

ELGC(5)-21-18 Papur 16/ Paper 16

Rebecca Evans AM
Minister for Housing and Regeneration
Welsh Government

26 June 2018

Dear Rebecca

On-going inquiry into fire safety in high rise buildings

Thank you for your letter dated 12 June 2018, which we discussed at our meeting on 21 June. We agreed to follow up a number of issues with you.

Private sector – the role of block managing agents

In our previous letter dated 17 May, we sought reassurances that the Welsh Government will provide support to companies set up to manage privately owned residential blocks. In this letter, we noted that in a number of blocks management responsibility has passed to flat owners, and that they are now having to deal with complex building, health and safety, financial and legal issues. We asked you what actions the Welsh Government was taking to ensure management boards have the skills and resources to deal with these issues.

In your response, you detailed the work the Welsh Government is undertaking in relation to lease management, as well as saying that you would be developing and refining the appropriate options following the Hackitt report, and the response to the recommendations that relate to dutyholders. However you did not provide any details as to what actions the Welsh Government is taking in the interim to help companies set up to manage privately owned residential blocks deal with these



complex issues, and in particular those that may not always have the experience or knowledge to easily navigate these difficult decisions.

We note that while the primary focus has been on blocks with ACM cladding, there have been safety concerns in blocks without such cladding. Therefore it is important the Welsh Government's response must consider this aspect, and ensure that these residents also get support and advice on how to ensure their blocks are safe.

Furthermore, we continue to have significant concerns about who is liable for costs of remedial work or interim fire safety measures (such as fire wardens). We are aware that the costs for some of this remedial work to bring buildings up to a basic safety standard could be high, and that not all owners will be in position to secure funds to pay for the work. We are aware of reports which suggest that people are now in a position where they may be unable to secure mortgages or sell properties because of the on-going uncertainty about safety, the amount of remedial work necessary and how this will be funded.

We note with interest the proposal by the RLA, for the Welsh Government to establish a low interest loan fund which would prevent safety work being held up because of disputes over liability or difficulties raising funds. What consideration has the Welsh Government given to this proposal, or other options to prevent delays to remedial work being carried out?

Expert Group

We welcome the establishment of the Expert Group to consider the recommendations made in the Hackitt Review. We feel it is important for us to maintain an active role in monitoring how the Welsh continues to respond to developments, and would like your views on how we can best keep updated with the work of the Expert Group?



Additionally, in light of the work of the Expert Group, could you clarify whether the Fire Safety Advisory Group will continue, and if so what will they be focusing on?

It strikes us that people living in high rise blocks in the private sector are facing a period of considerable uncertainty and lack the assurances provided to leaseholders and tenants in the social sector. Therefore, the Committee is now considering undertaking further work looking at fire safety in private sector high rise buildings.

In light of the forthcoming summer recess, and the importance of this issue, we would welcome a response that we could consider at our last formal meeting of the summer term, which is 11 July.

Yours sincerely



John Griffiths AM
Chair

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

