

Waking Watch Replacement Fund opens for applications

- Government announces additional £27 million to install fire alarms in all buildings where a Waking Watch is in place
- Thousands more leaseholders to be free of rip off Waking Watch measures, saving them on average £163 a month
- New measures will help end the disgraceful misuse of Waking Watches and protect leaseholders

Leaseholders will be further protected from rip off, misused fire safety measures thanks to new multi-million pound government funding to remove so-called Waking Watch patrols, it was announced today (27 January 2022).

The [£27 million funding](#) will pay for the installation of fire alarm systems in buildings of all heights, rather than just being limited to those over 18 metres.

It means hundreds more buildings where leaseholders and residents have been forced by their freeholders to pay for costly fire safety patrols will now be able to install fire alarm systems instead at no cost to themselves, saving people on average £163 a month.

Today's announcement goes beyond the existing £35 million Waking Watch Relief Fund (WWRF) which is already supporting 323 buildings to replace the expensive 24-hour fire patrol services and aims to end the unacceptable misuse of Waking Watches.

It follows the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Michael Gove's warnings to industry that either they come forward and pay to fix the building safety crisis or the government will impose a solution in law.

Minister of State for Building Safety and Fire, Lord Greenhalgh said:

It's unacceptable that innocent leaseholders are still facing fire risks in their own homes, let alone being subjected to the disgraceful misuse of rip-off measures at the hands of their building owners.

The extra funding being made available today will be a huge relief to many being forced to pay unnecessary costs.

However, fire alarms and Waking Watch are not long-term solutions. Industry must take responsibility and pay to fix their dangerous mistakes, and we are actively pursuing developers and manufacturers at fault to bring this scandal to an end.

Leaseholders in buildings awaiting the completion of remediation works are currently being forced to pay for Waking Watches, where a building is continually patrolled in case of a fire, by their building owners.

This additional funding will help end the misuse of this practice and encourage the installation of fire alarms, which are proven to be both more effective and cheaper in the long term, in an estimated 300 additional buildings.

A key focus of the government's overhauled approach to building safety is restoring common sense to the market and ensuring a more proportionate approach to fire safety in buildings under 18 metres.

The Levelling up Secretary has also warned industry that there must be fewer unnecessary surveys, an assumption that there is no risk to life in medium and low-rise buildings unless clear evidence of the contrary, and far greater use of sensible, risk-mitigating fire safety measures, such as fire alarm and sprinkler systems.

He has also announced the withdrawal of the Consolidated Advice Note – interim guidance which has been wrongly interpreted by the industry as requiring remediation of all cladding irrespective of building height.

New updated guidance, produced by the British Standard Institution, will also help fire risk assessors to take a proportionate approach to the assessment of walls, avoiding wholesale cladding replacement where safe to do so.

Meanwhile in the first of a series of roundtables last week, Mr Gove told industry that either they help pay the £4 billion needed to end the scandal, or further action would be taken, with nothing off the table.

Cladding companies have also been warned that they too are expected to pay their fair share. If they refuse, the government will consider legislative changes to block companies from government funding, or even from operating in this country.

This follows the suspension of Rydon Homes from the government's Help to Buy Scheme due to its links to the company who refurbished the Grenfell Tower.

A National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) spokesperson said:

NFCC welcomes the extension of the Waking Watch Fund to help leaseholders who have faced significant financial pressures.

Installing a common fire alarm system is a timely and cost-effective temporary measure that reduces dependence on waking watches.

The Responsible Person (RP) – the person or business responsible for ensuring the safety of residents in their building – can apply for the fund and provide the evidence needed. They are encouraged to speak to their local Fire

and Rescue Service about the installation of the fire alarms in their building and to keep leaseholders informed.

The government will continue to work closely with councils and Fire and Rescue Services on the delivery of the fund.