

Cladding and Fire Safety Compliance Update – Birch and Fir – 20th October 2021

Surveys of Birch and Fir blocks were carried out in July 2021 by our appointed Fire Consultant VEMCO Engineering Ltd. VEMCO reported to Chaney's and VHMC in August 2021.

The findings of the survey were that the following elements are non-compliant and should be remedied as indicated:

- Wall Type 1 - Rubber-faced Mansard cassette panels – replace panel and install cavity barriers
- Wall Type 2 - Aluminium-faced Mansard cassette panels – install cavity barriers
- Wall Type 6 - Render on resin board/blockwork – install cavity barriers
- Projecting Balconies – replace decking and joists with suitable material

EWS1 safety forms will not be issued for apartments in Birch and Fir until and unless these non-compliances are rectified.

Two questions must be resolved before we can move forward.

1. What will be the cost of remedial works to Birch and Fir?
2. What are the options for funding and who will pay?

VHMC has instructed our project managers Ridge to prepare a scope of work and specification for us to use as a basis for inviting offers from contractors. This will inform us of the likely cost. This work is under way.

As Birch and Fir are under 18 metres height (the top floor level is 11 metres above ground) they are not eligible for the Government's grant funding and as things stand the Leaseholders of Birch and Fir are wholly responsible for the costs. The Government has said that a loan facility will be established to "assist" leaseholders by limiting the amount they will have to pay to a maximum of £50 per month. However there are as yet no details available of how this system will work.

We are seeking clarification through a number of channels and we will keep you updated.

The Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service has been consulted regarding the ongoing safety situation in Birch and Fir. They have inspected the site and the blocks and they have confirmed that they are fully able to deal with any fire safety incident which might occur. With this reassurance we can all remain confident that personal safety is not compromised in these two blocks but still we have to deal with the fact that EWS1 forms cannot be obtained until remedial works are carried out.

We will keep you updated. Thank you for your understanding.

Martin Edge
Chair VHMC