



A grassroots campaign taking action against mammoth fuel bills and working towards an affordable, sustainable and democratic energy system

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The Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP
Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

17 May 2018

Dear Secretary of State,

We were very glad to hear of the government's intention to fully fund replacement of cladding and insulation for social housing tenants. Late though it is, the announcement will bring hope to many homes.

We are writing about a number of points of concern which we hope you will address this week.

1. We hope you will spell out that the £400 million cited is an *estimate* (from the information we've seen it is an underestimate) of the cost of recladding social housing tower blocks, and that no social housing provider will be told, "We're sorry, the money's run out." That is, that the government will genuinely "fully fund" this programme. This should also include other fire safety measures, beyond insulation and cladding.
2. It is essential that the materials used to replace both cladding and insulation are not flammable. We find it extraordinary that this should be a matter for consultation, after what has happened.
3. What are you planning to offer leaseholders in private blocks? We believe the government should equally fund replacement of dangerous materials there, and then seek to recover the funds from landlords or developers as appropriate. In our experience, leaseholders often have trouble meeting even their normal heating bills, and many go cold each winter. They cannot be expected to fund re-cladding projects, costing tens of thousands each, or continue to live in fire-trap homes. This crisis was not of their making, and there is no justice in a proposal that penalises some residents.
4. As well as housing, schools, hospitals, workplaces, and student residences, are also in danger.
5. **Cold, like fire, kills.** Even in a normal year, thousands die when they cannot heat their homes. Residents in many blocks already going through re-cladding know that when cladding is off in the winter, uninsulated flats are places of constant cold, condensation, damp and mould, and astronomical bills.

The health and safety of residents must not be sacrificed during the process that you are now promising to fund. Works have gone on for months; some are scheduled for nearly two years, with housing way below any legal decent homes standards, and families constantly ill. Some local authorities, some more than others, have taken steps to mitigate this nightmare. One issue of many is: last winter, residents who were unable to keep their homes warm were buying cheap space heaters to top up central heating. These can be not only extremely expensive to run, but represent a real fire risk. **Will the government now guarantee that every possible measure will be taken to ensure residents' safety and health during the process of re-cladding? Will you fund such a guarantee?**

We and others will also be anxiously awaiting your announcement of the timing and details of the new funding. Timing, with deadlines for completion of works is crucial. The time for this work to happen is now – while the weather is warm.

There are many other issues around consultation, regulation, inspection and accountability that we hope to raise with you in future, to help ensure that the same thing does not happen in the future. But the urgent thing now is the fine print on Theresa May's statement yesterday.

We await your explanation statement this week with great interest.

Yours sincerely,

Ruth London