



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 Robert Jenrick MP

Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

17 October 2019

Dear Secretary of State,

One of the most crucial measures for reducing carbon emissions is effective insulation and energy efficiency in our homes. Insulation, well-repaired housing, and efficient heating systems can also prevent the misery, illness and death that are caused by cold and damp. As climate change brings more extreme weather, including heatwaves as well as cold, it is ever more urgent to ensure that every home is well insulated and protected from the weather. It is equally important that the materials used for insulation and cladding must be non-combustible, and non-toxic.

- Each year around 9,000 people in England and Wales die because of fuel poverty.
- Homes are responsible for nearly 1/5th of UK carbon emissions, and the Committee on Climate Change says these are not decreasing.
- Each year, around the world, 100,000 to 200,000 people are dying because of climate change (World Health Organisation).

Yet the Government has consistently refused to act. Public investment in energy efficiency has collapsed. Insulation rates in homes have crashed by over 90% since the Government cut back the Energy Company Obligation and abandoned the Warm Front programme for tackling fuel poverty. The targets for bringing homes up to a bare minimum standard are very low -- but will still be missed by miles. The Zero Carbon Homes policy for new builds has been scrapped. These truths are not compatible with any commitment on Climate Change.

“Since 2011 Pembroke Park estate in West London has been fighting to make the builder Taylor Wimpey and the Housing Association A2Dominion deal with the lack of insulation in houses and blocks of flats across the tenures. Insulation was not installed, or not inspected, at the time of building. No one will take responsibility. Even though climate change is supposedly at the top of the agenda for builders and Housing Associations alike, we can get nowhere with either. What does this say about the reality?” Suzy Killip, Chair, Pembroke Park Residents’ Association, Hillingdon

“I am now retired and cannot afford (nor want to increase CO2 emissions) to heat my home all day and so sit with hot water bottles and blankets around me. Sometimes in the winter, I stay in bed as my lounge is not insulated. On our estate in Hackney we have just had a programme of external painting carried out. Windows which should have been replaced because they let in draughts, in some cases were dangerously loose and were not double glazed, were merely patched up and painted over to save money. I questioned this approach with Peabody but to no avail.”

Sandra McLeod, Peabody tenant, Hackney

Safe cladding and insulation now

One year ago today we wrote to your predecessor, James Brokenshire, about the urgent need to replace flammable cladding and to ensure that ALL buildings are safe and well insulated, using non-combustible materials. We also insisted that while cladding is off, residents must be enabled to keep warm in their homes. This letter was delivered with 150 weighty signatures from organisations, MPs, residents associations and others. The reply “committed” to “delivering lasting change”.

Today, although work has progressed replacing ACM cladding on social housing, and, more recently, in the private sector, these demands are very far from being met. There are still thousands of residents in tower blocks, as well as lower buildings, with ACM cladding, or other dangerous kinds of cladding and insulation.

“The residents of Salford are still in limbo re cladding and the poor standard of refurbishment to the nine high rise blocks of flats. It has been over two and a half years and yet Salford is no nearer to having the highly flammable cladding removed. This is not acceptable and is affecting residents mental state of mind. Residents fear for their lives.” Graeme Langton, Malus Court suspended Chairman, Salford

This winter, as last winter, residents who DO have cladding and insulation removed can expect little help as they struggle to keep warm.

Crucially, the Hackitt Report’s insistence on the importance of listening to residents is being ignored. Monitoring and supervision of building work remain at a level that ensures further deaths, from both fire and cold -- and from all the lethal effects of climate change both here and abroad as carbon emissions continue unabated.

Climate activists, along with residents of homes that are cold and energy inefficient, are determined to see your commitments translated into action.

Yours sincerely,

Cathy Augustine, Co-Vice Chair, Labour Representation Committee (President John McDonnell)

Cllr Jonathan Bartley, Co-leader, Green Party

Alice Bell, Director, Possible

Hannah Berry, Co-organiser, Greater Manchester Housing Action (GMHA)

Peter Billington, Secretary, Lancashire Association of Trades Union Councils (LATUC)

Brenda Boardman, Emeritus Fellow with Lower Carbon Futures Programme, Oxford University

Sue Bott, CBE, Head of Policy and Research, Disability Rights UK

Mary Bousted and Kevin Courtney, Joint General Secretaries, National Education Union (NEU)

Sara Callaway, Women of Colour Global Women's Strike

Jeremy Cassidy, Sustainable Haringey

Danny Chivers, Author, "The No-Nonsense Guide to Climate Change"

David Collins, former Chair of Grenfell Tower (Compact) Residents' Group

Rosie Cooper MP, West Lancashire

Anna Cross, All African Women's Group

Kieran Crowe, Secretary, Barnet Trades Union Council

Helen Davies, Chair, and John Burgess, Secretary, Barnet UNISON

Emma Dent Coad MP, Kensington

Cathy Deplessis, Committee Member, Southwark Pensioners Action Group

Dr Michael Edwards, Hon Professor, Bartlett School of Planning, UCL

Michelle Edwards, Freelance journalist and columnist for Waltham Forest Echo

Bob Ellard, Steering group member, Disabled People Against Cuts (DPAC)

Cllr Pete Elliott, Lambeth Councillor

Almuth Ernsting, Co-director, Biofuelwatch

Sian Evans, Global Women's Strike

Claire Glasman, WinVisible (women with visible and invisible disabilities)

Roger Godsiff MP, Birmingham Hall Green

Cllr Nicole Griffiths, Lambeth Councillor

Wera Hobhouse MP, Bath

Dr Stuart Hodgkinson, Associate Professor, School of Geography, University of Leeds

Ian Hodson, National President, Bakers', Food & Allied Workers Union (BFAWU)

Zita Holbourne, National Chair, Black Activists Rising Against Cuts UK (BARAC) UK

Rhiannon Hughes, Campaigns and Research Officer, Southwark Group of Tenants Organisations (SGTO)

Zamzam Ibrahim, President, National Union of Students (NUS)

Lorraine Inglis, Volunteer Campaigner, Frack Off London

Claire James, Campaigns Coordinator, Campaign against Climate Change (CCC)

Sarah Jones MP, Croydon

Paul Kershaw, Chair, Unite Housing Workers (LE1111)

Suzy Killip, Chair, Pembroke Park Residents' Association

Norman Lamb MP, North Norfolk

Graeme Langton, Chair (suspended), Malus Court Tenants and Residents Association

Ellen Lebethe, Chair, Lambeth Pensioners Action Group

Steve Leggett, Secretary, Bromley TUC

Ruth London, Director, Fuel Poverty Action (FPA)

Rebecca Long-Bailey MP, Salford and Eccles

Liz Lowe, Co-founder, Tower Blocks UK (TBUK)
Sampson Low, Head of Policy, UNISON
Caroline Lucas MP, Brighton Pavilion
Hannan Majid, Co-founder, Ledbury Action Group
Ben Martin, Payday Men's Network
Kate Metcalf, Co-director, Women's Environmental Network
Nathaniel McBride, Branch Chair, Kensington Labour Party
Sandra McLeod, Sustainable Hackney
John Moloney, Assistant General Secretary, Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS)
Gareth Murphy, Branch Secretary, Unite Community Camden LE/00018
Phil Murphy, HRRB Fire Safety Consultant, Technical Author of the High Rise Addendum to the Housing Health and Safety Rating System
Tytus Murphy, Reclaim the Power
Finnian Murtagh, Fossil Free London
Denise Nicholls, Committee Member, Southwark Pensioners Centre
Colin Nickless, Housing & Fire Safety campaigner
Steve North, Branch Secretary, and Ameen Hadi, Treasurer, Salford City UNISON
Tony O'Brien, UNITE Construction Southwark and Bermondsey Branch
Elizabeth Okpo, Founder, Spruce Court Action Group
Jacky Peacock OBE, CEO, Advice 4 Renters
Martin T. Potter, Chair, Montgomery House & Court Residents Association, Ex Officio
Indigo Rumbelow, Global Justice Rebellion
Cllr Scott Ainslie, Lambeth Councillor
Jacob Secker, Secretary, Broadwater Farm Residents' Association
Janet Shapiro, Co-ordinator, Hornsey Pensioners Action Group
David Shek, Executive Council Member London, Fire Brigades Union (FBU)
Jan Shortt, President, National Pensioners Convention (NPC)
Tulip Siddiq MP, Hampstead and Kilburn
Marilyn Smith, Executive Director, The Energy Action Project
Elizabeth Stravoravdis, Co-founder and coordinator, Kensington Presidents Alliance (KRA)
Neil Tasker, Convenor, Southwark Building Direct Labour organisation
Edward Thacker, Environmental Justice Bloc
Dave Timms, Head of Political Affairs, Friends of the Earth
Barry Todman, Secretary, London Region National Pensioners Convention
Dr Steve Tombs, Professor of Criminology, The Open University
Ian Townson, Secretary, Lambeth & Southwark Unite Community
Tirza Waisel, Barnet Alliance for Public Services
Andy Worthington, Save Reginald Save Tidemill
Neil Winne, Shotton Branch, Sima,
Richard York, Co-founder, Rainbow Collective