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Wednesday 9 September 2009

Two thousand new council houses to be built

Work will begin on a major council house building programme in Britain that will see over 2,000 new council homes built, Housing Minister John Healey announced today. Forty seven councils around the country will receive a share of £127 million of government funding, the largest investment in housing for two decades. Councils will match that funding, bringing the total investment to over £250million.

The Prime Minister said the announcement would mean “energy efficient, affordable homes for thousands of families”, and a boost for construction workers.

“This is a key part of the Government’s plan to continue to invest through the downturn to boost our economy and to Build Britain’s Future. We now need councils to move fast and make the best possible use of this investment, so that together we can meet local housing needs and support the house building industry.”

The investment in council housing is part of the Prime Minister’s £1.5 billion Housing Pledge announced in [Building Britain’s Future](#) in June.

Housing Minister John Healey said construction will begin on the first sites before the end of the year.

“This boost for affordable housing will help build the homes we need and it’s also a shot in the arm for the construction industry creating over five thousand jobs. And built to some of the toughest ever standards, this is good for the environment and means lower fuel bills for the families who live in them.”

John Healey said the cash injection along with plans to give councils greater control of their housing finances and more leeway in how they run their waiting lists will mean councils are “better placed to meet the housing needs of their communities”.

- Visit the [Building Britain's Future](#) website
- [Communities and Local Government](#) website
- Read more: [Article for Inside Housing Magazine](#)
- Read more: [Housing sector urged to work with Government](#)

Tags: [Building Britain's Future](#), [Council housing](#), [Housing](#), [Housing Pledge](#)

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Chief Fire Officer
Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service
Headquarters, 103 Dee Road, Tilehurst, Reading,
Berkshire RG30 4FS
NFSN Vice Chair – R King OBE, O St.J, QFSM,
F.I.FireE.



Robert Napier
Chairman
Corporate Director,
Investment and Renewal
Homes and Communities
Agency
110 Buckingham Palace Road
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SW1W 9SA

Please ask for: Ronnie King
Tel: 01535 631024
Mobile: 07836 266614
Email: KBigchief@aol.com
Our Reference: RK/HOUSING/SUSTAINABILITY/1
Your Reference:
Date: 9th October 2009

Dear Mr Napier,

Communities and Local Government - 29 September 2009
John Healey - Over £180 million further investment for more
council housing

The Chief Fire Officers Association and the National Fire Sprinkler Network welcome the Government's announcement of a £180 million investment for Round 2 of its Local Authority New Build Programme.

As you know, these homes are to be low carbon, sustainable and energy efficient, consistent with Government policy on climate change, the environment and sustainability. Many of these houses are likely to be occupied by some of those in society most at risk to the effects of fire; as such we believe a unique opportunity presents itself.

By incorporating fire suppression systems into the design and subsequent construction, we can ensure new council houses are not only consistent with Government policy but also safe for their occupants.

In addition to reducing fire risk amongst vulnerable members of society, we would like to take this opportunity to draw your attention to further benefits that would arise should these new houses be constructed with fire suppression systems installed.

It is estimated that fires in the United Kingdom release over two million tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere every year. This is excluding further emissions resulting from constructing replacement buildings and in recycling the fire damaged materials. Where a fire suppression system has been

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installed there is less damage to the environment both in respect of the products of combustion liberated and the volume of contaminated water generated.

Furthermore, in this challenging economic environment, mitigating loss would be far more prudent than paying for and replacing damage. We would therefore ask, is it really sustainable to build new homes without the inclusion of automatic fire suppression systems?

Communities and Local Government already recognises the value of automatic fire suppression systems in significantly reducing damage to property from fire, the saving of lives and reducing injuries. We would respectfully ask that automatic fire suppression is properly considered as part of the planning for these new homes. Please feel free to contact me should you require further information and we would be happy to offer advice on how this can be achieved.

Yours Sincerely

Ronnie King
Vice Chair

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John Lewis
Chief Executive, Milton
Keynes Partnership
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Your Reference:
Date: 12th October 2009

Dear Mr Lewis,

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The Rt. Hon. John Healey MP
Minister of State for Housing
and Planning,
Department for Communities
and Local Government,
Eland House
Bressenden Place
LONDON
SW1E 5DU

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We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours Sincerely

Ronnie King
Vice Chair

From: Roz Dicks [Roz.Dicks@hca.gsx.gov.uk] on behalf of John Lewis [John.Lewis@hca.gsx.gov.uk]

Sent: 13 October 2009 15:01

To: Ronnie King

Subject: RE: New council homes.

Thank you for your email. This is a topic we have dealt with locally as a planning authority but thank you for your interest in MK Partnership.

With kind regards

Roz Dicks

PA to John Lewis

Chief Executive, Milton Keynes Partnership

☎ 01908 353671

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Janet Dean Member of Parliament for the Burton Constituency

Rt Hon John Healey MP
Minister for Housing and Planning
Communities and Local Government
Eland House
Bressenden Place
London
SW1E 5DU

14 October 2009
Ref: LER

Dear John

Following recent correspondence I have had with the Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service, I am writing to draw your attention to the effectiveness of fire suppression (sprinkler) systems, particularly in domestic settings.

There is a host of evidence linking the presence of domestic sprinkler systems to a reduction in serious fires in the home, a reduction in deaths and injuries caused by domestic fires, a reduction in fire damage both in terms of property and the environment, not to mention a reduction in the risk posed to firefighters attending such incidents. During the summer we once again saw the devastating effects of fire when a blaae broke out in Lakanal House, Camberwell, resulting in the death of six people. I am sure you are aware the latest available statistics show that in 2008 a total of 347 people lost their lives in domestic fires, an increase of five per cent on the previous year's figures.

In July 1 tabled an Early Day Motion (EDM 1844— Domestic Sprinklers) congratulating the Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service on the work they are doing in this area and calling on the Government to amend building regulations to ensure all new build homes are fitted with a domestic sprinkler system. This received cross-party support.

Recent announcements of further funding for the construction of new council houses are gladly received and I believe we are presented with an opportunity to significantly reduce fire risk for some of the most vulnerable in society. I would therefore like to call on the Government to give serious consideration to constructing these homes with sprinkler systems installed.

I welcome your views and comments on this issue and look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely

Janet Dean

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Chief Fire Officer
Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service
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Richard Ennis
Director, Finance and
Corporate Services,
Homes and Communities
Agency
110 Buckingham Palace Road
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KBigchief@aol.com
Our Reference: RK/HOUSING/SUSTAINABILITY/1
Your Reference:
Date:

16th October 2009

Dear Mr Ennis,

Communities and Local Government - 29 September 2009
John Healey - Over £180 million further investment for more
council housing

Many Thanks for your response, which hopefully offers a possible opportunity for sprinklers to be included in some Local Authority areas.

Having said that, the intention of my letter, which was also sent to Minister for Housing and Planning, John Healey at CLG, was for an acknowledgement that sprinklers make a major contribution to Carbon reduction, by not having to replace fire damaged buildings and by not recycling fire damaged materials. As well as the huge reduction in CO2 emissions, if there is a fire. This is surely consistent with HCA's policy of increasing carbon reduction?

Also where sprinklers are fitted in domestic dwellings, fire deaths are almost eliminated.

Therefore we would like to see this new build programme of 2,000 homes, as the example for the future of truly sustainable, safe, and low carbon homes, being built to house some of the most vulnerable in society.

In other words, we are asking that this special build programme makes it mandatory to install automatic fire suppression in all the houses under construction.

Yours Sincerely

Ronnie King
Vice Chair

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Chris Enness
Deputy Chief Fire Officer
The Chief Fire Officers
Association
9-11 Pebble Close
Amington, Tamworth
Staffordshire
B77 4RD

21 October 2009

Dear Mr Enness

Re: Automatic fire suppression systems

Thank you for your letter dated 12th October setting out the safety and environmental benefits of incorporating fire suppression measures in new housing. Mr Ronnie King, Vice Chair of the National Fire Sprinkler Network sent a similarly worded letter to Directors within the HCA and so I will endeavour to set out for you the HCA's corporate response.

The HCA aims through its funding, involvement and influence to maximise the delivery of well designed, sustainable developments in places where people want to live, work or visit; a place-making agenda for homes *and* communities. We engage in the development of communities in several ways and operate a wide range of supporting programmes, each which must adhere to a set of minimum design and quality standards and each with mechanisms aimed at encouraging the provision of enhanced standards.

The design and quality standards that apply to the HCA's Local Authority New Build Programme are those that apply more widely to the 2008-2011 National Affordable Housing Programme (NAHP).

See http://www.housingcorp.gov.uk/upload/pdf/Design_quality_standards.pdf

The design and quality standards contain some key recommendations in relation to enhanced standards including the provision of sprinklers within new homes. Firstly, to ensure that the water supply rising main is sized (32mm min.) to allow future domestic sprinkler installation. Secondly, where new group homes for vulnerable tenants are being provided, that a domestic sprinkler installation is fitted following liaison with and advice from senior Fire Brigade officials.

Specific expectations apply to housing projects of 200 homes or more within the Thames Gateway; the HCA require that all affordable homes are designed and constructed to enhanced standards that include the above sprinkler criteria.

You pose the question of whether it is sustainable to build new homes without the inclusion of automatic fire suppression systems. I would suggest that this is not a straight yes or no issue; more a matter of degree. Whilst ideally all housing would have domestic sprinkler protection, this is a matter for

Building Regulations. However, given the higher risks associated with more vulnerable tenants in affordable housing, the HCA has, as outlined above, introduced measures aimed at mitigating the risk.

In addition, on exemplar schemes operating under the HCA's Carbon Challenge programme we have specified domestic sprinklers on a proportion of the projects where the residual values can support the enhanced provision.

We are currently considering a new set of unified HCA standards for application post-April 2011 and will be looking to support enhanced standards wherever possible.

Yours sincerely



Sir Bob Kerlake
Chief Executive

Cc: ~~Ronnie King, Vice Chair National Fire Sprinkler Network~~
Clive Clowes, HCA Head of Design and Sustainability
HCA Regional Directors
HCA Corporate Directors

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Sir Bob Kerslake
Chief Executive
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Email: KBigchief@aol.com
Our Reference: RK/HOUSING/SUSTAINABILITY/1
Your Reference:
Date: 27th October 2009

Dear Sir Bob,

Re AUTOMATIC FIRE SUPPRESSION SYSTEMS

Thank you for your letter of the 21st October, addressed to Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Chris Enness, of the Chief Fire Officers' Association, and copied to myself.

We are most encouraged by some of the very positive statements in your letter recognising in the HCA's design and quality standards, the benefits of automatic fire suppression systems, in almost eliminating fire deaths, and reducing injuries from fire and property damage by 80%, as well as reducing the impact of fire on sustainable communities and the environment. We do observe that the HCA's immediate priority is to ensure the safety of social housing, where most fatalities and serious injuries occur

However there are a number of matters for clarification arising from your letter, which you might be able to assist further with:

For example, in relation to the HCA encouraging the provision of enhanced standards, which include the provision of sprinklers within new homes, especially new group homes for vulnerable tenants, we have some difficulty in understanding why ALL these 2,000 new council homes are not considered to be potentially being built to house vulnerable people. Or have we misunderstood what is being said?

It is obviously easier and cheaper to install sprinklers in new build property, and a home built today, which doesn't house a vulnerable person or persons, could well house them in a few year's time; particularly in relation to the Government's announcement of a £180 million investment for

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Round 2 of its Local Authority New Build Programme, which is the basis of our request to include automatic fire suppression.

In order for us to fully appreciate some of the complexities arising from your letter, would it be possible for us to meet with yourself at the earliest opportunity, in order that we can find some commonality in our aims and objectives, to mutual benefit?

Furthermore we believe that the HCA could accelerate the process simply by loudly endorsing the principle for sprinkler protection, where possible, encouraging builders to consider the commercial advantages of being early adopters of fire suppression. Myself and my colleagues would be delighted to assist the HCA with producing factually accurate letters or articles towards that end.

I do hope that you will be able to find an hour or so, to meet with us, and look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours Sincerely

Ronnie King
Vice Chair
(Joint response with
Chris Enness - CFOA Lead
Officer - Fire Suppression)

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Yours Sincerely

Ronnie King
Vice Chair



Janet Dean MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA



Dear Janet

Shahid Malik MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State

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Our Ref: JH/SM/026106/09
Our Ref: LER

29 OCT 2009

Thank you for your letter of 14 October to the Rt Hon John Healey MP, in which you ask about amending the Building Regulations to ensure all new homes are fitted with a domestic sprinkler system. You also ask that the recently announced programme to build new council homes are constructed with sprinkler systems installed. Your letter has been passed to me for reply as I have responsibility for fire safety.

The latest edition of Approved Document B, which gives guidance on compliance with the fire safety aspects of Building Regulations, came into effect in April 2007. The extensive review that preceded the development of this new guidance considered a 4 year research project looking at the issue of residential and domestic sprinklers from both an effectiveness and cost/benefit perspective. The review, which included public consultation concluded that it would not be cost effective to provide sprinklers in all new homes but that it would be reasonable to provide them in blocks of flats over 30m in height where the risk were shown to be greater. A provision to this effect was, therefore, included in the revised Approved Document. We therefore do not intend revisiting Part B of the Building Regulations again until 2013 at the earliest.

The new homes announced as part of the local authority new build programme will have to comply with existing Homes and Communities Agency's Design and Quality Standards. With regard to sprinkler installation, this guidance makes key recommendations that for all new buildings investment partners ensure that the water supply rising main is sized (32mm min.) to allow for future domestic sprinkler installation as required. Also where new group homes for vulnerable tenants are being provided, a domestic sprinkler installation is fitted following liaison with and advice from senior Fire Brigade officials. The HCA are intending to consult on rationalisation of their existing standards later in the year.

I am copying this letter to my ministerial colleagues, Bill McKenzie, who has responsibility for the Building Regulations, and John Healey, who has responsibility for safety matters, including fire safety, within the private living areas of the social housing stock.

Best wishes

SHAHID MALIK MP