

Carl Sargeant outlines steps being taken following Grenfell Tower fire

The Cabinet Secretary made the announcement during an update to Assembly Members on the steps being taken in Wales following the Grenfell Tower fire.

The group will include representatives from the social housing and fire sectors and will be chaired by the Cabinet Secretary's Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser.

Carl Sargeant said:

"Everyone is, of course, horrified by the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower in west London last week. My deepest sympathies are with those who have been affected by it."

He said a first round of urgent discussions with all residential social landlords in Wales had been completed.

Carl Sargeant said:

"Between all residential social landlords in Wales, they own 36 blocks of flats of seven or more storeys.

"Social landlords have told us none of those appear to have been fitted with the type of cladding used in the Grenfell Tower. Seven blocks in Wales have been retro-fitted with sprinklers – and of course where any new or converted blocks are developed here, under the changes introduced as part of the Domestic Fire Safety Measure (Wales) 2011, they would be required to include sprinklers. The requirements were introduced for flats and houses on 1 January 2016.

"Installing sprinklers in new housing and as part of refurbishment programmes, which some Welsh councils and housing associations have already done, will go a long way towards minimising the risk of death and injury from fire.

"I hope this gives some immediate reassurance to the residents of those premises."

The Cabinet Secretary added that the expert group will also consider how prepared Wales would be to deal with such an incident as Grenfell if it were to occur.

He said:

“We need to make certain of our capability to do that and learn any lessons that emerge from events in London.

“My officials and I are in regular contact with counterparts in England and Scotland, to ensure that we pool intelligence and share learning.

“This process is at an early stage and it will be some time before the full truth about what happened at Grenfell Tower is known. However, the Welsh Government is completely committed to acting on those findings, while doing all that we can in the meantime to keep the people of Wales safe from fire.”

Strengthened approach to tackling bovine TB in Wales announced

From the 1st October this year, Low, Intermediate and High TB Areas will be established in Wales based on bovine TB incidence levels.

Enhanced measures will be applied in each TB Area tailored to protect the Low TB Area and reduce the disease in the Intermediate and High TB Areas. This follows consideration of the responses to a consultation launched at the end of last year.

The enhanced controls include introducing post-movement testing in the Low TB Areas from the 1st October 2017. This will protect the area by identifying infected animals at the earliest opportunity, before they can go on to infect others. This measure will also be introduced in the Intermediate TB Areas next year to stop the risk of the disease spreading from the neighbouring High TB Areas.

The priority for High TB Areas is to continue to reduce the number of TB breakdowns. Under the Programme, chronic breakdown herds will have individual action plans with disease control measures specifically aimed at clearing up infection in cattle.

In these chronic breakdown herds, where there is evidence of infection in the badger population, we will consider a range of options to reduce the risk of disease spread, including cage-trapping, testing and where necessary humanely killing infected badgers.

The Cabinet Secretary continues to rule out large scale culling of badgers that is being applied in England.

Speaking at the Senedd, the Cabinet Secretary said:

“Over the last few years we have made real progress towards eradicating TB in Wales. The number of new incidents has fallen by over 40% since its peak in 2009 and currently 95% of herds in Wales are TB free.

“I have listened to the industries responses to our consultation and have fed what was appropriate and reasonable into the Programme. This should not be seen as exclusively a Government plan; it has been developed through consultation with industry, and will be reviewed over time. I now call on the farming industry and veterinary profession to play a full part. Together we can achieve our goal of a TB free Wales.”

The new [TB Eradication Programme and Delivery Plan](#) are available on the Welsh Government website.

[Breast cancer drug approved for use in Wales](#)

Roche has now agreed with NHS Wales the same commercial access agreement as NHS England. This means that Welsh patients with certain types of advanced breast cancer will be able to benefit from the treatment.

The Welsh Government’s £80 million New Treatment Fund has been designed to ensure new medicines such as Kadcyła® can be made available as soon as possible, and certainly within two months of the recommendation from NICE.

Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething, said:

“I am very pleased to be able to announce that Kadcyła® has been approved for use in Wales following negotiations with the manufacturer.

“We are committed to improving the introduction of innovative, evidence-based, treatments, which is why we’ve introduced an £80 million treatment fund in Wales. The fund will be used to ensure patients get fast-access to this innovative, life-prolonging drug.”

Finance Secretary confirms commitment to new communities scheme as Landfill Disposal Tax Bill progresses

The Landfill Disposals Tax (Wales) Bill, which introduces a new landfill disposals tax to replace landfill tax in Wales when it is devolved in April 2018, today reaches stage three, in the National Assembly.

The Welsh Government introduced an amendment, which, if the Bill is passed, places the new Landfill Disposals Tax Communities Scheme on the face of the Bill.

The amendment places a duty on Welsh Ministers to prepare and publish a communities scheme, which will be targeted at activities which promote or improve the social or environmental wellbeing of communities close to landfill sites and waste transfer stations.

The scheme will be funded by using some of the revenue raised by landfill disposals tax. A decision about how much will be allocated will be made in the autumn.

A procurement exercise to appoint the single distributive body that will run the scheme has begun. It is anticipated the contract notice will be launched at the end of July – the contract is expected to be awarded by the end of the year.

The Welsh Government will administer the overall governance of the scheme.

Professor Drakeford said:

“In a year’s time, Wales will introduce the first Welsh taxes in almost 800 years. This is an historic milestone in Wales’ devolution journey as we become responsible for raising our own money to spend on public services.

“I am fully committed to having a new communities scheme when landfill disposals tax is introduced in April. The benefits it provides communities located around landfill sites and waste transfer stations are clear and numerous.

“The new grant scheme will focus on three areas – biodiversity, environmental enhancements and waste minimisation. It will maximise the amount of funding reaching community projects most affected by the disposal of waste to landfill and help improve our environment.

“The details of the scheme will be published separately but work is already underway to prepare for its introduction. I will make an announcement about the amount allocated to the scheme in the

autumn.”

The Landfill Disposals Tax (Wales) Bill is the third of three Bills to establish tax arrangements in Wales – a series of crucial legislation to prepare for the introduction of the first Welsh taxes in almost 800 years. The Welsh Government has also adopted a collaborative approach to gain cross-party support for the Bill, agreeing non-government amendments to further improve the legislation.

The Finance Secretary added:

“This Bill is the third piece of legislation to establish tax arrangements in Wales. It has been extremely important to work with colleagues across the Assembly to build consensus so we have a strong piece of legislation to help pave the way to a smooth transition to tax powers.”

New commission with responsibility for higher and further education in Wales to be created

The Welsh Government White Paper also sets out how the new body, which will succeed the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, will regulate the skills sector and have responsibility for funding research and innovation.

In March 2016 Professor Ellen Hazelkorn published her independent review of post-compulsory education in Wales with a range of recommendations that were accepted by the Education Secretary in January this year.

A consultation on the White Paper has today been launched, with the key proposal being the establishment of the Tertiary Education and Research Commission for Wales to provide oversight, strategic direction and leadership for the post-compulsory education and training sector.

The functions of the new Commission include:

- Protecting the interests of learners, ensuring that vocational and academic routes are equally valued and make sure Wales has the skills needed to succeed in an increasingly competitive economy.
- Strategic planning of educational and skills delivery across all post-compulsory education and training in Wales.
- Oversee and coordinate all Welsh Government research and innovation funding with the aim of creating a more dynamic and responsive-to-need

research, innovation and knowledge environment in Wales.

- Funding, contracting, quality, financial monitoring and audit of higher education, further education, work based learning, adult community learning, and relevant employability and employer-led programmes.
- Developing better links between higher and further education and Welsh business.

The Commission would report annually to the Welsh Ministers on the performance of the post-compulsory sector.

Kirsty Williams said:

“I am publishing proposals for a ‘made in Wales’ approach to post-compulsory education and training so that it is easier for people to learn and acquire skills throughout their careers.

“Our lives and economy are undergoing huge technological change. The knowledge and skills needed in a transformed workplace mean that ‘average is over’. There is rapid change in other parts of the UK and the realities of Brexit. Doing nothing, or maintaining the status quo, is not a viable option.

“Our national mission does not stop at the school gates. We need to ensure that those leaving our schools progress into a post-compulsory system which provides genuine parity of esteem for vocational and academic routes, and which equips them with the skills required for sustainable and rewarding careers. . Such a workforce will allow our economy to be more productive and competitive and our people more prosperous and secure.”