

[Green Party's Sian Berry responds to news 600 buildings may have Grenfell cladding](#)



22 June 2017

Responding to the news that 600 buildings in Britain may have the same cladding used at Grenfell [1], the Green Party's Assembly Member for London Sian Berry said:

"I am deeply concerned by the news that so many residents have been making their homes in tower blocks with the same cladding that was on Grenfell Tower.

"I am also extremely worried by just how long it has taken the government to get this information. Surely after a disaster of the kind we saw at Grenfell finding out where else it could occur should have been one of the main priorities? It's good to finally have an answer and action being taken but the wait was too long and information on fire risks must be dealt with more transparently and clearly in future.

"We also need a cast iron guarantee that any resident who wishes to move out while these necessary works are done is given temporary accommodation, particularly vulnerable residents."

Ends

Notes:

1. <http://news.sky.com/story/government-tests-on-tower-blocks-reveal-cobustible-cladding-10923147>
2. Green Party spokespeople are available for comment.
3. The latest estimate suggests 79 people have died in the fire that engulfed Grenfell Tower on 14 June. The Green Party's Sian Berry, Caroline Russell, Amelia Womack, and Jennifer Nadel have all visited the tower and helped residents with their concerns and queries.

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Sturgeon must come clean on second CAP crisis

22 Jun 2017



Nicola Sturgeon has been urged to “come clean” on whether or not the Scottish Government will need to ask for an extension in delivering vital farming payments.

The deadline for processing Common Agricultural Policy cash is next Friday and, if that is missed, the European Commission could slap ministers with a fine of up to £60 million.

As of last week, nearly 6000 farmers were still waiting for 2016 CAP payments, and the Scottish Government is signing off significantly fewer than 1000 a week.

That means the deadline will almost certainly be missed, with the prospect of a huge penalty for the taxpayer and more hardship for farmers.

At First Minister’s Questions today, Scottish Conservative Ruth Davidson demanded answers on what contact the SNP has had with the EC over an extension.

However, Ms Sturgeon wouldn’t say if a derogation had been sought – despite being asked specifically three times – instead saying she would “endeavour to make payments on time”.

Last year, the Scottish Government’s failed IT system starved rural Scotland of hundreds of millions of pounds.

And just last week, Audit Scotland warned the problems would only be fixed in 2018 “at the earliest” and that serious issues remained in processing the crucial subsidies.

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said:

“The deadline for processing these payments is a week away and, if the Scottish Government does not meet that deadline, it could be fined tens of millions of pounds.

“That’s why rural Scotland and taxpayers need to know if the SNP has approached the European Commission for an extension.

“Instead, Nicola Sturgeon did what her rural affairs secretary did earlier this week and dodged the question.

"It's a disgrace that so many farmers are still waiting for payments, and it looks like – for the second year running – the SNP is going to have to go cap-in-hand to Europe and ask for special treatment.

"This all has a massive knock-on impact for the wider rural economy.

"It's no wonder rural communities have completely lost trust in the SNP."

As of June 15, 5861 payments were still to be processed before next Friday's deadline.

On average, the Scottish Government's IT system is processing 895 payments a week, meaning the deadline will almost certainly be missed.

To see the full statistics, visit the below link and click "cap payment updates":

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/cap-payments-update/>

In a damning report last week, Audit Scotland said – should that deadline be missed – the Scottish Government could be fined up to £60 million:

<http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/report/common-agricultural-policy-futures-programme-further-update>

Earlier this year, Nicola Sturgeon offered assurances to farmers that she'd sort out the CAP crisis:

"Last year's problems with farm payments were unacceptable. Many of you, rightly, made that very clear to us. So did your union.

"In fact farm payments has been a good example of the role NFUS can play. It has been clear in its criticism, while also being very constructive in working with us to mitigate the impact on farmers.

"I want to assure all of you today that lessons have been learned. The Scottish Government has already accepted every recommendation made by Audit Scotland in relation to future payments, as part of our work to improve the system. We have also made £270 million of loans available for farmers who needed to receive their 2016 payments in January or earlier. And we expect all 2016 payments to be made by the end of June.

"We understand the difficulties that late payments caused to you last year. We apologise for those difficulties. We are determined not to repeat them."

(*Scottish Government*, 7 February 2017, [link](#)).

And rural affairs secretary Fergus Ewing made similar remarks:

"However, we must be realistic. I am determined that, for the 2016 payments, we make clear to Parliament and to the farming industry what the likely timescales really look like. The farming industry needs to have confidence in the payment timetable and that we will do what we say. There must be no repeat of the problems that were faced in 2015-16.

"From day 1 in the job and for the foreseeable future, the resolution of the CAP payment issues is my top priority as [cabinet](#) secretary. I assure members and all those who are listening in Scotland's rural communities that I will

devote all necessary time and attention to that task. It is my number 1 priority. I give the chamber the categorical assurance that I am determined to oversee and drive forward the work that is necessary to bring the payment regime back on to an even keel.

"I am determined that the Government will learn the lessons from the futures programme not just for the remainder of that programme but for our wider portfolio of [IT](#) programmes. However, I do not wish to distract from the clear and present task of getting the last of the payments out to farmers and crofters. Now is the time to focus on that, and on meeting the payment deadline successfully, but I can say to members that there will be a process to learn lessons from the experience.

"On behalf of the Scottish Government, I address three simple words to all farmers and crofters who have suffered as a result: we are sorry. Let me follow that up with four further words: we are fixing it."

(*Official Report*, 31 May 2016, [link](#)).

Press release: Fish kill costs Frome farmer Michael Aylesbury more than £22,000

A farmer was told to pay more than £22,000 for polluting a river in Frome, Somerset, killing nearly 2,000 fish.

Dairy farmer Michael Aylesbury, a director in Cross Keys Farm Ltd, pleaded guilty to causing an unpermitted water discharge which turned the river in Frome brown and smelly in May 2016, killing 1,700 fish, probably many more.

The pollution came from a slurry lagoon at Bollow Farm, Silver Lane, East Woodlands where it was overflowing into a ditch from an underground chamber that had not been fully sealed off. Making matters worse, a spillage from a slurry pumping operation days before also entered the same ditch, meant only to carry rainwater.

The reduced water quality and the river's polluted appearance hit local groups, like anglers, kayakers and swimmers, who had to suspend activities. Residents were also upset by the sight of distressed and dying fish.

The Environment Agency was alerted to the incident on 12 May 2016 and attempted to save the fish population by spraying hydrogen peroxide to restore dissolved oxygen levels in the water. The pollution was traced back to Bollow Farm the next day.

To save the fish, hydrogen peroxide was sprayed to restore the dissolved oxygen levels

Tasked with protecting water, land and biodiversity, the Environment Agency classified the incident as category one – the worst kind – which affected the watercourse for more than 6km and was obvious to the naked eye. The defendant told investigating officers “he had nothing to hide and held his hands up to the pollution incident” and that he was sorry it had happened.

Bath Magistrates’ Court found Aylesbury to be negligent for not informing the Environment Agency about the initial spillage and fined him £3,000, a victim surcharge of £170 and ordered him to pay costs of £19,306.69 on 5 June 2017.

Environment officer Andy Grant said:

Our role as a regulator is to protect people and the environment and support sustainable growth. We work with business owners to create better places but when avoidable incidents like this happen, we take action.

Informing us of the initial spillage and keeping an eye on nearby watercourses are two simple actions the farmer could have taken which would have sped up our investigation and stopped the cause of the pollution sooner.

Last November we restocked 5,500 fish including chub, roach and bream at two locations in Frome and we continue working with our partners including the Bristol Avon Rivers Trust, Frome Town Council, farmers and landowners to identify opportunities to enhance and protect the River Frome.

[News story: £260M job-sustaining contract for advanced identification system](#)

The system, called Mode-5 and developed for the MOD by UK-based company Leonardo, uses advanced cryptographic techniques and world-leading electronic technology to allow UK land, sea and air units to quickly identify friendly forces and operate safely alongside NATO allies across any battlefield.

Mode-5 IFF has been designed to give UK units a clear and secure view of potential threats and targets, providing a powerful cyber shield against jamming and interference intended to reduce vital situational awareness.

The contract will allow Leonardo to install the system in more than 350 units ranging from Royal Air Force’s Sentry aircraft to the Royal Navy’s Type 45

anti-air destroyers and the British Army's High Velocity Missile (HVM) multiple launcher system.

Minister for Defence Procurement Harriett Baldwin said:

This £260 million contract for battle-winning technology builds on decades of operational experience to keep UK pilots, soldiers and sailors safe on operations.

It is yet another example of the jobs and skills-sustaining impact of the Government's £178 billion equipment plan to supply the UK's armed forces with the best possible kit.

Less-advanced IFF systems have been used by nations all over the world since the 1940s. Mode-5 uses the same basic 'call-and-response' method as earlier systems, but significantly improves on them. Crucially, the system can easily interface with allied forces, reducing the risk of 'friendly fire' incidents between UK units and the units of other allies.

Defence Equipment and Support (DE&S) Chief Executive Officer Tony Douglas said:

Advances in digital and cyber warfare mean that it's never been more important for UK military forces to have the kind of confidence in their situational awareness that Mode-5 IFF instils.

The installation of this world-leading system will continue to give our fighting men and women a decisive edge on operations.

The new contract will cover the installation of Mode-5 on pieces of equipment that are in service already with the UK. New platforms coming into service in the future, including the Queen Elizabeth Class aircraft carriers, F-35 Lightning II combat aircraft and the new Apache AH64E Helicopters are being fitted with Mode-5 under separate contracts over the course of their construction.

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