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Please quote this reference in any correspondence

Tina Drury
Chief Executive
Your Homes Newcastle
YHN House
Benton Park Road
Newcastle upon Tyne
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27 June 2017

Dear Tina,

Re: Tower Block Safety in Newcastle following the Grenfell Tower Tragedy

I am writing following the devastating fire in Grenfell Tower in Kensington on the night of the 14th and 15th June and the subsequent public concern over the use of flammable material in high rise buildings.

Thank you firstly for the briefing that was sent from YHN to elected representatives following the event. Since this time I understand a number of high-rise cladding samples from across the UK have been tested and that the failure rate currently stands at 100%. This is an extremely serious cause for concern and suggests a systemic failure in fire safety and building regulations. In light of these developments, I am writing to ask further questions and seek further reassurances from YHN on various points.

Cladding and Insulation

The YHN briefing note states that the cladding used in Grenfell Tower is not the same cladding used in YHN high-rise blocks in Newcastle. However, given the results of the subsequent cladding tests nationally, there are questions over whether other cladding types may also fail such tests. Does YHN have plans to send samples of the cladding that is used on its managed high-rise blocks for similar testing? If so, could you let me know which blocks have had samples sent? Similarly, there are questions over the flammability of insulation materials following Grenfell. What plans are in place to ensure insulation in YHN high-rises meet the required fire safety standards also?

Sprinklers and Dry/Wet Riser Systems

The YHN briefing note states that no high-rise blocks have sprinkler systems installed. I note that all blocks have dry and wet riser systems to allow for the fire brigade to connect their hoses in order to





reach all parts of the building in the event of a fire. Whilst dry/wet riser systems allow for ease of access to water for the fire brigade, they do not allow for the immediate dousing of a fire in water that a sprinkler system would provide. Has a relative comparison of the merits of a dry/wet riser system vs a sprinkler system ever been conducted and is such an assessment going to take place in light of the Grenfell tragedy.

Fire Doors

Inspections in Camden Local Authority revealed that a significant number of fire doors were missing from high-rise blocks, presenting a significant safety risk. Have inspections of fire doors taken place to ensure that these are appropriately installed and located where necessary?

Inspections

Given the developments since the Grenfell tragedy, could you let me know whether YHN plans to conduct emergency inspections on the 38 high-rise tower blocks in Newcastle on all aspects of fire safety? I understand the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government has written to all social landlords advising them to conduct additional checks.

Building Regulations

The wider implications of the tests on cladding samples from across the UK suggest a systemic failure in the building regulations to ensure that the cladding used is indeed not a fire risk. It appears that following Grenfell, compliance with building regulations is not necessarily enough to ensure safety. Does YHN have any wider assessment on the suitability of the current building regulations in reference to external cladding and building materials more generally in reference to fire safety? I would be interested to hear if you have any view on this at this point?

Thank you in advance for taking the time to respond to these further queries. I look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely
Nick

Rt Hon Nick Brown MP
Newcastle upon Tyne East

