

Government Fire safety review continues



There was a second meeting of a Ministerial Working Group convened to examine building and fire safety regulatory frameworks this week.

The meeting was chaired by Communities Secretary Angela Constance along with Housing Minister Kevin Stewart and Community Safety Minister Annabelle Ewing. They were joined by Scottish Government officials and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

This group is overseeing a review of building and fire safety regulatory frameworks with an initial focus on high rise domestic buildings, following the tragic Grenfell Tower fire in London.

The Ministers recognised and praised the work of local authorities and private property owners to carry out resource intensive checks of their buildings.

The group was updated on the latest actions being taken by the Scottish Government, local authorities, the fire and rescue service as well as other building owners across the country.

Checks so far by local authorities have found that:

- No Scottish local-authority owned school buildings above 18 metres have the type of cladding reported to have been used on the Grenfell tower – aluminium composite material (ACM).
- No high rise domestic buildings owned by councils or housing associations have used ACM cladding.
- 29 of 32 local authorities have reported that ACM cladding has not been used on any privately owned high-rise domestic

buildings. Edinburgh and Glasgow are completing their investigations and it was acknowledged this will take time due to due to the numbers involved.

In addition the Group heard that:

- Building standards systems and regulations for high rise domestic properties in Scotland means the type of product used on Grenfell Tower should not be used in their cladding systems.

- All health boards have confirmed that none of their buildings use the cladding type reported to have been used on Grenfell Tower.

- The Scottish Government has asked the Scottish Funding Council to write to Universities Scotland and Colleges Scotland to ensure all colleges and universities are taking forward an assessment of their estate. Some have already started this work.

- ACM cladding found on a halls of residence in Edinburgh is being removed as a precaution and officials are keeping in close contact with the City of Edinburgh Council and Edinburgh Napier University to understand more fully the reasons behind why this material was used.

- In some controlled circumstances specified by our building regulations, ACM can be used as part of the cladding systems of other buildings. Our building regulations specify that those cladding systems must meet the relevant technical requirements applicable in each case.

- The group discussed its work plan including a fire safety campaign and an expedited consultation on standard requirements for smoke and fire detection in all high rise domestic properties.

- The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service provided a briefing on

their work and said an additional 300 operational assurance visits have been carried out since the Grenfell Tower fire, and 230 additional home fire safety visits to residents in high-rise buildings.

Ms Constance said: “While we continue to be confident that we have stringent building and fire safety regulations which contribute to keeping people safe, following the tragic events at Grenfell Tower it is imperative that we undertake a thorough and critical review of our regulations.

“The group today agreed to continue with the evidence led approach that has been followed since the Grenfell Tragedy. This has meant the initial priority focus was on high-rise domestic properties, then on other priority areas including schools and hospitals.

“We will continue to prioritise and are now looking at the next areas of focus which will be any high-rise properties where people sleep overnight that have not already been captured by local authority’s initial investigations. We’ll also look at other properties where there are expected to be vulnerable people living.

“I’d like to thank all local authorities, the fire and rescue service, housing associations and numerous other building owners across Scotland who are working extremely hard at the moment to reassure the public about the safety of their buildings.

“We’ll continue this partnership to ensure collectively we are doing our utmost to reassure members of the public of the safety of Scotland’s buildings.”