

Ministers must improve process of fire safety checks after only 95 tests completed since Grenfell – Healey

John Healey MP, Labour's Shadow Secretary of State for Housing, commenting on reports that 95 cladding samples from high-rise residential buildings have failed a combustibility test, said:

"These results point to a collapse in our system of fire safety checks and controls.

"Ministers must now do a great deal more to reassure residents that everything is being done to keep them safe.

"They must improve the testing process which has so far been too slow, too narrow and too secretive. The Prime Minister promised that 100 tests a day could be done but two weeks on from the Grenfell Tower fire only 95 have been completed.

"Ministers must also not outsource all responsibility for urgent remedial action to councils and housing associations. They must guarantee that where fire risks are found they will make available upfront funding, including for re-cladding buildings, fire prevention work and retro-fitting sprinkler systems, starting with the highest-risk blocks."

Ends

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It is being reported that all 95 samples of exterior cladding from high-rise residential buildings so far tested have failed a combustibility test being conducted for the government by the Building and Research Establishment in the wake of the Grenfell Tower fire.

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The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government Sajid Javid MP confirmed to John Healey yesterday in the House of Commons that only the exterior cladding on buildings was being tested:
<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2017-06-26/debates/02718B34-06C3-4984-9C4C-EAB30F2F0026/GrenfellTowerFireFireSafety#contribution-4320C1F4-1592-483E-8CD5-5FE8B7A9B0C9>

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The Prime Minister has previously said that capacity was available to test 100 buildings a day:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-commons-statement-on-grenfell-tower-22-june-2017>.

There are an estimated 600 buildings that may be at risk as a result of similar cladding to that in place at Grenfell Tower.

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John Healey and other Labour MPs put a series of questions on support, checks, funding, and overhaul of fire and building safety rules to Sajid Javid yesterday in the Commons which remain unanswered. John Healey's speech yesterday is here:
<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2017-06-26/debates/02718B34-06C3-4984-9C4C-EAB30F2F0026/GrenfellTowerFireFireSafety#contribution-1DBB53D7-BCD8-480B-A93A-98F93B78E551>

Tory Coalition of Chaos denies almost £70bn to rest of UK – McDonnell

Research from Labour, in consultation with the respected House of Commons Library, suggests that if the Tories' sweetheart deal with the DUP goes ahead and rises as is rumoured to £2 billion, then it could mean that £68 billion in government funding being denied to the rest of the UK.

Under the Barnett Formula an increase of £2 billion in funding for Northern Ireland would normally imply additional public expenditure in England of £59 billion, with Scotland getting an additional £6 billion and Wales £3 billion.

However, following such a drastic change in extra budgetary spending for Northern Ireland, the Conservatives have decided to not adopt an approach even similar to the Barnett Formula to increase funding across the board. Nor have they explained if this increase will be funded by borrowing, tax rises or spending cuts at the UK level.

John McDonnell MP, Labour's Shadow Chancellor, said:

"The coalition of chaos that was set up yesterday risks increasing division in our society by easing austerity in one part of the UK alone.

"We need to see an end to austerity throughout the UK not just in Northern Ireland, and not just to prop up Theresa May and her failed government.

"Labour's fully costed alternative programme of government stands ready to provide Britain with the leadership that will truly end austerity, and unite all nations and regions in our country."

Google ruling makes this a good day for fair competition and consumers – Watson

Tom Watson MP, Labour's Shadow Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, commenting on Google's record fine for its shopping service, said:

"This ruling has been a long time coming and is a vindication of long running concerns about Google's anti-competitive, unfair practices.

"When a company wields such power that it is effectively the gateway to the internet, it is the duty of regulators and lawmakers to verify that power is being exercised fairly. This ruling makes clear that Google shopping has not been operating fairly and could open the door to other investigations of similar examples of market distortion by the company.

"This ruling rights an unfair wrong, making this a good day for fair competition and consumers."

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- Today the European Commission has handed Google a record fine of 2.42bn euros (\$2.7bn; £2.1bn) after it ruled the company had abused its power by promoting its own shopping comparison service at the top of search results.

- Google's unfair advantage has been a source of long running concern with

Tom Watson writing about the issue in 2013

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/feb/14/google-competition-sear>

This marks another decisive blow against this Government's failing austerity agenda – Abrahams

Debbie Abrahams MP, Shadow Work and Pensions Secretary, commenting on the Prime Minister's decision to drop her manifesto commitment to ending the 'triple lock' on state pensions and cutting the Winter Fuel Payment from ten million pensioners, said:

"We welcome that the Prime Minister has been forced to drop these punitive austerity measures, which would have hit the living standards of millions of older people.

"This marks another decisive blow against this Government's failing austerity agenda, which was not supported at the general election.

"After refusing to last week, the Work and Pensions Secretary must now rule out any future threat to the 'triple lock'.

"This Conservative chaos and confusion shows that only Labour can be trusted to guarantee older people a secure and dignified retirement."

Let's call this grubby deal what it is: this is a straightforward political bribe to desperately prop up Theresa May in office – McDonnell

Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell, commenting on the Tory-DUP deal,

said:

"The price of Theresa May's political weakness is now becoming clear. The same Conservative Party which spent the recent election campaign saying there was no money available for the crisis in the NHS and schools has now found at least £1 billion to buy a Parliamentary majority, with some reports suggesting it could be as much as £2bn.

"As this is additional spending beyond that laid out in the Spring Budget, the Chancellor must now come forward with an explanation as to how it will be funded. In the context of a forecast increase in Government borrowing this year, the public must be told whether this additional spend will be funded through spending cuts elsewhere, additional tax rises or more borrowing.

"There are also important questions to be answered about the implementation and fiscal consequences of devolving corporation tax, VAT and Air Passenger Duty, as well as what this could mean for other devolved administrations.

"Let's call this grubby deal what it is: this is a straightforward political bribe to desperately prop up Theresa May in office.

"This Tory-DUP deal is clearly not in the national interest but in May's party's interest to help her cling to power."