

Building Safety: Levelling Up Secretary's op-ed for The Telegraph

We have a new and reinvigorated government in Westminster.

A government ready to roll up its sleeves and put in the hard graft so that the future of this country is bright and prosperous.

We must ensure that everyone in our society – irrespective of where they're from, what they do, or how much money they earn – lives somewhere warm, decent and safe.

We've already acted on energy bills, so a typical household will pay no more than £2,500, while providing hundreds of pounds in relief for struggling families this winter.

And we're acting with that same urgency on building safety.

What happened at Grenfell Tower was nothing short of a national tragedy. It should not have taken the death of 72 people for us to have woken up to just how ineffective the building safety regime was. It is our duty as a government to fix this, and ensure that it never happens again.

Just a few weeks into the job I am hearing from leaseholders who are still waiting for remediation works to be carried out, who are unable to sell, and face sky-high building insurance premiums.

I'm determined to finish the job my predecessors started, fixing the system for good, ensuring that industry rectifies the problems it created, and making sure that the leaseholders who have been so unfairly caught up in this scandal get the relief and protection they deserve.

In recent months, we've already taken some big steps in the right direction.

The Building Safety Act came into force over the summer.

It represents the greatest set of reforms in a generation with a tough new regulator and an even tougher regulatory regime to ensure that people's homes are made safe.

The Act means that every block of flats must now have someone who is responsible for a building's safety and the residents who live in it.

It also provides far-reaching legal protections to leaseholders so that they're no longer hit with unfair bills to fix cladding issues.

For the first time government will have powers to force owners to fix dangerous buildings for which they're responsible and ensure remediation works are both fast and proportionate.

Forty-nine of the largest housebuilders have now risen to the challenge set by government and signed a public pledge to fix unsafe buildings that they developed or refurbished. Responsible housebuilders are wasting no time in getting on with fixing those buildings and I look forward to working with this group on our ambitious housing agenda to deliver the homes and growth this country deserves. We will shortly turn those pledges into legally binding contracts, which will give residents confidence that their homes will be made safe and that leaseholders will not have to pay.

Any housebuilders that fail to act responsibly may be blocked from commencing developments and from being granted building control sign-off for their buildings. This month we have taken steps to set up a scheme in law to show which housebuilders are doing the right thing, and which are failing to do so.

Our Recovery Strategy Unit will expose and pursue firms and individuals involved in the most egregious cases of building safety neglect. Where freeholders are not coming forward and accepting government money to make buildings safe, this unit will be launching legal action. I expect the first cases to be brought very soon. This government is determined to hold the worst actors to account, deliver for leaseholders, and restore confidence in the housing market.

But this was never about heaping blame on one part of the sector. It's about making the whole industry, including construction product manufacturers, play its part in fixing the wrongs of the past.

That's one of the reasons why my department is also working hand in hand with the Financial Conduct Authority to ensure that appalling practices within the insurance industry, like the sharing of commissions between brokers and managing agents, which can drive up prices for consumers, are brought to a swift end. I wrote to the British Insurers Brokers Association myself this week and I expect this immoral behaviour to stop immediately.

It is also why we will continue to work relentlessly with the lending industry to ensure leaseholders are no longer trapped by over the top risk aversion and unnecessary paperwork, freeing them to take their next step on the housing ladder. I welcome their commitments so far but now is the time to see tangible changes to unlock the market.

We will make homes safer. We will protect leaseholders from crippling costs. And we will work to restore the right of everyone in this country to feel safe in the place where they and their loved ones sleep at night.

[Domestic tree seed production to be](#)

ramped up with new grant

Domestic tree seed production is to be ramped up with new Government funding announced today (Thursday 22 September). The £1.2m Seed Sourcing Grant will boost domestic tree seed production, create green jobs, help meet the increased demand for trees and achieve our ambitious net zero targets.

The grant is designed to enhance the quantity, quality and diversity of tree seed sources in England. Most tree seed planted in the UK is of British origin, but evidence suggests that British seed sources may struggle to meet future demand across all species and there are known to be global shortages of tree seed. The grant will boost domestic tree seed production and support green jobs, helping meet the increased demand for trees and achieve our ambitious tree planting targets.

The Government has re-committed to its net zero targets, and new woodland and tree planting will contribute to those. The Seed Sourcing Grant will help to ensure the availability of planting stock to meet domestic tree planting needs.

The grant also aims to improve the diversity of England's seed supply, for example by increasing the range of species and provenances available. This will be crucial for creating diverse and resilient woodlands, which are better able to adapt to future climate conditions as well as emerging pests and diseases.

Richard Stanford, Forestry Commission Chief Executive, said:

Seed sourcing is an essential part of tree production and one that can sometimes be overlooked. As planting rates increase, so too will the demand for tree seed.

This funding will give a vital boost to domestic tree seed production, helping to create diverse and thus resilient woodlands across our country. This will both help meet our ambitious tree planting targets and ensure the resilience of woodlands so they can thrive in the uncertain future.

The Seed Sourcing Grant will also reduce the need to buy seed from the international market, lowering the risk of importing harmful pests and pathogens.

Today's announcement comes as the world's leading authorities on plant health and biosecurity come together for the world's first ever International Plant Health Conference to address current and future plant health challenges – including facilitating safe trade and new pest and disease pathways, such as e-commerce.

Nicola Spence, UK Chief Plant Health Officer, said:

Plant health and biosecurity are fundamental to life on Earth and ensuring their continued health and vitality will be critical to a thriving natural environment for future generations.

By increasing and diversifying England's seed supply, this grant is crucial to help lower the risk of importing harmful pest and diseases by reducing the need to buy seed internationally and will create diverse and resilient woodlands which will be better adapted to future threats.

Eligible activities for the grant include:

The grant aims to attract a broad range of applicants, including both organisations already involved in these activities and those who have not previously considered seed sourcing.

To apply now, [visit our dedicated page on gov.uk](#). Closing date for applications is Sunday 13 November 2022. The Forestry Commission will host a webinar on Tuesday 11 October 2022 to help with the application process. [Sign up to the webinar here](#).

Civil/crime news: email service for JR custody time limit cases

A new email service is available solely for crime providers using civil forms in emergency judicial review applications associated with custody time limit extensions:

LAAassociatedcivilapplications@justice.gov.uk

If you have a Client and Cost Management System (CCMS) account, you will be able to make this application more efficiently by using our online system.

Why are you doing this now?

We want to ensure providers working under the 2017 Standard Crime Contract understand how to use the civil forms to apply for funding in custody time limit cases. This is civil work arising out of criminal proceedings.

Associated civil work is provided for within the crime contract. But we realise that making civil legal aid applications is very different to the process for crime. So, we want to make sure you can contact us with any

questions.

Emergency application emails

Remember that this option of sending application forms to the new mailbox is for emergency applications only:

LAAassociatedcivilapplications@justice.gov.uk

Make sure that the subject line of the email you use to send your form clearly states that this is an urgent custody time limit case. You should also flag your email as high importance.

Who processes emergency applications?

Your application will be processed by the Exceptional and Complex Cases Team (ECCT). We aim to make decisions within 48 hours of receiving emails.

What if 48 hours is too long?

If you need a decision more quickly you will need to:

- call customer services on 0300 200 2020
- explain why a decision is needed faster than 48 hours
- ask for the case to be fast-tracked to ECCT managers

How to speed up your application

You should include the following to help speed up a decision on your emergency application:

1. Relevant questions on the CIV APP1 need to be answered. This includes providing a full case statement. You need to clearly set out the reasons for any conclusions that are drawn about the funding criteria.
2. Applicable means forms should also be used and sent with the CIV APP1 form. These are listed below at the end of the article.
3. Complete decision/order of the court.
4. Any pre-action correspondence.
5. Any advice or note from counsel about the merits of any proposed judicial review, where available.

What happens next?

If you are unable to use CCMS, the Legal Aid Agency (LAA) will upload your application after it has been determined.

You should note that you will need to upload any subsequent amendments and bills using CCMS. If you need help getting set up to do this, our Online Support Team will be able to work with you.

Further information

[Civil Legal Aid \(Merits Criteria\) Regulations 2013](#)

[CIV APP1 form](#) – you must download and use the CIV APP1 along with the relevant means forms for your legal aid application

[CIV MEANS 1 form](#) – download and use to accompany CIV APP1 if client does not receive a passported benefit

[CIV MEANS 1P form](#) – download and use to accompany CIV APP1 and CIV MEANS 1 if client in prison (1P is second form on page)

[CIV MEANS 2 form](#) – download and use to accompany CIV APP1 if client receives passported benefit

[CIV MEANS 4 form](#) – download and use to accompany CIV APP1 if client under 16 years of age

Customer Services and Online Support teams: 0300 200 2020

[£15k sponsorship boost for ChamberFORCE](#)

The relaunch event took place at the Amazon Fulfilment Centre in Dunfermline on August 23. Amazon staff and senior management had the opportunity to engage with a variety of military stands, vehicles and equipment.

Regional Learning & Development Officer, Lieutenant Commander Garth Atkinson RNR, represented the Royal Navy. 154 (Scottish) Regiment Royal Logistic Corps (RLC), 225 (Scottish) Medical Regiment and 7th Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland (7 SCOTS) attended the event to represent the British Army. 603 (City of Edinburgh) Squadron Royal Auxiliary Air Force represented the Royal Air Force. Regular units, including soldiers from 2nd Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland (2 SCOTS), also attended.

Vehicles on display included a Foxhound Protected Patrol Vehicle, Field

Ambulance, and an EPLS MK3 truck. Visitors had the chance to get hands on with equipment including Army Bergens as well as trying out a virtual reality simulator.

The tri-service stands were followed by a presentation of a £15,000 cheque for sponsorship funding from Amazon to ChamberFORCE. The funding will be available over a three-year period. Fife Chamber of Commerce Chief Executive Alan Mitchell accepted the cheque on behalf of the other participating Chambers from Amazon Dunfermline General Manager Jamie Strain.

ChamberFORCE is a partnership programme between selected Chambers of Commerce in Scotland and their local Navy, Army and RAF units, designed to bring tangible benefits to Chamber members and to Defence. The founding Chambers of Commerce have all signed the Armed Forces Covenant and achieved ERS Gold Awards: Fife Chamber of Commerce, Dundee & Angus Chamber of Commerce, Moray Chamber of Commerce and Dunbartonshire Chamber of Commerce.

Highland RFCA first launched the initiative in November 2018, with the aim of bringing the participating Chambers of Commerce and Armed Forces Reserve units closer together. Defence Relationship Management (DRM) supported the initial pilot.

ERS Gold Award holder, Amazon, sponsored a virtual leadership event with Fife Chamber back in 2020. Keen to develop the relationship with other Chambers of Commerce, Amazon is sponsoring the next phase of the ChamberFORCE project. Amazon is now the official corporate sponsor of ChamberFORCE for the next three years, enabling the participating stakeholders to deliver advocacy for Defence.

This year, through its Military Programme, Amazon will recruit over 300 veterans, reservists and military spouses in over 35 different jobs. These jobs range from health & safety specialists, engineers, sales managers and team leaders to senior managers.

Amazon was awarded the Employer of the Year Award at the Ex-Forces in Business Awards for two years in succession for its outstanding efforts in supporting ex-services personnel and military spouses.

Alan Mitchell, Fife Chamber Chief Executive, said:

On behalf of all the participating Chambers of Commerce, I want to thank Amazon for embracing ChamberFORCE.

We are all very excited about working with the Amazon team and our friends at HRFCA to create an exciting programme of events that will strengthen the bonds between the businesses and the military units across the four regions that we represent.

Amazon has benefited enormously from employing ex-military personnel and reservists, and we want ChamberFORCE to provide a platform for many other businesses to enjoy the same benefits.

Dunbartonshire Chamber of Commerce was represented by Chief Executive Damon Scott, and Dundee and Angus Chamber by Sarah Young, Events and Marketing Manager. Scottish Chambers of Commerce Deputy Chief Executive, Charandeep Singh, was also in attendance.

Charandeep said:

I look forward to supporting the ChamberFORCE programme and unlocking the opportunities for Scotland's communities. With many sectors and companies continuing to cite recruitment challenges and skills shortages as a barrier to growth, ChamberFORCE is an excellent example of how partnership working can tackle the big challenges facing our economy.

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