



INTRODUCTION

In March 2020, the Home Office Fire Protection Board's first Building Risk Review (BRR) exercise focusing on Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) buildings was successfully completed by Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs). The Board is now working on the next steps towards meeting the ambition set by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, to increase the pace of inspection activity across the estimated 11,000 high rise residential buildings over 18m in height by December 2021.

On 5 September 2019, the Secretary of State for Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) stated:

"I expect all high rise buildings to have been inspected or assured by the time the new building safety regime is in place, or no later than 2021."

As a result, further advice was produced for the Board, proposing that FRSs be supported to take a risk-based approach to high rise residential buildings, targeting intervention activities based on a process of triage.

On 2 June 2020, the Prime Minister wrote to the Chair of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry, Sir Martin Moore-Bick, outlining the intent that all high rise residential buildings 18m or above in height should be inspected or reviewed by the end of 2021 supported by Government funding.

To assist FRSs, central funding has been allocated through a Section 31 Uplift Grant. Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) has been allocated £229,803.71.

Made up of:

Building Risk Review (BRR)	£60,000.00
Protection Uplift	£123,549.85
Infrastructure Funding	£46,253.86

This report will only deal with the BRR and Protection Uplift grant funding.

BACKGROUND

BFRS is in receipt of uplift grants paid to Fire and Rescue Authorities to improve the protection function in order to tackle risk in the built environment and support the work of the Fire Protection Board. The grant conditions cover two separate programmes:

- The BRR programme – which will deliver a review of all high rise residential buildings over 18 metres by the end of December 2021.
- The Protection Uplift Programme – which drives improvements in local protection capability.

OBJECTIVES OF THE GRANT

- To demonstrate that the portfolio of risk across c.11,000 high rise residential buildings in England (57 identified premises across BFRS) is understood, targeting resources where risk may be greatest.



- Deliver on the Secretary of State's ambition.
- To measure delivery against the above objectives and determine when the programme has been completed - a dataset should be collated by FRSs which will form the basis for meeting reporting requirements.

SCOPE

BRR:

The scope of the BRR programme is to triage every high rise residential building above 18m. Any with identified combustible ACM cladding, which were previously captured for which a return has already been provided, do not need to be considered again.

Protection Uplift

The scope of the grant is to build long-term capability within fire protection functions. Expenditure should be incurred for the purposes of bolstering FRS protection capability and delivery in line with locally agreed integrated risk management plans and risk-based inspection programmes.

Information relating to acceptable expenditure is captured in detail within Appendix C.

REPORTING

Each FRS will be required to report to the Protection Board on their progress against the programmes objectives as stated within the grant funding agreement from the Home Office:

Quarterly commentary on progress and expenditure.

The Protection Board is required to report to the Minister of State for Fire on the BRR Programme and break this down to individual FRS level.

INSPECTIONS

For a high rise residential buildings to be considered audited/inspected for the purposes of a BRR response, it requires the FRS to provide the minimum question set to be completed and returned by a sector competent regulator.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

The BRR is an output-based programme for which performance measures can be reported on. From the monthly BRR return, performance measures which are analysed and reported on, are captured. An online portal has recently gone live, hosted on Tymly.

In addition, FRSs will provide a quarterly narrative report updating on delivery to the Board, which will allow an explanation of external factors that could affect delivery. Until otherwise informed by FRSs, there is a working assumption of a straight-line delivery trajectory. FRSs will be requested to supply the Board with a delivery plan, including milestones, allowing a



commentary for local delivery challenges based on circumstance.

BFRS APPROACH

Following the Grenfell Tower fire, Dame Judith Hackitt was commissioned by Government to lead an Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety. Dame Judith's report - Building a Safer Future - identified that there are significant issues across the fire and construction sector including a lack of competence in key professions. There were specific recommendations made in relation to the competence of Fire Safety Officers (FSOs). In light of this, the existing Competency Framework for Business Fire Safety Regulators has been reviewed.

The proposed changes to the competence requirements for FRS protection staff will enable the sector to prove that it is fit to regulate the built environment as part of the proposed new regulatory system and demonstrate to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) that FSOs are competent to undertake their role.

BFRS already aspire to achieve all areas of the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Competency Framework for Fire Safety Regulators and are currently undertaking to train a number of staff. To use this Uplift Grant to create new vacancies will also require investment in time and money in the initial acquisition of skills.

The protection structure has been amended to provide a suitably qualified and competent team to deliver the required outcomes and report on progress on a monthly basis to the Home Office Protection Board.

Persons responsible for all in scope BRR buildings (e.g. owners, managers) have been written to, introducing the BRR programme and requesting up to date information and data sets, to allow for an initial desk top review and triage to be undertaken, prioritising buildings and establishing the triage method to be used. All in scope buildings within Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes will be physically visited.

The current Risk Based Inspection Programme (RBIP) is being reviewed and will incorporate buildings identified within the Protection Uplift programme data sets.

A number of members of staff have been employed / seconded on fixed term contracts into the BFRS protection team to support the delivery of both programmes.

The necessary Information Technology equipment has been purchased to support these roles.

Acquisition training has been procured for these new staff members, and to upskill a number of existing ones.

Specific training has also been procured to support the delivery of the programmes.

Business engagement has been prioritised and a number of work streams are being developed.

Further investment in technology is planned, along with training to support response crews in



the delivery of business engagement and fire safety activity with lower risk buildings.

CONCLUSION

With the current focus on high rise residential buildings following the Grenfell Tower fire and the subsequent inquiry, shortcomings are continuing to be uncovered sending ripples through the built environment. Public and governmental interest will remain for the foreseeable future.

In delivering this programme not only will the financial investment be used to improve the safety of the residents of these types of buildings but there is an opportunity to build resilience, capability and succession planning within the protection teams going forward.

Provided the requirements and scope set by the Home Office are met, full advantage can be taken in delivering elements of the BFRS Corporate Plan. Additionally, firefighter safety will be improved, and any deficiencies found within these premises will be rectified through the robust inspection programme.

Focus must not be lost on the people who live and occupy these buildings. By giving information in a timely and appropriate manner, they will be reassured, therefore maintaining the confidence of the people in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes in their Fire and Rescue Service.

We will remain dedicated to maintaining the measured and targeted approach used so far which is based on risk. We will continue to use our professional capability and experience to support Local Authorities, building owners and other organisations through a period of high demand and increased government expectations.