

# Ministerial Working Group on Building and Fire Safety

4ER St Andrew's House | Thursday 13 July 2017 @ 10.15am

## Action Points and Summary

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### 1. Welcome and action points from previous meeting

Previous minutes were agreed.

Update on previously agreed action points:

1. Officials to confirm that the Scottish Funding Council letter issues promptly to universities and colleges. - **COMPLETED**
2. A concise description to be produced of how relevant Scottish building standards compare to those in the rest of the UK. - **COMPLETED – Discussed under agenda item 4**
3. Brief paper to be produced giving an overview of the role undertaken by the fire and rescue services across the UK in line with their relevant statutory and other duties. - **COMPLETED**
4. SFRS and Building Standards Division to consider jointly whether any additional research should be recommended. – **Discussed under agenda item 2**
5. Evidence based criteria to be submitted to MWG along with recommended next steps. - **COMPLETED – Discussed under agenda item 4**
6. Work programme to be shared with the Local Government & Communities Committee. **COMPLETED**
7. Initial meeting with stakeholders to be set up. – **Discussed under agenda item 5**

### 2. Update on the current position

An update on the situation since the last meeting was provided.

Checks so far by local authorities had found that:

- In relation to high-rise domestic properties the only outstanding returns relate to privately owned properties in Edinburgh and Glasgow. Work continues in both local authorities and Scottish Government officials are meeting with both to discuss the process and any assistance that can be offered.
- There are no local authority school buildings above 18 metres which have Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) in their cladding systems. The returns in relation to all schools are due by close on 13 July. From those received to date the Group were made aware that there are a small number which have used ACM in their cladding systems. Checks are being carried out by local authorities and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) to ensure that all of these systems are in accordance with building regulations.

In addition to responses from local authorities the Group was also updated on other areas:

- Information relating to universities and colleges, including student accommodation, has been requested by the Scottish Funding Council. The latest deadline for this information is 24 July, initial indications are that no further issues are expected.
- In relation to the NHS all health boards have confirmed that, whilst 8 sites have used ACM, none of their buildings use the same type reported to have been used on Grenfell Tower.
- In relation to media reports concerning the use of material, similar to that used on Grenfell Tower, being used on Queen Elizabeth University Hospital (QEUH). The Group were told that this related to a type of insulation board (Kingspan Kooltherm K15) which had been used on less than 5% of Grenfell Tower and is not the material that has been the focus of investigations. The Group were assured that this material is classified as an acceptable product under our building regulations and that it has been appropriately installed to ensure it met building and fire safety regulations.
- There was also a brief update from SFRS stating that an additional 600 operational assurance visits have been carried out since the tragedy at Grenfell Tower (300 since the last meeting of the Group), and that more than 500 additional home fire safety visits had been undertaken with residents in high-rise buildings.

AP1: The Director of Local Government and Communities will issue an e-mail to all local authorities to thank them for their continued assistance on this issue.

### 3. Update on the position in the UK

An update was provided on the situation across the UK.

- There was a debate on the Grenfell Tower fire inquiry in the UK Parliament on 12 July.
- The position in England is that over 200 high rises, 5 hospitals and 1 school have failed the tests that have been established in response to the tragedy at Grenfell Tower.
- The UK Government will be undertaking large scale safety testing and Scottish Government officials are invited to attend as normal practice.
- The Welsh administration are seeking to be included in UK Government's expert panel and have written to the Secretary of State to request appropriate representation. The Group agreed that this should be supported and that Scotland should also seek representation on the panel.

AP2: Cabinet Secretary to write to the Secretary of State seeking to ensure good collaboration between the Scottish and UK Governments and request representation on the UK Government's expert panel.

### 4. Discussion on work programme

- **Information and evidence gathering:** The Group agreed to continue to gather evidence on the use of ACM in the cladding systems of buildings in Scotland. It was agreed that the next stage would focus on any high-rise properties where people sleep overnight that have not already been captured and any other types of property where there are expected to be vulnerable people living. Therefore, it was agreed that that information would be sought on the use of ACM in cladding systems in: prisons; care homes; and hotels. It was also agreed that clarification was required to ensure that information had been requested on all student accommodation, including those that are privately owned.
- **Smoke and Fire Alarm Safety Standards:** The Group were updated on the ongoing work regarding the harmonisation of standards across the different tenures of housing. The Group noted the positive discussions with key partners and agreed that a consultation on common standards for smoke and fire alarms should be brought forward to the autumn.

- **Building Standards:** The Group discussed the next steps in relation to the building standards related workstreams identified as part of the work programme. These workstreams are looking to establish whether current building regulations and guidance is sufficiently robust and clear; and whether building regulations are being complied with and establish the current level of enforcement and recommend improvement actions if necessary.  
As a result of these discussions the Group agreed that two working groups within Building Standards would be established to review: Building Regulations and Guidance; and Assessment and Approval of Building Regulations.
- **Review of evidence on automatic fire suppression systems:** The Group agreed that there should be an in depth session at the next meeting to consider automatic fire suppression systems including sprinklers.

AP3: Requests for information on the use of ACM to be sent to the relevant bodies for prisons; care homes; hotels; and student accommodation.

AP4: In depth session on automatic fire suppression systems to be included in the agenda for the next meeting.

## 5. Stakeholder engagement

- The Group were clear that engagement with partners and the wider community was essential to ensure that they could understand the issues. Officials have considered a number of prospective engagement sessions and identified those that would assist the Group in understanding in more detail the challenges and the good practice that currently exist in the system. These sessions would also be key to a continuing partnership approach with local authorities, registered social landlords and other bodies.
- Five themes were identified: fire safety in high rise domestic buildings; living in high rise domestic buildings; building standards regulations; fire safety regulations; and wider considerations.
- The Group agreed that engagement sessions should be arranged and officials would work with partners to identify the appropriate attendance and arrangements.

AP5: Engagement sessions to be scheduled with priority for those with tenant representatives.

## 6. Date of future meetings

- It was agreed that the next meeting would be held on 9 August at 1.30pm.

**Attendees:**

Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities (Chair)  
Minister for Local Government & Housing

Lesley Fraser, Director Housing & Social Justice  
Kenneth Hogg, Director Local Government & Communities  
Bill Dodds, Head of Building Standards  
Rebekah Widdowfield, Deputy Director Better Homes  
Stephen Garland, Head of Housing Sustainability Unit  
Wendy Wilkinson, Deputy Director Safer Communities Division  
Martyn Emberson, HM Fire Service Inspectorate  
Donna Mackinnon, Deputy Director Local Government Division  
Christine McLaughlin, Director Health Finance  
John Connolly, NHS National Services Scotland  
David McGown, SFRS Assistant Chief Officer  
Stuart Stevens, SFRS Area Manager  
Alison Gilfillan, Communications  
Cameron Stewart, Secretariat to Working Group  
Karen Mehan, Secretariat