



## Unsafe Cladding: Protecting Tenants and Leaseholders

House of Commons, February 1, 2021

Speech by James Murray MP (Ealing North) (Lab/Co-op)

---

When the horrific fire at Grenfell Tower struck in June 2017, I was London's Deputy Mayor for Housing. Madam Deputy Speaker, if you had told me then that, three-and-a-half years later, we would still be trying to force the Government to make buildings safe, I would not have believed you.

Yet here we are with hundreds of thousands of people across the country still living in unsafe homes and millions caught up in the wider building safety crisis.

There has been a fundamental failure of leadership by the Government in resolving the question of who pays to remediate buildings, and that has been instrumental in the delay in making them safe.

Two related principles must therefore be at the heart of what Ministers do next: first, there must be absolutely no further delay; and, secondly, leaseholders must be protected from the costs of the work.

That is why I will be voting today for the Government to provide upfront funding to ensure that remediation can start immediately and then to protect the leaseholders and the public finances from the cost of doing so by pursuing those responsible for the cladding crisis.

The Government's failure to get a grip on this situation has left leaseholders facing huge bills, with their lives on hold while the problem is resolved.

I wish to draw Ministers' attention to the plight of shared owners and leaseholders in the Central West building—a block of 69 flats completed in 2005 on Greenford Broadway in the heart of my constituency.

Central West was built by Shepherds Bush Housing Association and is home to teachers, social workers, retired nurses, transport workers, delivery drivers, agency workers and many others.

Central West is only just less than 18 metres, and so is not eligible for the Government's building safety fund. Leaseholders face paying for all the works to make the building safe, despite residents being unable to afford the thousands of pounds that that would entail.

I wrote to the Housing Minister about the situation faced by residents at Central West, and I have received a reply from Lord Greenhalgh, the Minister for Building Safety and Communities, in the past few days. He wrote:

*"it remains building owners' responsibility to address unsafe cladding on buildings of all heights... and we have called on them to do all they can to protect leaseholders from the costs of remediating historic building defects."*

The Government do not have to call on others to protect leaseholders; it is within their power to help leaseholders themselves. The buck stops with them, and we expect them to act.

---