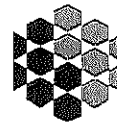




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Our ref: SCORR-0142-2017

Date: 7 August 2017

Dear Mr Downey

Thank you for your letter of 14 July 2017 to Hugh Widdis highlighting the motion passed by Belfast City Council at its meeting on 3 July on Cladding on Flats and High Rise Buildings. I am replying on behalf of Mr Widdis who is on leave.

I would first assure you that the Department of Finance is fully aware of the issues and concerns raised by the Grenfell Tower tragedy.

The Department has provided detailed input on a number of guidance letters promoting appropriate testing of Aluminium Composite Materials (ACMs) to help replicate UK Government advice to local bodies including District Councils. The Department is grateful for the co-operation and support of Councils in reporting on these investigations.

Belfast City Council's motion calls on the Department to "*undertake an immediate review of all fire safety requirements and guidance issued under the Building Regulations (Northern Ireland) Order 1979 to ensure that they are based upon the most recent developments in fire safety design and construction*".

The Department fully recognises its role in ensuring that all aspects of Building Regulations specify minimum requirements which in the opinion of the Department can be reasonably attained. Since the introduction of Building Regulations in 1972, the Department has developed proposals to follow up to date research carried out on behalf of the UK Government by bodies such as Building Research Establishment (BRE) and others.

The Department receives support from the Northern Ireland Building Regulations Advisory Committee (NIBRAC) to help ensure proposals suit local circumstances and practices. Consultation with NIBRAC is required for any legislative changes and recruitment to NIBRAC as quickly as possible and by early 2018 at the latest is a key priority for the Department's Building Standards Branch. The expertise gathered will assist in the longer term and more detailed review which will build on lessons learned from the Grenfell tragedy.

Part E (Fire Safety) of the Building Regulations was last updated in October 2012. Work on a further technical uplift involves a detailed and complex range of measures which will now require further consideration arising from investigations into the Grenfell fire. As an interim measure, therefore, officials will undertake a short review of Technical Booklet E (Fire Safety), which provides guidance to the requirements of Part E of the current regulations, with a view to quickly addressing any potentially straightforward amendments to the guidance. This review is underway, after which any policy proposals will be subject to Ministerial consideration and consultation.

I understand that officials have had meetings with Belfast City Council Building Control. The Department greatly values Council Enforcement Officers' views and acknowledges the ongoing goodwill and expertise shared to date.

Yours sincerely

Paul Wickens

PAUL WICKENS
Chief Executive ESS

cc: Hugh Widdis
Desi McDonnell