



Michael Gove says the companies that made Grenfell Tower's cladding are as responsible for the disastrous fire as the developers who installed it

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Construction materials firms threatened with Grenfell tax by Michael Gove

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Michael Gove has indicated that he will go after big building materials companies whose products were used on Grenfell Tower to help to fund repairs to thousands of unsafe buildings around the country.

The communities secretary seemed to take aim at Kingspan, Saint-Gobain and Arconic as he told MPs on the housing select committee yesterday that leaseholders should not have to foot the bill to fix construction flaws.

When asked why the government should not fund all remediation costs associated with new regulations it has introduced since the Grenfell fire in London in 2017, which killed 72 people, Gove said: "Developers and construction product manufacturers, if they say that they are squeaky clean, are wrong."

He added: "If I were defending the construction products industry, I would say that it's not that a product is intrinsically unsafe, it's how you use it. Nevertheless, what the inquiry has uncovered is

tests of the safety of a product in particular circumstances being manipulated, it would appear, in order to evade responsibility.”

The [Grenfell inquiry](#) was told that [Kingspan](#), the €18 billion Irish construction company whose combustible insulation was used on Grenfell, had used fire test data from an out-of-date product to market combustible insulation as being safe for high-rise buildings.

[Celotex](#), an insulation producer that is part of Saint-Gobain, the €32 billion French materials group, whose flammable product also was used on Grenfell, was accused by a former employee of being “dishonest” by “overengineering” a cladding fire safety test so that its RS5000 insulation product would pass. Gove also appeared to take aim at Arconic, the American maker of flammable cladding panels used on Grenfell.

He said: “One company ... is hiding behind the law ... to avoid answering questions.” [Arconic](#) has sought to use a French law to prevent employees living outside the UK from providing oral evidence. The company denies wrongdoing and has insisted that it has co-operated with the inquiry.

The government plans to tax residential developers to claw back £2 billion to fund remediation work. However, construction materials firms have so far evaded a similar financial penalty.

Kingspan said its product was used on Grenfell without its knowledge. Saint-Gobain declined to comment. Celotex has apologised for “unacceptable conduct on the part of a number of former employees”.