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TO: **ALL MEMBERS**

Dear Brother / Sister

Update on FBU Activities and Campaigning around Grenfell

This circular is to inform you of the union's recent activities around Grenfell.

In June this year, thousands joined the Grenfell community in a silent walk to mark two years since the tragedy. Two years on, the independent inquiry into the fire has delivered no answers and next to nothing has been done to tackle building safety.

We are now approaching the publication of the report of Phase 1 of the public inquiry but the concerns which have been raised by the FBU since the fire remain largely unanswered.

FBU Campaign 'Grenfell: Never Again'

In this context, we launched our campaign 'Grenfell: Never Again' which demands action on the underlying issues that led to the fire. This was agreed at FBU Conference in May and launched in June 2019. It calls for:

- the removal of flammable cladding from all tower blocks and public buildings;
- retrofitting sprinklers in high rises and schools (wherever a risk assessment deems them necessary);
- ensuring tenants are given a real voice in the running and upkeep of their buildings;
- reversing the cuts to firefighter numbers and fire safety officers;
- a new independent national body to oversee standards and best practices in fire services across the country.

As the professional voice of firefighters, the FBU is uniquely placed to understand what change is needed within fire and building safety and to ensure that a disaster like the one that happened at Grenfell never happens again. The union has unique knowledge and experience of;

- previous public inquiries;
- inquests and inquiries into the deaths of firefighters and members of the public in fire;
- the various recommendations made following such events – including the occasions where such recommendations have *not* been implemented by those in authority;
- international experience of similar issues and challenges;
- the knowledge, expertise and experience of FBU members on the front line.

Clearly the campaign is linked to Grenfell but our aims are much wider. The issues which led to that fire are relevant up and down the country in unsafe buildings, unsatisfactory systems of regulation, inspection and enforcement and under-resourced fire and rescue services. This is a UK wide emergency which needs immediate action. Regrettably, the tactic of government appears to be based on 'kicking the can down the road.'

Over 10,000 people have signed a petition backing the campaign, with support from the Daily Mirror newspaper, Grenfell community groups, and the Mayor of London Sadiq Kahn. We will soon be handing the petition to the new Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, so if you haven't already, please add your voice by signing [here](#). Visit the campaign homepage [here](#).

In Parliament, Labour Leader Jeremy Corbyn said: "Grenfell is a symbol of a failed housing system and the grotesque inequality in modern Britain ... the Fire Brigades Union has Labour's full support. We cannot stand by while tens of thousands of people are forced to live in fear in their own homes"

Over the coming months, we will be further developing the campaign through actions and initiatives and we will keep you up to date.

Grenfell Tower Inquiry (GTI)

Phase 2 of the GTI is due to open in January 2020, although legal representatives, including the FBU's solicitors, have been reviewing the evidence since early this year. Phase 2 will examine the circumstances that led to the fire at Grenfell, including the construction and refurbishment of the tower, and the regulations in place.

The FBU has argued from the start that the ordering of the inquiry is flawed in that the events of the night of the fire cannot be understood without a thorough understanding of what had happened to the building and how it had been allowed to happen.

We are currently preparing for the publication of the Chair's Phase 1 report, which has been delayed since the spring and is now expected towards the end of October/early November. It is likely that the publication of this section of the report will provoke significant media interest again.

Political engagement

We've taken a number of actions in recent months to put pressure on the government to act faster to improve building safety and address the known risks to people still living in dangerously-clad buildings. We took part in Justice for Grenfell's Solidarity March outside parliament for the second year anniversary and our arguments on fire safety have been picked up by many Labour MPs in debates and questions to ministers.

We have recently responded to two government consultations asking for views on [reforms to building regulations](#) and the [Fire Safety Order](#) and we will also be putting forward our views on the new consultation into the use of [sprinklers](#) in high rise buildings. In this way, will be joining many other interested parties in proposing the fundamental changes needed to improve fire safety. You can download our response to the consultation on building regulations [here](#).

During the Labour Party conference in Brighton in September, the FBU held a fringe event entitled 'Grenfell Never Again'. The well-attended event was chaired by Kevin McGuire, Daily Mirror Associate Editor, with Matt Wrack, Emma Dent Coad MP for North Kensington and Jill Hendrick, a former Grenfell resident and building safety expert as speakers.

FBU Publications and Media Reports

We recently launched a new report entitled '*The Grenfell Tower fire: a crime caused by profit and deregulation*' which can be downloaded on our website at:

<https://www.fbu.org.uk/publication/grenfell-tower-fire-crime-caused-profit-and-deregulation>.

The report, that highlights the complacency of central government in addressing fire safety problems and has been very well-received, was covered by various news sources, with an exclusive in the Independent:

(<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/grenfell-fire-austerity-privatisation-cuts-deregulation-labour-conservatives-fire-union-a9115396.html>)

In the media, we have been able to draw attention to the government's misleading rhetoric on fire safety, by highlighting that many FRSs across the UK would not have the resources to tackle a fire on the scale of Grenfell:

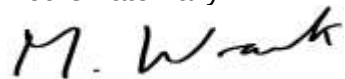
(<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/may/21/ministers-complacent-over-high-rise-fire-risk-say-firefighters>).

Additionally, we have continued to challenge the government on the slow rate of progress removing flammable cladding. Our research and campaign has been widely reported by the mainstream press and has garnered a lot of interest from other interested parties.

We will continue to keep you informed of important developments.

Best wishes.

Yours fraternally



MATT WRACK
General Secretary

MW/mr