

Building Safety Bill

Written evidence from the Fire Sector Federation October 2021

The Fire Sector Federation

The Fire Sector Federation is a not-for-profit non-government organisation established to act as a forum for the discussion of fire-related issues of interest to its membership and to evolve as a central source of information on all aspects relating to fire. It brings together representatives from over 50 stakeholder bodies that make up the UK fire sector thus incorporating a broad spectrum of opinion. It encourages horizontal integration to help reduce silo mentality in working practices by addressing both the built and natural environment, as well as fire and rescue service issues.

Overview of the Bill

Overall, the Federation welcome in the Bill the creation of a new regulatory framework for control of the built environment. The Draft Bill, amended after consultation, does demonstrate the complexity of ensuring fire safety in this environment and the diversity of actors who are involved.

This complexity goes, in our view, way beyond those who seek to regulate and audit building safety. At its heart is the competency and behaviour of all those in the supply and delivery chains who design and construct buildings, together with everyone who is seeking to maintain those building safety features and facilities.

In this arena fire safety can easily slip between the multiple actors involved and, because of how the new regulatory regime is being concentrated on higher risk buildings, leave a great swathe of buildings outside scrutiny and scope. We do not believe this is the intent but needs to be raised to ensure that the changes are understood and change is implemented.

The pace of this change is also quiet overwhelming for an industry of many parts and a regulator who is effectively learning on the job. The speed of delivery cannot match the expectation of regulations, themselves drafted in quick succession, given this involves multiple disciplines and skills. A realistic understanding is necessary in this regard.

Fundamentally the situation that has to change is our whole approach to life and building loss from fire. Regulating to save life is paramount but loss of buildings also has significance with the loss of livelihoods, community, heritage and economic and social wellbeing; and these are not well addressed by the Bill.

Height and cladding alone is not the determinants of risk from fire and the general reaction thus far has indicated the overall failure to adequately recognise the interaction of those features that do contribute to fire risk and the possibilities of suppression and mitigation arrangements.

+44 (0)1244 321073 executive@firesectorfederation.co.uk www.firesectorfederation.co.uk

Finally, as a general comment there is concern that the duty of the Regulator to “keep safety and standard of buildings under review” needs greater emphasis. We are struggling now as horizon scanning for issues has been limited. We are today building a legacy that has known weaknesses yet seems incapable of operating constraint; this must change if we are to successfully create safe structures. In an industry operating a fast-changing delivery system that innovates and experiments in products, materials, designs and techniques there is a real need for the review and agility to ensure that we address potential risks.

If we can assist with further explanation and amplification please do contact



Dennis Davis
Executive Officer
executive@firesectorfederation.co.uk
0787 9491056