

# Grenfell Tower Inquiry

The Prime Minister,  
10 Downing Street,  
London SW1

13 November 2017

*Dear Prime Minister,*

## **Grenfell Tower Inquiry**

When I wrote to you on 10 August 2017 with proposed terms of reference for the Inquiry I said that I hoped to be able to provide you with an initial report dealing with the cause of the fire and the means by which it spread to the whole building by Easter next year. Since then I have appointed a number of leading experts in the fields of forensic fire analysis and fire engineering to examine the evidence and give me their opinions on the initial cause and subsequent development of the fire. One important aspect of that part of the Inquiry's investigation is to understand the generation and movement of smoke, in particular in the stairwell, which impeded effective evacuation of the building.

In order to enable the experts to reach firm conclusions it is necessary for them to have evidence of conditions at different levels within the building as the fire developed, as well as evidence of the development of flames up and across the facade. It is therefore necessary to obtain accounts from two important bodies of witnesses in particular: the former residents of the tower and the firefighters who responded to the emergency. Of the former residents of the tower 225 managed to escape from the building and by the time all hope of saving more lives had been abandoned about 260 firefighters had attended the fire. There are

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therefore almost 500 witnesses to interview and until they have all been interviewed it will not be possible to identify which of them can give the most significant evidence. In addition, there will be others to whom it is important that they have a chance to tell their story.

Taking statements from such a large number of people, many of whom have been traumatised by their experience, is a time-consuming, but essential, process, which is still going on.

The pace at which the Inquiry has been able to gather statements from potential witnesses has also been affected by the existence of the concurrent police investigation. The Metropolitan Police Service has provided valuable co-operation to the Inquiry, but it and the Crown Prosecution Service are understandably concerned (as indeed am I) to ensure that the Inquiry does nothing that might undermine any future prosecution. For that reason the police are anxious to ensure that they have a chance to take statements from potential witnesses before they make statements for the purposes of the Inquiry. As a result, the speed at which the Inquiry can proceed towards an initial report is being dictated in part by the time required by the police to interview former residents and firefighters. Current indications are that the task is unlikely to be completed much before the spring of next year. A number of further steps will then need to be taken before I can begin hearing oral evidence (steps which include analysing the evidence, making it available to solicitors for about 400 Core Participants and deciding who should be called to give evidence in person).

I regret that it has not proved possible for the Inquiry to gather evidence as quickly as I had previously hoped, but, having discussed the matter with the Metropolitan Police Service, Leading Counsel to the Inquiry and (perhaps most importantly) the solicitors acting for many of the former residents of Grenfell Tower, I have been driven to the conclusion that the process I have described cannot be accelerated without creating an unacceptable risk of undermining both the work of the police and that of the Inquiry. I plan to discuss the timetable further with those acting for the various Core Participants at a procedural hearing

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on 11 December, after which I should be able to form a clearer view about what is possible by way of hearing evidence and the publication of reports.

In other respects the Inquiry has been making good progress. In particular, I am about to announce the appointment of the following three persons with widely differing experience who will assist me as assessors in fulfilling the terms of reference:

Joe Montgomery is a former housing officer and senior civil servant who has had extensive experience of community engagement in relation to social housing and urban regeneration. He is well equipped to provide advice on the social context in which the disaster occurred, including the experience of social housing tenants, the management of social housing by local authorities and the manner in which they, independent tenant management organisations and similar bodies can be expected to communicate with the residents of buildings which they manage.

Joyce Redfearn is a former chief executive of Gloucestershire County Council and Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council. She will bring to the Inquiry valuable insights into best practice among local authorities in relation to many matters, including the management of finances and the procurement of services relating to the design and construction of residential buildings.

Professor David Nethercot is a structural engineer, who until recently was Head of the Civil and Environmental Engineering Department and Deputy Principal of the Faculty of Engineering at Imperial College, London. He is widely recognised as a leading expert in the field of structural engineering and is well qualified to provide assistance in understanding the expert evidence that will be called relating to the physical structure of the building and the rapid spread of fire and smoke.

I am also seeking to appoint as an assessor someone who can provide expert assistance in relation to matters of design and the choice of materials for use in high-rise buildings from an architectural perspective, which will be an important aspect of Phase 2 of the Inquiry. As the Inquiry progresses it may become apparent that it would be desirable to obtain advice

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from others with particular expertise. If so, I shall take steps to identify and appoint additional assessors.

Yours sincerely,



SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK

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