

## Kingspan yet to comply with UK Government request for remediation contribution after Grenfell Inquiry

Michael Gove wrote to the company in April 2023 requesting the company contribute to any remediation work required



The Grenfell Tower fire

**Liam Tunney**

Kingspan has yet to meet a commitment to contribute to a remedial fund to make buildings fitted with flammable cladding safe, the *Belfast Telegraph* understands.

A £33m fund to make external wall systems in residential buildings in Northern Ireland safe was launched by the Department for Communities (DfC) on Monday. Construction materials supplier Kingspan was heavily criticised when the public inquiry into the Grenfell Tower fire revealed issues with the company's fire testing, certification, and mis-marketing of its popular insulation product Kooltherm K15. A total of 72 people died when fire broke out at the block of flats in North Kensington,

London in June 2017. More than 70 people were also injured in the blaze, which burned for around 60 hours.

Last month, Ulster Rugby agreed to extend its on-shirt sponsorship deal with Kingspan for another year, despite calls for the club to reconsider its partnership following the Grenfell fire. In a letter sent to Kingspan CEO Gene Murtagh in April, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities urged the company to provide a “comprehensive financial package” as a contribution to remedial costs for buildings fitted with flammable cladding.

The letter to Mr Murtagh refers to a commitment he made in The Observer newspaper that the company would pay where K15 products had been inappropriately used on buildings. It has also said it would contribute “to an appropriate joint government and industrywide funding mechanism” to support wider fire safety issues on buildings. 72 people were killed in the Grenfell Tower fire.

“I was appalled by the evidence heard by the Inquiry about the reckless and deceptive behaviour within your company,” wrote Minister Michael Gove. “If the report was accurate, this acknowledgement is a positive step. I sincerely hope it is a first step only, in what should be a comprehensive package of financial support from Kingspan and other construction product manufacturers. Your record trading profit of £382.8m will, I presume, help to fund this commitment. I invite you to meet my officials to discuss how you propose to scope, identify and pay for remediation works. This would go in some way to restoring confidence in the sector in the way that we have recently seen from developers. People who bought or rented homes in good faith, whose safety continues to be threatened by your products and who deserve better from the companies that have exploited their basic need for a home. Those companies who do not share our commitment to righting the wrongs of the past must expect to face commercial consequences.”

Mr Gove also warned of “severe consequences” for companies – including Kingspan – that did not come forward with a remediation package. The Department for Levelling Up told this newspaper that their position remained unchanged from that outlined by Mr Gove in the April 2023 letter. It is understood the Irish company has not responded to the letter and is yet to make a contribution, despite Mr Murtagh’s commitment that it would pay for remediation.

DfC has formed an agreement with the Department for Levelling Up that Northern Ireland applications can be processed and delivered through their Cladding Safety Scheme (CSS). In Northern Ireland, it will be administered by Homes England as part of the English scheme. A DfC spokesperson said on Monday: “This fund has been launched following ongoing consultation with residents, developers and owners of potentially affected buildings in Northern Ireland. Its primary aim is to make homes safe. However, it is also hoped that the fund will go some way restoring confidence in the market and easing the financial stress caused by inflated home insurance premiums and other associated costs for leaseholders who have been unable to sell their homes.”

Mr Murtagh told The Observer newspaper in February 2023 that Kingspan would “pay for remediation

where its product K15 had been used inappropriately in a high-rise building and was ready to contribute to a joint government and industry funding mechanism”. The Belfast Telegraph contacted Kingspan three times for comment on the status of the remediation payments, but received no reply. On its website, the company said it had not made the exterior cladding on Grenfell Tower and that they had not supplied or recommended K15 for its construction. They said K15 made up approximately 5% of the insulation layer of the facade system and was substituted without their knowledge. They also condemned “in the strongest possible terms” the issues in historical testing revealed by the Inquiry.

