

END OUR CLADDING SCANDAL

EMBARGOED UNTIL 00.01 ON 27 SEPTEMBER:

Grenfell survivors, top lawyers and residents of blocks with deadly cladding call for 'urgent national effort' to fix cladding crisis

Survivors and bereaved family members from the Grenfell Tower fire have joined forces with residents trapped in dangerous flats in a new national campaign calling on the Government to lead an "urgent national effort" to solve the spiralling crisis.

Over six months after the Government announced funds to remove dangerous cladding, the groups say the current effort is failing and 700,000 people are being left in dangerous conditions with no end in sight. Up to 3.6 million people face waiting as long as a decade to sell almost any modern flat because they cannot prove their walls are safe.

The relaunched *End Our Cladding Scandal* campaign sets out 10 Asks to fix the crisis, which has left about 200,000 high-rise homes wrapped in deadly materials and up to 1.5million modern flats, in buildings of all heights, unable to sell or get a new mortgage.

Around the country, about 20,000 high-rise flats still have the same cladding as on Grenfell Tower. An estimated 186,000 flats in at least 2,957 tall buildings are wrapped in other types of flammable materials, according to registrations for the Government's first-come-first-served £1bn Building Safety Fund, obtained by *The Sunday Times*. These figures exclude hundreds of thousands of medium-rise flats (below 18 metres) that are also thought to be affected.

The groups' demands include for the Government to lead an urgent national effort to remove all dangerous cladding from buildings by June 2022 and for funding to be provided up front to all blocks, including social housing blocks. It is an approach modelled on steps being taken in several Australian states, where the Government would put up the money to fix buildings, but then take on the power to pursue those responsible through the courts and levy new development charges to recover the costs.

The 10 Asks - launched today in *The Sunday Times* - have been developed in consultation with specialist magazine *Inside Housing* and several lawyers representing families at the ongoing inquiry into the Grenfell Tower fire, including Michael Mansfield QC.

They are based on the Recommendations of the cross-party Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee and have the backing of several industry bodies, politicians from across the spectrum, including regional mayors Sadiq Khan, Paul Dennett, Steve Rotheram and Andy Street, Labour's Shadow Housing Minister and celebrities including TV presenter Kevin McCloud.

Grenfell United, a group of bereaved families and survivors from the fire, said: "**It's been three years since the fire that took the lives of our loved ones and neighbours. With this dangerous cladding still on buildings all it will take is a simple kitchen fire to cause another Grenfell. It could happen at any moment.**"

“Only the Government has the capacity to sort this mess out. They haven’t done enough and every month they stall they are willingly leaving thousands of people in danger. Rishi Sunak and Robert Jenrick need to step up and make this right.”

The £1bn Government Fund will cover fewer than 600 of the 2,957 developments that have registered, leaving 2,357 with no recourse to remediation.

This is in addition to 291 out of a total of 458 tall buildings with the same Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) cladding as used on Grenfell, which are yet to complete remediation 1,171 days from the fire. Just 53 of these buildings have completed remediation this year.

In the absence of government funding, costs for remediation often fall on leaseholders – with sums reaching above £100,000 per flat in the worst cases. Leaseholders are also required to fund waking watches (24-hour fire patrols) and other interim measures, at costs of up to £800 per month each, until their blocks are made safe.

Around the country up to 1.5m modern flats are unsellable – even in three-storey blocks – because they cannot demonstrate the safety of their cladding, insulation, balconies and wall structure, a necessary requirement of gaining a mortgage thanks to updated government guidance.

The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan said: “The Grenfell Tower fire should have been the tragic wake-up call ministers needed to improve building safety. Instead, more than three years on, thousands of Londoners continue to live in unsafe accommodation, dealing with the stress and uncertainty of building owners dragging their feet and the Government failing to take responsibility.

“I welcome the work carried out by the Housing, Communities and Local Government select committee and I’m proud to back Inside Housing’s campaign to end our cladding scandal.”

Michael Mansfield QC, representing a collective of lawyers working for Grenfell Tower families, said: “There are many more Grenfell fires waiting to happen. Thousands of citizens are at risk.

“After three years it is a disgrace that this risk has not been eradicated by the removal of all combustible cladding. With the advent of more lockdown, the message is clear and urgent CLADOFF!”

Paul Dennett, Salford City Mayor and Chair of the Greater Manchester High Rise Task Force, said: “I have and will continue to support the residents of Greater Manchester and the work of the Manchester Cladators and other campaigning groups to End our Cladding Scandal.

“As Chair of the Greater Manchester High Rise Task Force it is clear to me that this is a national industrial crisis caused by a failed regulatory system which is now becoming a public health crisis as thousands of residents live with ongoing fear and anxiety about their safety and their finances. I hear regularly first-hand from residents about how their health is impacted and how their lives are on hold as they are trapped in flats they do not feel safe in.

“In Greater Manchester we have worked tirelessly for three years to try and ensure our buildings are safe and residents feel safe in their homes. The scale of this crisis requires a national response to support everyone affected now and ensure that changes are made to the fractured and ineffective regulatory regime. We want to work with Government but more must be done at a national level and the 10 Steps set out in the End Our Cladding Scandal Campaign require the Government to step up and deliver solutions. Residents did not cause the problems in their buildings and they should not bear the responsibility and cost for remedying them.”

Giles Grover and Rebecca Fairclough, of Manchester Cladiators, said: "The Government has accepted that its building regulations have been 'not fit for purpose' for years but has chosen to only commit a fraction of the funds required to make our homes safe.

"This continued flawed approach to tackling this crisis has only increased the uncertainty our residents are suffering. The Government must step up and put this right now."

Ritu Saha, a founding member of the UK Cladding Action Group, said: "Grenfell has exposed terrible failings of the building safety regulatory regime in this country.

"Thousands of buildings are now deemed unsafe, with horrific mental and financial consequences for innocent leaseholders. Any decent government must put the safety of residents first. This Government must act now or be responsible for another Grenfell."

Jennifer Reid, a founding member of the Birmingham Leaseholder Action Group, said: "It is clear - systemic failings led to unsafe homes being developed for over 20 years. This is a housing crisis. The Government must lead from the front to ensure buildings are made safe, and faultless leaseholders are not made bankrupt and lose their homes due to the mistakes of others."

Julie Fraser, founder of Liverpool Cladiators, said: "More than three years after the dreadful fire at Grenfell, and 72 lives tragically lost, hundreds of thousands still find themselves in limbo and cannot move on with their lives. Residents are living in dangerous buildings, with properties valued at zero and are being forced to pay thousands for interim measures and remediation costs. None of this is our fault - Government must act now!"

The 10 Asks are:

1. The Government must lead an urgent national effort to remove all dangerous cladding from buildings by June 2022, actively prioritising the buildings most at risk
2. The Building Safety Fund must cover all buildings, regardless of height, and a range of internal and external fire safety defects not just cladding
3. The Government should provide the money up front, and then seek to recover it from any responsible parties or via a temporary levy on development
4. Social housing providers must have full and equal access to the fund
5. The Government must compel building owners or managers to be honest with residents about fire safety defects
6. The Government should cover the cost of interim safety measures
7. The Government should act as an insurer of last resort and underwrite insurance where premiums have soared
8. A fairer, faster process is needed to replace EWS and funding is necessary to ensure all buildings requiring a form are surveyed within 12 months
9. Mental health support must be offered to affected residents
10. Protecting residents from historic and future costs must be a key commitment of new building safety legislation



NOTES TO EDITORS

- The Asks of the Campaign are based on the report of the Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee, available here:
https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5801/cmselect/cmcomloc/172/17207.htm#_idTextAnchor072
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Jen Reid (Birmingham Leaseholder Action Group) on wearebrumlag@gmail.com or 07450200463.
- The campaign is backed by:

Organisations and individuals:

- Grenfell United
- National resident cladding groups: Manchester Cladiators, UKCAG, Leeds Cladding Scandal, Birmingham Leaseholder Action Group, London Cladding Action Group, Liverpool Cladiators and others
- A collective of lawyers representing Grenfell Tower families, led by Michael Mansfield QC and Imran Khan QC
- George Clarke, TV presenter and campaigner
- Kevin McCloud, TV presenter
- Sacha Lord, co-creator Parklife/WHP and Greater Manchester Night-Time Economy Adviser
- Shelter
- Fire Brigades Union
- Association of Residential Managing Agents
- Royal Institute of British Architects
- Chartered Institute of Housing
- National Housing Federation
- Unison
- National Leasehold Campaign and Leasehold Knowledge Partnership

Politicians:

- Paul Dennett, Salford City Mayor and Chair of the GM High Rise Task Force (Lab)
- Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London, (Lab)
- Steve Rotheram, Merseyside Metro Mayor (Lab)
- Andy Street, West Midlands Metro Mayor, (Con)
- Philip Glanville, Mayor of Hackney (Lab)
- Mike Amesbury MP, Shadow Housing and Planning Minister (Lab)
- Cllr Sir Richard Lees, Leader of Manchester City Council (Lab)
- Matthew Pennycook MP (Lab)
- Kim Johnson MP (Lab)
- Rebecca Long-Bailer MP (Lab)
- Shabana Mahmood MP (Lab)
- Liam Byrne MP (Lab)
- Ian Byrne MP
- Meg Hillier MP (Lab)

- Abena Oppong-Asare MP (Lab)
- Mohamed Yasin MP (Lab)
- Margaret Hodge MP (Lab)
- Ruth Cadbury MP (Lab)
- Apsana Begum MP (Lab)
- Andrew Mitchell MP (Con)
- Cllr Ian Ward (Lab)
- Cllr Suzanne Richards (Lab)
- Cllr Liz Clements (Lab)
- Cllr Maria Toolan (Lab)
- Cllr Christine Banks (Lab)
- Cllr Nick Small (Lab)
- Cllr Ken Wood (Con)
- Cllr Meirion Jenkins (Con)
- Cllr Robert Alden (Con)
- Cllr Anton Georgiou (Lib Dem)
- Cllr Jane McCoy (Lib Dem)
- Cllr Rabina Khan (Lib Dem)
- Caroline Pidgeon AM (Lib Dem)
- Cllr Andrew Wood (Independent, former Conservative)

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