

News story: Update on school cladding safety checks

Following the Grenfell fire, as part of the government's determination to ensure children's safety, schools, further education colleges and universities across the country have all been contacted and asked to carry out building checks to identify those that might require further investigation.

These checks have included asking those responsible for the safety of school buildings to identify where external cladding has been used on buildings and its type. In line with a cross-government approach, any buildings with Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) cladding above 18 metres will have samples of that cladding sent for testing to see what type it is.

As of today, 13 July, cladding from two school buildings has been tested by the Building Research Establishment (BRE), the body carrying out checks on all buildings on behalf of the government.

Results of these two tests confirmed that the cladding was not of limited combustibility and the affected schools have been informed.

The schools tested to date are:

- One secondary academy in London
- One primary special school in London is part of a residential block which has ACM cladding that has not passed combustibility tests.

The advice endorsed by the National Fire Chiefs' Council makes clear that the fire risks posed by those buildings with ACM cladding, which is not of limited combustibility can be mitigated by other actions and additional checks.

As a precautionary step, both schools have already been inspected by the Fire and Rescue Service who confirmed appropriate measures are in place to mitigate the risks from potential fire, and the buildings have now been declared safe for continued use.

Both buildings have been designed to meet stringent fire safety requirements and evacuation procedures are routinely tested as part of fire drills.

The department is continuing to work closely with the schools concerned to support them and ensure all the necessary steps are taken to ensure the continued safety of the buildings.

As part of this each school has a named contact within the department to guide them through this next steps.

All schools already have to follow a range of strict fire safety regulations designed to ensure they are as safe as possible and extremely well prepared

in the event of a fire. They must have robust plans to follow in the event of a fire, conduct regular fire drills, install sprinklers if an assessment deems them necessary and typically have multiple exit routes.

Notes to Editors:

Updates on further test results for education establishments will be released as they become available.

Under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, schools are required to:

- maintain their buildings to ensure they are appropriate to protect from the cause and spread of fire;
- have adequate fire precautions in place to allow the safe escape of occupants in case of fire;
- and conduct termly drills, so that pupils and staff are able to evacuate quickly in the case of fire.

Speech: Liam Fox celebrates trading relationship between the UK and Spain

Your Majesty, Your Royal Highness, Lord Mayor, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Our surroundings here at Mansion House, where we are so kindly hosted by the Lord Mayor, are a reminder of the long history of trade that this country has enjoyed.

We are at the heart of the City of London Corporation, an authority that was founded to protect the skilled labour and trading freedoms that made London, for centuries, the commercial capital of the world.

Although the City of London Corporation may have almost a thousand years of history behind it, the Spanish have been here for far longer.

Since Roman times, trade has flourished between the Iberian Peninsula and the British Isles. The legions may be long gone, but many of the products they imported from Iberia into Britannia would be familiar to us today – wine, olive oil, clothes.

In the fifteenth Century King Edward IV, recognising the quality and demand for Spanish goods in these islands, signed a charter allowing the Basques to sell their wares freely throughout England. Soon after, an early piece of free trading history was made, when the city of Guernica reciprocated the arrangement.

Mutual investment, too, has long flourished between Spain and Britain. The

British may be famous for their love of Spanish sherry, but where would that industry be without familiar names like Osborne, or Harvey?

Such examples may seem to us like ancient history, but they are a reflection of a commercial relationship that continues unabated.

Today, the bilateral trade between Spain and the UK stands at some £40 billion.

Spain is the UK's ninth largest export market, receiving more of our goods and services than Brazil and India combined.

Over 700 UK companies have invested in Spain, and their operations have created over a quarter of a million jobs across Spain, from Santander to Cadiz.

Here in the UK, Spanish trade and investment has reached the lives of millions of people. In fact, anyone who has ever flown into London will have almost certainly landed at a Spanish-owned airport, then taken a Spanish-built train into the City along Spanish-laid rails, all powered by electricity generated by Spanish-owned offshore power!

Of course, the real foundation of the Spain-UK partnership is the personal connection of our people.

Over 11,000 Spanish students study at UK universities. 300,000 British citizens live and work in the Spain. Every year, there are 30 million air passenger journeys between our 2 countries – more than between the United States and Canada.

It is a remarkably fruitful relationship.

We are here today not only to celebrate our past, and to congratulate ourselves on the strength of our current relationship, but also to look to the future.

The United Kingdom is opening a new chapter in its history, and the values that we share, politically, economically and socially, will ensure that our relationship continues to flourish.

At its heart is the continued faith that companies, like those represented here today, continue to show in the Spanish and British economies.

The UK has for several years been the most popular destination in Europe for Spanish overseas investment, but in 2015 we overtook the United States, and now attract more investment from Spain than any other country on Earth.

Companies from across Spain are flocking to the UK, keen to tap into our world-class research and development sector, our financial services industry, or simply take advantage of our unrivalled access to world markets.

In all corners of the United Kingdom, Spanish companies are investing to take advantage of access to skilled local workforces and local markets.

As Secretary of State for International Trade, the UK's global economic department, I am delighted that Spanish investors are recognising all that Britain has to offer them.

Spanish rolling stock manufacturer CAF has today announced that it is to start building trains and trams at a new factory in South Wales. The company will invest £30 million in the plant near Newport, creating 300 jobs and giving an important boost to UK manufacturing and the Welsh economy.

Global leader in assisted fertility IVI is investing £15 million as they expand their offer across the UK, creating jobs and tapping into our world-class research capabilities.

Construction firm Sacyr have released the news that they are establishing their European headquarters in London, and my own Department for International Trade is supporting Gonvarri Steel Services in their construction of a new £26 million site in the West Midlands.

And of course, we cannot mention Spanish investment without acknowledging the on-going expansion of London Luton Airport by Spanish operator AENA, who is investing over £100 million in a major redevelopment which is expected to create over 10,000 jobs.

For all our long history together, the commercial relationship between Spain and the UK has never been more valuable, and as the economic recovery continues to boost businesses across our 2 countries, it is a partnership that can only grow more productive.

We are here today to celebrate the ties between our 2 nations, and to forge the personal and professional relationships upon which we will build still greater success.

Together, we can help to build a safe, secure and prosperous future, for Britain, Spain, and the world.

Thank you.

Press release: Flood defence improvement plans shared at Burton regatta

On 9 July 2017, visitors to Burton's famous regatta had an opportunity to find out about the planned £17 million improvement works to the town's flood defences. Staff from the Environment Agency were at the event to discuss the scheme and also spread awareness about being more flood resilient.

Burton has flooded regularly over the centuries. Ten years ago during summer the defences were put to the test when England and Wales suffered its worst ever flooding, with 414mm (16 inches) of rain between May to July, the most since records began in 1766.

The planned works to the Burton flood defences will see improvements to the 9km of existing defences that already protect more than 7,000 homes and businesses in the town, with a further 3,358 properties set to benefit. The work, due to start in October 2018, with a completion date of March 2020, will enable further transformation of the town centre to allow it to become more sustainable.

Mark Swain, who heads the Environment Agency's Staffordshire flood risk team, said:

Burton is a major transport and business centre. The defences have prevented flooding for 100 days in the last 30 years. The cost to families and businesses if those defences had not been there would have been astronomical.

But we can't afford to rest on our laurels; we're working with our partners and the people of Burton to protect thousands more homes and businesses for the future.

That's why it was so important for us to be at the regatta, explaining our plans and how everyone can do their bit to reduce flood risk.

As well as the plans for the new works and how to become more resilient, visitors to the regatta were also able to find out how the Environment Agency's remote-control survey boats work and what is being done across Staffordshire to protect people and properties from flooding.

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Press release: Change of British High Commissioner to Cyprus

2017 Full time language training 2013 – 2017 FC0, Director, Asia Pacific 2009 – 2013 Manila, Her Majesty's Ambassador and Non-Resident Ambassador to Palau, the Marshall Islands and Micronesia 2006 – 2009 FC0, Head, Far Eastern Department 2003 – 2006 New Delhi, Counsellor (Economic) and Director of Trade

& Investment 1999 – 2003 Guangzhou, Her Majesty's Consul-General 1998 – 1999
FCO, Deputy Head, China Hong Kong Department 1997 – 1998 FCO, Head of
Section, Hong Kong Department 1996 – 1997 FCO, Head of Section, European
Union Department (Internal) 1992 – 1995 Beijing, Second later First Secretary
(Economic and Political) 1989 – 1991 Full time language training (Mandarin)
1988 – 1989 FCO, Assistant Desk Officer, Middle East Department