

# News story: Communities Secretary statement: safety checks following the Grenfell Tower fire

The Grenfell Tower police-led investigation is underway, but it will be some time before it is fully understood how the fire started or why it took hold in the way it did.

In the meantime there is significant anxiety amongst residents about whether their own blocks are safe.

While the exact reasons for the speed of the spread of fire have yet to be determined, we have concluded that there are additional tests that can be undertaken with regard to the cladding.

We are therefore [asking local authorities and other registered providers of social housing](#) to identify whether any panels used in new build or refurbishment are a particular type of cladding made of Aluminium Composite Material (ACM).

More details on how to identify this cladding are being supplied in a technical note, and the Homes and Communities Agency can offer expert support in surveying your properties if necessary.

It is important to stress that ACM cladding is not of itself dangerous, but it is important that the right type is used.

Communities Secretary Sajid Javid said:

We have asked local authorities and all providers of social housing to identify whether any buildings in their area contain cladding made of aluminium composite material (ACM) by the end of today (Monday 19 June).

We are putting in place a rigorous, government funded testing process for any ACM cladding identified.

Housing Minister Alok Sharma this morning met representatives from across the housing sector including the Home Builders Federation, Local Government Association and the National Housing Federation. They all expressed their support for this work and gave a commitment that they would progress this with all possible haste.

It is clear that a considerable amount of work has already been undertaken. Councils are working closely with fire and rescue services to ensure that the appropriate safety and response measures are in place and talking to their tenants to hear their concerns.

Any landlord who is concerned can contact the department at [housingchecks@communities.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:housingchecks@communities.gsi.gov.uk) for further advice about cladding materials – this is a dedicated contact point which has been set up to provide technical support and reassurance.

Our priority is to reassure people that they are safe in their homes – and that is exactly what we are doing.

---

## **News story: Minister Burt statement on Jerusalem attack**

Minister for the Middle East, Alistair Burt, condemns the attack in Jerusalem on Friday 16 June.

Minister Burt said:

I strongly condemn the terrorist attack that took place on Friday in Jerusalem. My thoughts are with the victims and their families. The UK is clear there can be absolutely no justification for terrorism in any circumstances.

### **Further information**

---

## **Radical education reforms are absolutely the right thing to do**

In my last column, I looked ahead to a very important statement that Education Secretary John Swinney was due to make in Parliament, about reforming the way our schools are governed.

I couldn't give too much away, but I promised it would be bold and radical.

I hope that everyone who has now seen it would agree.

---

## Speech: PM press conference with Taoiseach Leo Varadkar: 19 June 2017

I would like to extend a warm welcome to Leo Varadkar to Downing Street today for the first time and offer my congratulations on his appointment as Taoiseach and leader of Fine Gael.

The unique relationship shared between the United Kingdom and Ireland is one of friendship, close cooperation and a deep sense of shared endeavour, bound by common values and generations of family links between our people.

The Taoiseach has said he believes in an Ireland where every person has an opportunity to succeed and share in prosperity. And I share a similar belief that the United Kingdom should be a place where everyone should have the chance to live a secure and happy life – a country that works for everyone, not just the privileged few.

We also spoke about the unimaginable tragedy which struck Grenfell Tower last week. The government will continue to do absolutely everything possible to help all of those affected through the difficult days, weeks, months and years ahead.

We spoke too about the appalling attack on Londoners in Finsbury in the early hours of this morning. As I said earlier, this was an attack that once again targeted the ordinary and the innocent going about their daily lives. Our thoughts and prayers are with the family and friends of the man who died and those who were injured.

The Taoiseach expressed his deepest sympathies for those affected by these horrific events and we both agreed that this kind of hatred and evil that leads to terrorism would never prevail.

Last week, the Taoiseach and I spoke and we agreed on the crucial need for the parties in Northern Ireland to form a fully functioning Executive by the 29 June deadline and how we would continue to engage closely on this important issue and reaffirmed that today.

We have both met the two main parties to make clear that the UK and Ireland would do everything we can to work with them and the importance of reaching an agreement by 29 June.

It is my firm belief that with good will on both sides a resolution can be reached which builds on the progress made in the last round of discussions.

And my government remains absolutely committed to a successful outcome from these talks and we remain steadfast in our support for the Belfast Agreement and its successors.

As the United Kingdom embarks on leaving the European Union, I fully respect that Ireland will remain an EU member state and that's why it is more important than ever that the relationship between our countries continues to go from strength to strength.

We are leaving the European Union, but we are not leaving Europe – and we want to remain committed partners and allies of Ireland and all our friends across the continent.

Trade between our countries is worth over £43 billion a year and supports 400,000 jobs. And there are also complex supply chains that benefit both our countries. And as I've said before, no one wants to see this diminished.

I am personally committed to ensuring a practical solution that recognises the unique economic, social, cultural and political context of the land border with Ireland – which so many people pass through everyday and it remain our priority to work closely with the Irish government to ensure a frictionless and seamless a border as possible.

And I made this clear in my letter to Donald Tusk triggering Article 50 and that we want to maintain the Common Travel Area between us to make sure the UK's withdrawal from the EU does not harm the Republic of Ireland.

We also want the reciprocal rights that our citizens enjoy in both countries to continue, including the rights guaranteed under the Belfast Agreement.

And both we and the EU have made clear that we want to resolve this as a matter of priority and I am pleased that as negotiations begin in Brussels today we can start working in earnest together on joint solutions.

And it is with this shared sense of purpose that I believe our 2 countries can build even deeper ties and our unique relationship will become even closer and stronger.

The Taoiseach and I have had constructive discussions today. I look forward to working with him and to continuing the close relationship that our 2 countries have enjoyed for many more generations to come.

---

## **News story: New ministerial appointment June 2017: Leader of the House of Commons**

The Rt Hon Andrea Leadsom MP has been appointed Lord President of the Privy Council and Leader of the House of Commons.

Andrea Leadsom said:

"I am delighted to have been appointed as Lord President and Leader of the House of Commons in what is an historic period for our Parliament.

"I am optimistic about our prospects as the UK prepares to leave the European Union and plan to work diligently to ensure the Government can successfully bring in its new legislative programme.

"It is incumbent on all parliamentarians that we do so in a spirit of national unity – openly discussing our disagreements while working hard to resolve our differences in the best interests of the country. I look forward to working across party lines on this basis.

"As we anticipate the return of significant powers from the European Union to the Palace of Westminster, we will show the world why our democracy is so valuable and so important in helping provide fairness and opportunity for everyone."

Also confirmed is the reappointment of Michael Ellis MP as Deputy Leader of the House of Commons.

Michael Ellis said:

"I am very pleased to return as Deputy Leader, a role I have greatly enjoyed and continue to relish.

"The Government is always committed to listening carefully to Parliament's views and we will continue to do just that in the years ahead."