

Wednesday, 13 December 2017



Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer

HM Treasury
1 Horse Guards Road
London
SW1A 1HQ

Budget 2017 and the Safety of Public Buildings

Dear Chancellor,

I am writing to you on behalf of our Members who supply a range of timber products including fire doors. Our concern is on consideration given to corrective works in social housing in the Autumn Budget Statement. The Grenfell tragedy underpins how, over the years, the regulatory environment, enforcement and working practices have rendered many buildings unsafe. Whilst we expect to hear from the Hackitt review on Monday how things can improve moving forward, we must confront the legacy problem. It is vitally important that activity, that may save lives, is not delayed due to financial considerations.

Whilst all accept that the public purse has limitations, it is imperative that we see the Treasury making an allocation for such potentially life-critical work. We believe that serious consideration should be given to establishing a Building Safety Fund, similar to the Pension Protection Fund. There are parallels with the pension crisis and the issue of vulnerable people exposed. The fund would allow Housing Associations and Local Authorities to focus on what needed to be done whilst applying to the scheme to fund the works (a defined percentage of the likely costs). The Building Safety Fund could also, as with the Pension Protection Fund, manage litigation should it be deemed a third-party is liable.

This would alleviate concerns from existing building managers, allow focus on the fundamentals and help to centralise legal matters through controlled precedence. The Fund would need to be levied in some way, potentially via insurance premium tax.

We would be only too happy to provide any support we can give in helping to explore and develop this concept, either directly or through our wider networks.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'I. McIlwee', with a horizontal line above the first few letters.

Iain McIlwee
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