# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE**  | **Hackitt Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety**  |
| **DATE**  | **23 May 2018** |
| **BY** | **Rebecca Evans AM, Minister for Housing and Regeneration** |

Dame Judith Hackitt last week published her report about the current systems of building regulation and fire safety, which the UK Government commissioned in the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower tragedy. As those systems are similar in Wales and England, I am today setting out the Welsh Government’s initial response.

Dame Judith’s report is challenging, and rightly so. It recognises that a tragedy on the scale of Grenfell Tower has many complex causes. The report avoids attributing all blame to specific organisations, decisions or products. Instead, it argues strongly that there are serious and systemic underlying failures. Attitudes, values and cultures in the construction, housing and fire safety sectors do not always give proper weight to safety. The processes for inspecting, regulating and enforcing fire safety are complex, burdensome and ineffective.

We accept that broad diagnosis.

A safe building is one which is constructed, managed and occupied with safety as the paramount consideration – not profit, or convenience, or habitual practices which have become outdated. But without the sorts of changes Dame Judith calls for, we can never be assured of this. More importantly, nor can residents – many of whom have understandably been concerned since the tragic events of last June.

I am therefore announcing our intention to make the radical and far-reaching reforms to the regulatory system which Dame Judith calls for. Our reforms will embrace all relevant regimes, including fire safety, building regulations and housing standards, and will aim to simplify, strengthen and integrate those as the report recommends. It will also consider other high risk buildings, not just high-rise blocks over a specified height. While we do not want to see regulation out of proportion to risk, we also cannot accept a dysfunctional system which jeopardises the safety of any citizens.

There are also more immediate and specific issues. Dame Judith deliberately avoided any reference to specific matters, such as materials in cladding systems. She was right to point out that underlying failures of culture and of the regulatory system may allow unsafe practices and products to persist and those failures will manifest themselves in other ways unless they are addressed head-on. But I cannot ignore the risks and the clear public concern. Subject to a legally-required consultation into this matter, we will move to ban the use of combustible materials in cladding systems on high-rise residential buildings in Wales.

Dame Judith’s report was addressed to the UK Government, and reflected the current position in England. While the statutory framework here is similar, our institutions, our housing stock and our risks are different. We must consider Dame Judith’s recommendations in our own context and apply the principles to our proposals for a new, robust system in Wales.

The First Minister has therefore asked me to chair an expert group to develop those recommendations into workable law, policy and practice changes for Wales.

I hope to complete this work, and to bring forward detailed proposals, by the end of the year. I will, of course, keep Members informed in the meantime.