

National Fire Sprinkler Network

Parliamentary Update (September – December 2023)

Welcome to our first NFSN Parliamentary Update for members. It is our intention to issue this Short report on a quarterly basis to provide a succinct overview of key parliamentary activity related to fire safety, which includes fire suppression. The content will evolve as we move forward, and we would be happy to hear from members who have any suggestions on format, detail, and subject matter, as well as questions.

Schools - Building Bulletin 100

In September the APPG Fire Safety and Rescue Group met with Baroness Barran, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the School System to discuss its concerns about the process followed in the review of Building Bulletin 100 “Fire Safety Design Guide for New Schools” and the outcome reached by way of decisions.

The APPG subsequently wrote to Baroness Barran to reiterate cross party concern that the Department has not made available all the responses to the BB100 consultation which closed over two years ago. The APPG has asked for more details on the advice behind the decision not to mandate sprinklers in new schools and the full risk and cost benefit analysis that led to the DfE to determine which schools it regards as high risk and thereby qualifying for sprinkler protection. (This is a complete reversal of the criteria for sprinklers in the current BB100). DfE’s public consultation on the revised DRAFT of BB100 closed in August 2021 and the Department has still not released the responses to the consultation!. [\(copies of the Final minutes of the 5th September APPG’s meeting with the Minister are attached along with exchanges of correspondence between the APPG Chairman and the Minister\)](#)

Lithium-Ion Batteries and E Bikes

The APPG Fire Safety and Rescue Group met with Department for Business and Trade Minister, Kevin Hollinrake in September to discuss the issues around the significant increase in lithium battery fires, particularly in e-bikes.

A representative from the Office For Product & Standards confirmed that General Product Safety Regulations are designed to be a ‘catch all’ on areas which are not covered by sector specific regulations and advised that Warwick University is currently a safety study into the root causes of these fires.

A public safety campaign was due to be rolled out to fire and rescue services before the end of the year and consideration will be given to a campaign directly targeting fast food delivery companies and their employees.

Automatic fire sprinkler protection will certainly have a role in buildings where electric vehicles and e-bikes are parked and charged. There is a serious issue where e-bikes are taken

into domestic premises and charged there. ([a copy of the notes from the meeting of APPG Members with Minister Hollinrake is attached, along with a copy of the Minister's subsequent letter](#)).

Consultation on new approach to fire safety of domestic upholstered furniture

The APPG Fire Safety and Rescue Group deferred its response to the Government consultation which closed on the 24th October 2023, pending a response from the Environmental Audit Committee (EAC) that all the conclusions and recommendations from its 2019 report had been met. In December, the EAC wrote to the Minister for Enterprise, Markets and Small Business to follow up on the recommendations, identifying five areas where the recommendations have not been reflected in the government's proposed "New Approach". The full details are available [here](#). The APPG's Adviser and Hon. Sec. worked closely with other organisations and the APPG before pressing the EAC to ask a number of questions raised in 2019, but remained unanswered. The APPG has still not responded to the consultation pending answers from the Minister for Enterprise, Markets and Small Business. ([A meeting with the Minister for Business and Trade, the Chairman of the Environmental Audit Committee and the Chairman of the APPG, plus its adviser/Hon. Sec. is being requested](#))

APPG Fire Safety & Rescue Group Meeting with Minister of State DLUHC, Lee Rowley MP

The APPG Fire Safety & Rescue Group met with the Minister of State DLUHC responsible for Building Regulations on 13th December 2023. The following matters were discussed:

a). 23rd Oct 2023 Written Answer to PQ:

Lee Rowley: "The Regulator of Social Housing recently completed a Fire Remediation Survey on the progress that Registered Providers of social housing are making towards identifying and fixing fire safety defects in their stock above 11 metres". "We intend to publish findings by the end of the year". (2023) Any interesting outcomes likely – were mentioned by the Minister and appear in the [minutes attached](#).

b). The Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill is making its way through Parliament - There has been quite a bit of interest in the provisions that allow government to replace the HSE as Building Safety Regulator. (whilst the committees remain untouched)?

c). Inside Housing – 13 June 2023 – article: Vast majority of social housing high rises do not have fire alarms or sprinklers, new research reveals. This is despite the government being asked by HM Coroner to encourage social landlords to retrofit sprinklers in these flats at the Inquest in 2013 following six deaths at Lakanal House.

d). Lithium-ion Batteries charging up in Blocks of Flats - Multi agency Government involvement. Update following recent events and APPG meeting with Business and Trade Minister Kevin Hollinrake MP. (referred to earlier above).

e) Luton Airport Car Park Fire – Minister to comment on why Government did not implement a mandatory sprinklers rule for car parks, despite the report 13 years ago stating their importance in mitigating fires.

Fire safety expert calls for sprinklers in all car parks after massive infernos destroyed Luton airport and Liverpool Echo Arena multi-storeys | Daily Mail Online

f). Property Protection of Schools - DfE claims to be compliant with the Building Regulations in its Fire Safety Design Guide for new schools yet its current problems of RAAC and Grenfell type cladding on the exterior walls of schools together with the asbestos problem suggest otherwise.

There is no known Fire Safety advice having been sought in its current proposals, with its removal of most of the expectations for automatic fire suppression. On what basis does DfE have such exemption from compliance with the Building Regulations, to be able to set its own measures?

g). **Fire safety in leasehold blocks: (Case Ref: CA27783) - Guidance in relation to the role of Directors of the Resident Management Company for a block of flats over 18 mtrs, given the high costs of engaging a Building Safety Co-ordinator and when they are currently in such high demand.**

The Issue was raised by Caroline Ansell MP and supported by Sir Peter Bottomley MP – referred to Matthew Armer (Home Office) and James Aulton (FSU) on 27th September – who were consulting with colleagues in DLUHC.

h). Secretary of State reference to possible deferment of implementation Decision for requirement of two staircases for Blocks of Flats over 18 mtrs.

<https://www.ioshmagazine.com/2023/09/07/uk-government-mandates-second-staircases-new-residential-buildings-above-18m>;

i). Response still awaited to APPG Chairman's letter to DLUHC Secretary of State – the Rt. Hon. Michael Gove MP re Construction Products Testing Report by Paul Morrell and Anneliese Day KC. Follow up to meeting held on 26th April 2023

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[\(A meeting with the Minister for Business and Trade, the Chairman of the Environmental Audit Committee and the Chairman of the APPG, plus its adviser/Hon. Sec. is being sought\)](#)

House of Lords debate on Fire Safety in England

On 14th December, Lord Goddard of Stockport led a two-hour debate in the House of Lords on "the current state of fire safety regulations in England and the case for a new integrated approach to fire safety guidance." Automatic fire suppression systems featured prominently in a broad debate that covered a range of fire and building safety matters including sprinklers in schools, compartmentalisation, lithium batteries, e-scooters and bikes, building control and enforcement. The full transcript from Hansard is available [here](#) and on BBC iplayer in video.

Published Reports

In November, The Building Safety Regulator published its [Strategic Plan](#), setting out how it will carry out its building safety functions in the first three years of operation to March 2026.

In December, the Government published [a Timber in Construction Roadmap](#) setting out the actions it identifies that are needed to ensure safe utilisation of timber in construction as part of its decarbonisation strategy.

In December, The Government published its response to the consultation paper [Reforming Our Fire and Rescue Service](#).

In December the Office for Product Safety and Standards published its [Delivery Report 2022-23](#), setting out how it protects consumers through product regulation, working with partners across all relevant sectors.

Relevant Correspondence between the APPG and Ministers, together with selected **Minutes** of APPG meetings are attached to this report where it assists in clarification, but members are requested not to circulate these wider.