

Press release: PM chairs third meeting of the Grenfell Tower Recovery Taskforce

Theresa May chaired meeting of the Grenfell Tower Recovery Taskforce and received updates on the support for those affected by the fire.

The Prime Minister has this afternoon (Monday 19 June) chaired the third meeting of the Grenfell Tower Recovery Taskforce.

She received updates on the support for those affected, including on housing, access to payments from the discretionary fund, healthcare and co-ordination on the ground.

While it was clear some progress is being made, the Prime Minister will continue to receive daily updates to ensure that the steps taken are being carried forward at sufficient scale and speed that help is getting to people who need it.

An officials-led taskforce meeting will take place tomorrow and the PM will chair a further Secretary of State level meeting on Wednesday when she expects to receive significant updates on the proportion of people who have received support across the areas identified.

Key updates include:

- In line with the Prime Minister's commitment to provide additional central government resource to bolster response efforts on the ground, as of this morning 5 government departments now have staff embedded within the Grenfell Fire Response Team on the ground, with a number of additional departments providing additional capability. Those Departments are: Department for Communities and Local Government, Department for Work and Pensions, Home Office, Foreign Office, and Department for Transport.
- DWP have today begun administering the first £5,000 payments from the discretionary fund directly into the bank accounts of eligible households affected by the fire.
- Nearly 100 letters providing further advice on how to come forward and claim discretionary payments have been personally delivered to affected residents staying in temporary accommodation, to ensure nobody who is eligible for support misses out on this funding to help with immediate costs.

- The Prime Minister received reassurances that the commitment to re-home people within the same or neighbouring borough would be met within the three-week deadline – and that reports of people being offered homes hundreds of miles away were false.
- Work is ongoing to assess the housing needs of all residents who have had to leave their home – with the first rehousing offers made today.
- A dedicated, 24/7 NHS mental health response line is now active to provide services and advice to anyone affected directly, or indirectly. Enhanced support has begun for first responders from today and the NHS London bereavement pathway has been put in place to support bereaved families in the longer term.
- Local NHS primary care services are also providing enhanced support, including primary care and pharmaceutical services at rest centres and extended opening hours at local GP services.
- By close of play today, DCLG expected to receive figures from all local authorities and housing associations in England on the total number of high-rise buildings across the country which would be subject to additional safety checks.
- DCLG has written to the heads of Local Authorities providing more details to help councils identify a particular type of cladding which is being subject to additional checks – facilities have been set up for testing of samples to begin from tomorrow once the first returns are received from councils.
- There will be a further boost to the number of council workers visible on the ground to provide direct assistance to residents.
- The Lord Chief Justice is expected to appoint a judge to oversee the independent Inquiry in the next couple of days and the Prime Minister has reiterated her commitment that residents would be consulted on the terms of reference for the inquiry before they are finalised.

[News story: Sir Michael Fallon](#)

reappointed as Secretary of State for Defence

It has always been an honour to serve as Secretary of State for Defence and I am pleased I can continue our vital work. Defeating the evil of Daesh in Syria and Iraq, countering Russian aggression through NATO, working with the United States and other allies and supporting the Police in dealing with terrorist atrocities, our contribution is as important as ever.

Our £178 billion Equipment Plan will deliver the cutting edge equipment our soldiers, sailors and airmen need and I am determined to make the most of our rising Defence budget.

I also want to drive innovation within our supply chains and ensure the UK is a leader in the field of military technology.

With so much to be done, I would like to welcome back to the MOD Mark Lancaster who will take up his new position as Minister Armed Forces, Lord Howe (Minister in the Lords) and Harriett Baldwin (Minister for Defence Procurement). I would also especially like to welcome Tobias Ellwood who joins our highly experienced Ministerial team from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to become Minister (People and Veterans).

News story: Secretary of State David Davis' statement following the opening of EU exit negotiations

Firstly, I think we should start by recognising the very productive discussions that we've had today.

I've been encouraged by the constructive approach that both sides have taken.

We have laid a solid foundation for future discussions, with an ambitious but eminently achievable timetable.

It was clear from the opening that both of us want to achieve the best possible outcome and the strongest possible partnership.

One that works for the UK and for the EU.

And we agreed that we stand a much greater chance of success if our teams work together as that's been demonstrated today.

Nowhere is this more true than on the important issues around the rights of our citizens – where I am happy to report there is much common ground.

Ever since the referendum, I have been clear that my first priority is to provide certainty to European Union citizens living in the United Kingdom, and to UK citizens resident in the European Union – and I know Michel shares that aspiration too.

So now that the negotiations have started, we are determined to get on with the job and deliver that certainty as soon as possible.

The Prime Minister will later this week update European leaders on the UK's approach to this issue at the European Council.

We will then publish a detailed paper, outlining our offer on Monday, which I believe will form the right basis on which to reach agreement.

I will also be briefing members of other parties on privy council terms, as well as briefing Parliament more generally.

In addition to our discussion on citizens' rights, we have reached agreement on how we will structure the talks over the coming months.

Michel and I will meet every four weeks, bringing our teams together for a number of days at a time.

We hope this regular rhythm will help us to progress our discussions across the full range of issues very quickly.

We have also established a number of technical working groups, tasked with driving progress on the all-important detail.

These groups of senior experts from both the UK and the EU met for the first time today.

They will support Michel and me by developing creative solutions to challenges we have identified, testing options under consideration, and building out the underpinning detail.

Today marks the start of a journey, for the United Kingdom and for the European Union.

There is a long way to go, but we are off to a promising start. We have taken the first, critical steps together.

Now, we have a shared responsibility to deliver quick and substantive progress.

As you heard Michel said, we had a brief exchange earlier about the distinction between being optimistic and being determined. And he gave you Monet's answer to that.

There is no doubt that the road ahead will at times be challenging, but as

Winston Churchill once said:

“The pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity.

“The optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.”

And so bridging between Churchill and Monet, I am certainly a determined optimist.

[Speech: Lord Chancellor swearing-in](#) [speech: David Lidington](#)

Mr Attorney, I'd like to thank the Lord Chief Justice for his kind words and warm welcome. I too look forward to working with the Lord Chief Justice and the other eminent members of the bench.

It's an enormous privilege and a great honour to have been sworn in as Lord Chancellor and to have received the Great Seal of the Realm, an ancient symbol of this office that has 900 years of history behind it.

The freedoms and protections that we all enjoy are of course built on a principle that is much more important than the seals and the symbols of office – the rule of law itself.

That principle, together with the independence of the judiciary, form the very bedrock of a free and democratic society.

They safeguard us against tyranny and dictatorship.

They allow us to live in a society where no individual and no government is above the law, a society where everyone can expect equality before the law and the right to a fair trial, a society where executive power is balanced by both a strong judiciary that acts without fear or favour and a scrutinising legislature – something that I have seen in action over 25 years as a member of Parliament and in the last 12 months as Leader of the House of Commons.

Three branches of the state, each separate, but each having a mutual respect for the others.

I know from my previous ministerial experience how important the strength of those structures and the rule of law are.

As Europe Minister, one of my key priorities was to promote the protection of human rights and help uphold the rule of law in countries across Europe, especially perhaps in those European nations that had seen those traditions crushed.

I've seen the impact on people's lives when they falter.

And I'm proud of our work to support countries all over the world, for example in Eastern Europe, nations like Albania and Bulgaria, where the United Kingdom is helping them build the strong justice and legal systems they need for their democracies to deepen and flourish.

And I have seen that you, as senior judges, have played – and continue to play – a vital role in that noble work, extending your expertise, through the Judicial College and other organisations like the Slynn Foundation, to assist countries with judicial training and court reform.

And for that, thank you.

For me, this overseas perspective serves as a sharp reminder of just how precious those principles are here at home – for protecting our freedoms, our democracy, and our way of life – a way of life, which we have seen in the dreadful news from north London today, remains under threat.

So I am determined I will be resolute and unflinching as Lord Chancellor in upholding the rule of law and defending the independence of the judiciary.

The very reason countries look to us for support is because the UK is seen as the home of high quality justice and legal services.

People come here from around the world to have their legal disputes resolved because they know that they will get a fair and independent hearing.

And for this, we have much to thank the exceptional men and women that make up our judiciary.

Your intellect, your sharp legal minds, your wealth of knowledge, together with your dedication, personal integrity and commitment ensure we have a judiciary that is fair, free from improper influence, and truly independent.

Now, wearing these robes today for the first time, it is impossible not to feel the history.

But I see, too, how important it is to look beyond the pageantry to how, robed or not, bewigged or bare-headed, judges embody the rule of law.

You all carry the weight – often the lonely weight – of this most vital duty, both in the judgments you make in individual cases, and in the development of the common law itself – a jurisprudence that is world-renowned.

For that – and for the strength and health which this has brought to our country and our society – I want to thank you all sincerely.

But we should never be complacent about the need to build on and protect our successes, nor be too shy to embrace reform where that is needed.

And looking ahead as we leave the European Union, it will be a priority for me to promote our excellent legal services both at home and as a major UK

export, to maintain London as a competitive hub and ensure people continue to see English law as the law of choice.

I also want to work together to make sure the administration of justice is swifter and puts the citizen at the centre of what we do by harnessing all the new opportunities which the technologies of our digital age have to offer.

And I know much hard work has already been done to modernise the courts and tribunals system for the 21st century, and how the judiciary has led that endeavour, and I look forward to continuing that important work with you.

The principles of justice that I swear to protect and promote in my Oath as Lord Chancellor are timeless.

Our approach to the way we protect and administer those principles of justice is in many cases modern.

And together, we can not only celebrate and preserve our proud history, but work to ensure that justice continues to be fairly administered and robustly defended for the next 900 years.

[News story: Communities Secretary statement: safety checks following the Grenfell Tower fire](#)

The Grenfell Tower police-led investigation is underway, but it will be some time before it is fully understood how the fire started or why it took hold in the way it did.

In the meantime there is significant anxiety amongst residents about whether their own blocks are safe.

While the exact reasons for the speed of the spread of fire have yet to be determined, we have concluded that there are additional tests that can be undertaken with regard to the cladding.

We are therefore [asking local authorities and other registered providers of social housing](#) to identify whether any panels used in new build or refurbishment are a particular type of cladding made of Aluminium Composite Material (ACM).

More details on how to identify this cladding are being supplied in a technical note, and the Homes and Communities Agency can offer expert support in surveying your properties if necessary.

It is important to stress that ACM cladding is not of itself dangerous, but it is important that the right type is used.

Communities Secretary Sajid Javid said:

We have asked local authorities and all providers of social housing to identify whether any buildings in their area contain cladding made of aluminium composite material (ACM) by the end of today (Monday 19 June).

We are putting in place a rigorous, government funded testing process for any ACM cladding identified.

Housing Minister Alok Sharma this morning met representatives from across the housing sector including the Home Builders Federation, Local Government Association and the National Housing Federation. They all expressed their support for this work and gave a commitment that they would progress this with all possible haste.

It is clear that a considerable amount of work has already been undertaken. Councils are working closely with fire and rescue services to ensure that the appropriate safety and response measures are in place and talking to their tenants to hear their concerns.

Any landlord who is concerned can contact the department at housingchecks@communities.gsi.gov.uk for further advice about cladding materials – this is a dedicated contact point which has been set up to provide technical support and reassurance.

Our priority is to reassure people that they are safe in their homes – and that is exactly what we are doing.