the safety of residents in the event of fire.

As we understand it following identification of concerns with the building the Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service and the managing agents worked to revise and communicate their evacuation strategy ahead of putting in place remediation works. On the night the Fire Service responded with speed, fighting not only the fire quickly and efficiently, but also supporting a safe and swift evacuation. Fortunately whilst the loss of personal possessions is devastating, injuries were minimal.

However, what it does highlight is the need for building owners and managing agents to ensure that the safety of individual buildings is managed dynamically – there is no single right approach to managing fire risk within a building. Up to date fire risk assessments, carried out by individuals with the relevant expertise and qualifications are essential. Whilst this is not yet a legal requirement I intend to bring forward legislation that will require annual fire risk assessments of high-rise residential buildings undertaken by qualified individuals. Therefore I would urge you to consider the most recent assessment for your building and decide if this should be updated in light of recent events.

It is also essential that residents understand what their response should be in the event of a fire in their building. This is especially important where change to the fire strategy is needed, for example changing from a 'stay put' strategy to 'simultaneous evacuation', and you may find the National Fire Chiefs Council's recent [guidance](#) on this useful. It is also important to clarify that, notwithstanding the terrible events at Grenfell and the near miss in Bolton, 'stay put' remains the default position, and for good reason. We do not want people evacuating needlessly in the event of a manageable fire, potentially

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

exposing them to avoidable risk and impeding the firefighting effort. I believe that Responsible Persons should review their communications with regards to building safety and be proactive in providing this information regularly to residents, as well as displaying this essential information in common areas of buildings. Again, this is an area that I intend to legislate for in the future and I would ask that you lead the way in ensuring regular and clear updates to residents.

There are a number of other things that the Grenfell Phase 1 [report](#), which came out at the end of October, highlight that are simple actions, but that have the potential to save lives. I précis these and bring them to your attention now to encourage you to take action:

- Floor numbers should be clearly marked on each landing within stairways and in a prominent place in all lobbies in such a way as to be visible in normal and low lighting or smoky conditions
- Providing information to enforcement bodies (the Fire and Rescue Service and the Local Authority) about the external walls and insulation
- Hold and have easily accessible up-to-date plans in both paper and electronic form of every floor of the building identifying the location of key fire safety systems and the nature of any lift intended for use by the fire and rescue services
- Undertake regular tests and maintenance of fire equipment including lifts, especially those for fire-fighting purposes
- Regularly inspect fire doors and ensure that all fire doors are fitted with effective self-closing devices and are in working order
- Keep under regular review evacuation plans, copies of which should be made available to the fire and rescue service in the event of an incident
- Prepare personal emergency evacuation plans (PEEPs) for all residents whose ability to self-evacuate may be compromised and provide to the FRS when required

I would remind Managing Agents and Owners subject to the Fire Safety Order that detailed requirements of building design and specification information to be handed to the responsible person at occupation are set out in Appendix G of [Approved Document B – Fire Safety](#). It is crucial that this information is maintained.

I hope that you find this letter useful and you take the opportunity to review your current arrangements as a result.

Yours sincerely,



Julie James AC/AM

Y Gweinidog Tai a Llywodraeth Leol
Minister for Housing and Local Government