



Industry and Regulators Committee

Corrected oral evidence: Building Safety Regulator

Tuesday 8 July 2025

10 am

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Members present: Baroness Taylor of Bolton (The Chair); Lord Best; Viscount Chandos; Lord Gilbert of Panteg; Baroness Harding of Winscombe; Baroness Nichols of Selby; Lord Teverson; Viscount Thurso; Viscount Trenchard; Lord Udny-Lister; Baroness Valentine.

Evidence Session No. 4

Heard in Public

Questions 38 - 49

Witnesses

I: Mark Reynolds, Co-Chair, Construction Leadership Council; Helen Fisher, Director, Cladding Safety Scheme, Homes England.

Examination of witnesses

Mark Reynolds and Helen Fisher.

Q38 The Chair: Good morning. This is the Industry and Regulators Committee of the House of Lords. We are looking at building safety, in particular, the regulator. Our witnesses this morning are Mark Reynolds, who is co-chair of the Construction Leadership Council (CLC), and Helen Fisher, who is director of the cladding safety scheme at Homes England. Good morning and welcome to you both. Perhaps we can start by asking you about your general impressions. Tell us about your organisation and your relationship with the building safety regulator (BSR). Also, if you can, we have heard of the recent changes being proposed. If you have got thoughts on how that might work out, we would be interested to hear that as well.

Mark Reynolds: Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to speak. My name is Mark Reynolds, and I am the executive chairman of Mace Group, a consulting and construction business. It is a global consultancy business and a UK-based construction business, predominantly in the south-east.

I am also co-chair of the Construction Leadership Council since 2022. The role of the Construction Leadership Council, which was set up in 2013, is to convene and help change the industry. Our role at the present time is very much around convening and bringing the industry together. We have been focusing on four primary workstreams: building safety, people and skills, net-zero carbon and biodiversity, and next-generation delivery, which is a catch-all for digital and the way we administer better contracts within the industry, around procurement.

Focusing on building safety, the two workstreams to which I pay particular interest with industry sponsors are building safety and the implementation of the Building Safety Act, to help the industry. That is led by Karl Whiteman of Berkeley Homes. He has quite a large team supporting him across industry. That is not just consultants, contractors and local authorities; it covers all spectrums of the industry.

I will touch on people and skills, because they are linked. When I first joined the Construction Leadership Council, I looked after people and skills before I became co-chair. Since after Grenfell, we have been really intensively looking at competency. This was initially led primarily by the Construction Industry Council. They picked this up looking at the industry reports post Grenfell, but we have really taken this on collectively with the industry competence groups, looking at how we drive competency through trade and professionals. There are about 1,200 people working on new competency frameworks.

Building safety and people and skills are very close to our CLC agenda. More importantly, it is about how we can help the industry get through the challenges we are currently seeing. We have been working with the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), the

BSR, Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) and various industry partners, training bodies and Homes England.

Helen Fisher: Good morning. I am Helen Fisher, director of the cladding safety scheme, as has been said. Homes England is an arm's-length body for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. Our job is boosting housing supply and driving regeneration across England.

In addition to that and driving supply, one of our roles over the past two years has been to administer and design the cladding safety scheme. That has been a new programme that has taken over from predecessor programmes such as the building safety fund. The cladding safety scheme operates in England for 11 to 18-metre buildings and 18-metre-plus buildings outside of London. Within London, delivery of the building safety fund is carried out by the Greater London Authority, which is a distinction that is important here. However, we work in collaboration with all delivery partners to ensure that we are accelerating remediation where possible.

Our aims via the cladding safety scheme are to help leaseholders and residents obtain safe properties and work through the removal of combustible materials as quickly as possible. Our work therefore has been absolutely instrumental in collaborating with the building safety regulator and the new regime as it has come forward. Making sure that we can improve and keep that collaboration at the forefront of new designs will be instrumental as we move forward, certainly post the new announcement last week of how we move forward collectively as two arm's-length bodies under MHCLG, how we do data sharing and work collaboratively and effectively together to remediate buildings and on new supply as an agency.

The Chair: We have heard quite a lot about delays and some of the problems that people in the industry are facing. You mentioned skills, which are clearly another consideration across the board, probably in every sector. The announcements that we heard a couple of weeks ago are quite significant. Have you had a chance to think of the implications of the approach that the Government announced?

Mark Reynolds: Let us give some background context to this. I was in a previous committee where I explained that some of the approvals are taking up to 40-plus weeks. There are still approvals in the system that have been there for longer than 40 weeks which are still not approved. So we are trying to work through that.

We are very much involved and engaged with both industry and Government on the changes. We had a meeting on 2 June with Minister Norris, with MHCLG, the regulators and various people from the industry. Prior to that, we had 10 days of intense meetings, putting together the action plan, which was part of the innovation hub and the changes we have been proposing since autumn last year. We put six proposals on the table. They took on board four of those proposals without question,

eventually, and they said that they would partially take on board the others.

There seems to have been a step change since the beginning of May when we had the first meeting with the Minister. We asked for monthly meetings, and he agreed to those. We have set up an industry oversight group, which Dame Judith Hackitt is also involved with, with all the other departments and industry. The director general is now Katie Farrington. We are working with them closely to put in what is called an innovation hub; it is basically an action plan that we are working through to address the issues. I am happy to go through some of that in more detail, if you wish.

Helen Fisher: The introduction of the building safety regulator is a crucial cultural shift in the market; it has been necessary. I agree with Mark that the service and operational designs have not worked. I think the building safety regulator has admitted that as well. We have worked with it quite closely to improve foresight and pipeline data, and to make sure that we can work collaboratively to guess what is coming down the pipeline here.

On the decision made over the past two weeks, it is too early to tell what the impact will be yet. However, as Mark said, the right people are around the table to support whatever comes out of that. Organisational and operational design and process will need to be at the heart of that to make sure we are lean, do not duplicate and offer value for money moving forward.

The Chair: My colleagues will want to follow up on some of the exact points you have touched on there.

Q39 **Lord Udny-Lister:** First, I need to declare some interests because I am involved in the industry. I am a non-executive director of Stanhope Properties, an adviser to Delancey, and the chair of BMGP Homes, which is a registered housing provider.

I am particularly interested in Mark's point about how the regulatory framework is impacting the delivery of new homes and what it is also doing to the maintenance and remediation of existing properties. How concerning are those delays? They are clearly concerning, but when you put them beside other factors such as finance and planning, where does all this fit together? I would like your overall view of where all that is going.

Mark Reynolds: You know better than I do how challenging the planning regime has been for many developers. That could take 12 months. The Government have listened with the planning reforms, so there have been some changes there. Let me put it in context. Imagine you are a developer and you have a scheme of, say, 500 to 800 homes. You have taken a year to get planning, you go out and get your finance and you think you are going to get building control approval fairly quickly, but it takes another year to get building control sign-off.

Two things can happen. First, interest charges will definitely go up. For the scheme I have just outlined, there are good examples of where they go up by broadly £1 million to £1.5 million. Secondly, you get construction inflation. In 2022, that was running at 12% when you look at everything; it is now down to 4%. In the worst case, if the scheme becomes unviable, you lose your finance. If the scheme is no longer viable, no longer financeable and does not happen, it will cost jobs. The problems will not manifest themselves today; they will manifest themselves in 12 to 18 months' time because the pipeline is shrinking. That means that you cannot get finance because people will not finance you.

I have a scheme myself in Stevenage—it is an HRB (high-rise building). We are looking at making it a much smaller building, which means that Stevenage Borough Council will not get so many receipts for the site. We will lose about 100 homes and, of course, the jobs and everything else that goes with that.

I do not do a great deal of housing in our business, but the industry is saying that this is a crisis today. We need to make the system work, and the way we do that is by getting through gateway 2 as quickly as possible and as expediently without being, quite frankly, reckless. I think the industry has matured. There are still some bad actors, and we need to make sure that they are prevented from undertaking their buildings.

There are lessons from overseas countries that are taking a more pragmatic view. I can go through the detail, which I have set out through the Construction Leadership Council and presented to the BSR. We have been pushing the BSR for several weeks to acknowledge and accept those proposals. It has, quite frankly, until this week to do so; otherwise, we will write a formal letter to the Minister in advance of the meeting we will have with him on Monday next week.

Helen Fisher: As we have said, delays to construction projects are wide and varied. We certainly see that within building remediation, if I can focus more specifically on that. That is very much dependent on the local capability and complexity of any building going through the regime. The building safety regulator is a new regime and its standing-up has had operational difficulties—that is something that it is aware of.

However, more is needed than fixing a regime and a set of processes; there is a cultural need for the construction industry to take the requirements of building safety regulation more seriously. It needs to start understanding and raising the cultural bar, in order to have that capability and capacity within teams and to have appropriate processes.

Within the cladding safety scheme—I think you heard some of this last week in relation to our national remediation system—we have worked with the sector to try to ensure that, if there is a delay, we can very easily point to exactly where in that process that delay is sitting. Is it an operational delay? Is it a capability or a capacity delay? We should encourage more transparency around that, so that if we see those delays,

we can say with confidence that, for example, in London we are missing fire engineers or in Manchester we are missing planners. Greater transparency to tackle those issues will help all those involved; it will speed up remediation and the ability to move forward with new supply at accelerated pace.

Mark Reynolds: Can I just build on that? Something that came out of the action plan that was developed a month ago is that the regulator has more RBIs (registered building inspectors) and MDTs (multi-disciplinary teams), so it is recognising them and bringing them in house. It is not being perhaps as transparent as it could be. The industry has said, "If you haven't got the people, please let us know and we will support you and second people into the regulator". The challenge is getting the right people in the right place, having a clear pipeline and working together. That is something that we need to support the regulator with at the moment.

I would not say the regulator and MHCLG have not listened; they both have and they are both taking action with a clear plan. We have supported that plan. We need to help them deliver that plan and monitor it. Helen's point around transparency is the most important part: if we do not know that we do not have enough people, there is nothing we can do about it—but if we do know that, we can do something about it.

Q40 Baroness Nichols of Selby: We obviously all know why we need to be here—we need more homes. It was in the Government's manifesto to deliver that. We also want those homes to be safe and need people to be able to work on those sites. Does the building safety regulator's regulatory framework strike the right balance between providing a holistic outcome-based view of safety and ensuring that developers and building owners understand what they are required to do? Do you feel that greater clarity is needed from the BSR on what makes a good, safe building, potentially through issuing better guidance—I think you have touched on some of that—or more prescriptive requirements?

The industry has also called for better communication and engagement, and feedback from the BSR and multidisciplinary teams, which I think both of you have mentioned this morning. Should there be greater communication to help improve understanding or common working, or does this bring a greater risk of industry lobbying and capturing the BSR and its MDTs?

Mark Reynolds: Let me pick up the regulatory requirements. These are some of the challenges we have been facing with the BSR, and the BSR has been challenged itself. It had to demonstrate that it was implementing a new regime—there is no doubt about that—but the level of detail that was being asked, particularly at gateway 2, was, quite frankly, beyond the capability of the system the industry works in.

What I mean by that is that, if you pick out a structure, you do not design a structure to the nth degree until you have actually procured your delivery contractor. That will be the subcontractors, not the main

contractors—the specialist contractor design. That is the same for cladding and the same for dry lining. Those are the three things which are driving structural integrity and compartmentalisation—the walls and the floors and ceilings, then you have your doors. There are not many components you need to worry about.

The regulation has said that it needs to be fully designed. That means that the industry is not capable of doing that at gateway 2 without spending a lot more money and having a lot more delays in the process, but it is able to do that at gateway 3. If you look at lessons from Australia and New Zealand, they give examples. We have used this framework about the design principles. Would it not be better to have a prescribed specification that says that these are the principles and come forward?

The CLC, led by Karl Whiteman and the team, with help from the Department for Business and Trade and Nicola Walters—so Government—has proposed a set of guidance notes to the BSR and MHCLG which have been ready to issue for several weeks. Unfortunately, we cannot conclude that because there is an agreement on the approach. The point you raised there is absolutely the nub of the issue. If it was a performance framework rather than an absolute requirement, we would be able to move things forward much more quickly and efficiently through gateway 2. There is always a gateway 3 that stops that.

There are also some other things that we could do to improve communications. We have asked applicants to be clear in the guidelines, so it is almost like a pre-application from a planning perspective. We have asked for that to be defined; there has been some relaxation, but clearly, the regulation does not allow the regulator to do that.

I feel for the regulator. Philip has been trying to apply the rules as they have been absolutely outlined, but this goes back to the issue of not working together at the beginning of the process. If Government, regulator and industry work together, you work through those challenges. If Government goes off behind closed doors and writes regulations that cannot be implemented, it is just going to impose delays and slow things down.

The regulatory framework is not conducive to delivery. It can be, and there are examples all around the world where it is. We have a comprehensive set of guidance notes which we would like the regulator and MHCLG to approve this week, because we are not going to issue until we get it approved.

Picking up on the communications—communication is everything—Helen has been doing some brilliant work around reporting. We do not see the level of reporting that we have been asking for. We have been very clear with the BSR and MHCLG that we would like a level of visibility that goes down to the resources that are available from MDTs, because it was taking nine to 12 weeks to get an MDT in place, and the availability of the

BSRs. That affects both new build and remediation. If we had transparency behind reporting, that would make a lot of difference.

We want to help. This is not about using it as a tool to leverage; it is actually to help and assist. We have no ambition to try and use this as a tool or weapon to get something to change. It is about how we work together collaboratively to make improvements, and we have made that very clear to the Minister, to MHCLG and to the regulators—OPSS as well.

Helen Fisher: I agree with a lot of that. I will take your questions from the end to the top. There are really good examples in the social sector of how it works with the social housing regulator. Regulation and communication between regulators should not overstep and diminish the role of the regulator but having good guidance and communication is crucial.

I do not envy the job that the building safety regulator has had to come into. As I have talked about, there has been that cultural challenge of making sure that people and the construction industry understand that they are not here to do and mark homework. There is a big shift with what the building safety regulator has attempted to do, which is not just to tell you that you have to comply with regulation but to prove and demonstrate the process that you have been through in order to show and demonstrate that you have complied. That has been a shift.

There is a difference between guidance and having to explain the building regulations to those who should understand building regulations, but that does not diminish the fact that really good communication on method, process, resources, volumes and all those things can really help.

This comes back to the point that transparency builds trust in the industry, and it will help us all understand where there are learnings to take place, where there is greater understanding required, but also where there are then operational issues and we can build those into project plans. I genuinely think that if we work collaboratively with the construction industry, MHCLG and Homes England in its delivery capacity of things like the cladding safety scheme, we can start to look at how you really build traction and understand exactly what is required and what those things are, without overstepping. We can ensure that we see this important cultural shift for current residents, leaseholders and future leaseholders who will want to buy high-rise buildings and understand that they have been fully complied with and are safe. That is a crucial role and a crucial step for the BSR to keep and maintain.

Q41 **Lord Teverson:** What I was going to ask has mainly been covered but, just to check, to what extent have the issues and delays that we have talked about been caused by lack of detail in the legislation—the building safety Acts—and the building regulations? Is there anything else that we need to say on that?

Mark Reynolds: I would not say that it is a lack of detail, but it is really about the approach that has been taken, ensuring that the absolute detail

is provided early on and is complete in a process that does not allow us to provide that. There has been some learning at the beginning; it is about how you practically apply that process.

There has been a shortage of people—there is no doubt about that. It was difficult to get the multidisciplinary teams mobilised, but that is something on which the regulator and MHCLG have worked together to put more people in place. There has been a shortage of RBIs as well, so the building inspectors have been put in place. This is where industry and the regulator need to work together more closely.

Lord Teverson: Is it at that level, rather than bothering to rewrite the primary or secondary legislation? Is it a question of practically sorting it out?

Mark Reynolds: The fundamental thing is about the specificity of the detail at gateway 2 rather than taking the learnings of design and performance, and also MDTs and RBIs. There are three or four crucial things that we could do as quick fixes and we have a plan with MHCLG and the regulator, which they are pretty much taking on board. We would like them to move a bit quicker.

Lord Teverson: Helen, do you agree with that?

Helen Fisher: That is legislation, and changes in legislation are for MHCLG to answer specifically. I do not think that the current system has been live and working long enough to ascertain whether there were gaps in the legislation or whether we have not had a standardised operational process that worked well enough to understand this.

Lord Teverson: There are a couple of other things that I would like to take up. Mark, you mentioned going through the different strands that the leadership council were going to look at. One of them was about relationships with contractors and subcontractors. In some of the evidence that we have had, particularly last week, the industry was accused of having a culture where the lead organisations get in contractors and subcontractors, and mentally or culturally say, "Well, anything that they do is up to them. They need to get it right. It is not really my responsibility as the top dog".

You get a situation where subcontractors do not always necessarily perform particularly well. The accountability that I have seen, in the industries in which I have worked, does not seem to work here. Is that true? If it is, surely that needs to change. I will come on to duty holders and account holders in a minute, but is that something that needs to be put right? This area seems to be pretty fundamental.

Mark Reynolds: That is absolutely right. I can only talk from the perspective of the organisations I deal with. Certainly, they are not in that place. Their subcontractors or supply-chain partners—whatever the term is today—are partners in that process. They are absolutely essential. Some of them do not always have the tools and wherewithal to

understand the regulatory change or what is required of them. Many of us have been doing training courses and various webinars to make sure that we can bring people up to speed. Through the Construction Leadership Council and in collaboration with the BSR, we ran a series of webinars to make sure that everyone is aware. In my own organisation, we have been explaining this and putting our supply chain through the basic training of building safety since 2019.

You say that the tier 1 organisations do not care, but the tier 1 organisations are ultimately responsible. When you have a contract and you subcontract, if the subcontractor is no longer in business five years down the line, the person who writes the check for putting it right is the tier 1 organisation. So even if the tier 1 organisation is basically saying, “I do not care”, they will still be writing checks.

By the way, in my organisation, I have written checks for organisations that have not done work properly. We have even installed things that have been certified and bought in good faith by manufacturers—but the guarantee was removed. We then had to take those things out at our cost, to put something back in that then meets the code.

We are seeing what I call a 12-year legacy—although it can now be 30 years—under the contract, whereby that was truer for work that went on in the past than it is today. Things have changed. Certainly, the people involved with HRBs, across all the spectrum, are now far more aware, so the cultural change that people talk about has been happening, frankly, since Grenfell.

Lord Teverson: It seems to me that it must be a huge challenge for safety if that is not right. Helen, have you found that?

Helen Fisher: I became acutely aware of that in the designs of the cladding safety scheme, compared with the predecessor programmes of the building safety fund and ACM (Aluminium Composite Material) programme. Something we have designed into the national remediation programme is a requirement to look at not just who is leading the project but who the five or six subcontractors are. This is crucial. It is about the data that you have, to be able to look at who the tier 1s are using. We ask: are there patterns there? Will those patterns impact pace? Alternatively, does this mean that gateway 2 will fail?

You can look not just at who the tier 1 is but at which design teams and subcontractors will do some of the scaffolding work. That is really important information that we now have on the cladding safety scheme. We do not just look at engaging with and trying to work collaboratively with the tier 1s; we are looking at the dataset that we have built in over the past two years for the cladding safety scheme to ask who else we are exposed to and how we can collaborate across the sector. That allows us to ensure that they are also hearing some of these cultural shifts and messaging, because they are part of the solution to make sure that we build better, safer buildings moving forward. They hear that directly from some of the entities such as Homes England.

Lord Teverson: We now have duty holders during construction and accountable persons for the building officers. Should the introduction of those roles not solve that issue? I presume that there is someone—other than a legal person—who you can point towards as having responsibility. Has that been implemented? Has it made a big difference?

Mark Reynolds: It is making a difference—there is no doubt about that. The CDM—the principal contractor and the obligations within it—is an extension of that. It is clearly making a difference, in the same way that the CDM has made a difference to the industry.

Lord Teverson: What is the CDM?

Mark Reynolds: Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 1994, updated in 2015. They have been in existence for well over 25 years, and they have made a difference from a design safety perspective. There is no doubt about it that the regulations as a whole have forced the industry to make some changes. Those organisations that are delivering homes at scale—or even commercial buildings or other buildings at scale—fully recognise the need to make buildings safe.

Lord Teverson: Helen, for the buildings that you deal with, do you know who the accountable person is?

Helen Fisher: We absolutely do. We call them the responsible entity—the person who holds responsibility for maintaining and fixing that building. I think my answer will probably be slightly different. The building regulations are welcomed; they are a really important shift. There is the construction part of building new homes, creating new supply and remediating buildings, and then you have to ensure that you comply with building regulations and get your building safety certificates. That is a role of the building safety regulator.

We absolutely must ensure that we keep firmly in the forefront of our minds that some of these people are right-to-manage companies, and some are leaseholders who will be responsible for the maintenance and safety of these buildings. That is a difficult task. As we build these new processes and as we look at how we now shape a building safety regulator that is fit for moving through all of this, we need to look at the life cycle that a building will go through and, at any one time, who needs to comply with these regulations. We have to ensure that there is guidance to build and maintain buildings and to get through things such as gateway 2 and gateway 3. As you then take receipt of a building and you are in the management seat of that, you have to ask: what has to be true and how do you understand that?

You will have heard from entities such as End Our Cladding Scandal and others that there certainly needs to be some support for the leaseholders who will find themselves in those positions of responsibility, to ensure that they understand the requirements and that there is appropriate training and support for those who will take that on in the long term.

Q42 **Viscount Chandos:** I will pick up on the reference you made to the education of the industry in this area. It is human nature to look for somebody else to blame, particularly if there is a regulator. How much do you think the delays in approvals, in the past and currently, reflect inadequate understanding on the part of developers, building owners and managing agents?

Mark Reynolds: You can honestly say that, before Grenfell, there was a lack of understanding of the products, some of the design detailing and the consequences of the design detailing provided by some of the principal designers and specialist contractors. There was a lack of awareness of the implementation from tier 1 organisations through to the whole of the supply chain—there have been significant failures all the way through that. I would say that the wake-up call was Grenfell. It probably took a year before people really understood what that meant in all its aspects. The reason why I say that is because people sell products that are unsafe—it is a bit of an issue—but they have test certificates that say that they are safe. If you go and buy a product and you think that it is safe but it is not, you do not know that, do you? There are examples of that. Forgive me for getting into the absolute detail but, if you do not realise the consequences of penetrations through the wall and the distortion of different materials in there—for example, if your designer has not designed it, and you have just put a big hole through a wall and put in different pipes, wires, cables and cable trays, all of which distort at different rates in a fire and fall out because they are not separated properly—you will not know that.

This is an issue for the industry going back, and we will see it for some considerable years. I can remember going around a project when I had an event business; we had secured a large commercial building as an FM provider. I said, “None of these firestops is compliant”. They looked great—they had all the badges on them—but they were not compliant with the new regulations. To your point, the greatest worry for the industry at the moment is the legacy that currently exists. Moving forward, there is no excuse for any organisation to accept that sort of performance.

Viscount Chandos: You have touched on the change in culture post Grenfell, but we all know—both in individual companies and as an industry—how hard it is to change a culture if it has not been right. Taking your example of a product that the developer, contractor or whoever does not know is adequately safe, what do you think the mindset is? Should they be saying, “This is a bit too good to be true. It is meant to be absolutely safe, but it is 20% cheaper than a competing product”? Is there a mentality of grabbing that saving without asking whether something is lying behind it that would suggest it does not have the right level of safety?

Mark Reynolds: Let us talk about what we have done; I will be a bit controversial here. If you buy a bottle of water, do you go and test it before you drink it? You assume that it is safe and that it is regulated. Take a product that you bought in 2017: if you think that it was tested

and approved but it subsequently turns out that it was not, that is a problem.

That was then. Moving forward to now, again, the Construction Products Association put in some guidance—I think that it is called the CCPI (Code for Construction Product Information)—on testing products to make sure that the people who have put those products forward for sale know that they have been properly tested and that that is verified. So a level of culture change, behaviour and self-regulation has come about in the past three years.

Going forward, the challenge that we should ask ourselves is, “Are we doing as much as we possibly can to avoid all of the issues occurring?” I think that there is still some work to do and an opportunity to do some more—I am happy to discuss that—but I do think that we have raised the bar.

The important thing there, touching on skills, is that some of the things we started looking at when we brought together the work being done by the CIC and the Construction Leadership Council were skills, knowledge, experience and behaviours. All of that is going into the curriculum that we are rewriting for all of the different working groups and trades, from professionals and fire engineers right through to plumbers, electricians, carpenters, bricklayers, dry liners, facade engineers, facade fixers, et cetera.

All of that curriculum—as I say, there are probably 1,200 people working on it—has been written. We have a full schedule of what is being developed and has been implemented. We are lucky to have not exactly a competency system but the CSCS (Construction Skills Certification Scheme), which is the skills card; it is being enhanced to incorporate that. So not only do we have the curriculum right; we have the training and a card to demonstrate competency at the end of that. However, there is still work to do, and we need to improve that over the next few years.

Viscount Chandos: It is 10 years after Grenfell.

Mark Reynolds: I am afraid so. I agree—it has taken 10 years.

Viscount Chandos: Helen, what is your perspective on the issue of culture and culture change?

Helen Fisher: I agree that, unfortunately, there is a need for the culture to be taken more seriously. You asked specifically whether it is the regulator or the industry. There are still operational improvements required and requirements in the industry both to move forward and to take this more systematically and seriously, at the forefront of what it does.

An awful lot has happened with the introduction of the building safety regulator to put building safety at the absolute heart of the design and where we need to move to, but a percentage of buildings are failing

gateway 2. This could be down to needing more guidance and better communication; however, there has to be an element around ensuring that we are increasing the skill sets here to make sure that the industry understands, complies and takes building regulation really seriously. Otherwise, it will just keep confounding the system, because there is not a process in the land that will escape from the fact of people taking that really seriously.

Again, it is about having utter transparency so that we can answer that question collectively across industry more effectively and say, "It's these things. These bits are improving and will improve the system". At the moment, it is a real mix of some operational pressures, a new regime and a cultural shift that are behind where it needs to be.

Q43 **Baroness Harding of Winscombe:** The BSR has suggested that it would like to issue notices on an organisation-by-organisation basis, rather than the current system of going from building to building. Would you support a move that focuses on organisations, or do you feel that this would lessen its focus on the safety of individual buildings?

Mark Reynolds: We have been calling for that; we think that it is a very positive move. Let me give you a couple of examples of why we think this. First, there are many good organisations out there. In some of the ways in which the regulation is applied, it almost applies to the lowest common denominator. If it is by organisation, that would be really helpful.

It would also drive consistency and a better understanding of what is needed, and would improve the turnaround times. So we think that this is a very positive move; it is something that we have been calling for for quite some time.

Helen Fisher: There is a lot of value in ensuring that you have account oversight of those who have the volume of this and who work through the building. That is not everybody. There needs to be significant lean-in and collaboration to learn from where there are designs. The cladding safety scheme takes a building-by-building approach, for example, but has an account management tier on the top, which ensures that those who are doing volumes of this are met on a regular basis and understand progress, issues and themes from their performance. There is a lot of value that you can get from those types of approaches.

However, to do building safety regulation well would involve local teams, local authorities, and local fire and rescue services. So there will always be a need for them to take a top-down and bottom-up approach. It is really important now that they work with, and we learn from, other operational designs in the sector that are doing this well. They are very simple processes to ensure that you can have clear account management and hold people with large volumes of this to account—as well as help them to learn on a mass basis—while ensuring that you maintain integrity of the local requirements and local influence that are needed here to make sure that things pass through regulation seamlessly.

Mark Reynolds: Can I just add one point to that? Helen has picked up something that I should have raised.

At the moment, there is a limited number of applications going through the process but, next year, there will be multiple applications from single organisations going through. So, where one organisation is putting in five or six applications now, it will be wanting to put in 40 at the back end of this year and next year. This goes back to whether we are going to build homes at capacity. Unless we have an account-management-by-organisation approach, we will not be able to deliver the capacity. Helen is absolutely right: it is top down, bottom up, but there is that commonality to drive the volume, which is really essential.

Helen Fisher: I would add, however, that the pipeline should not be a surprise as to what is coming here. There are numerous steps before you get to gateway 2. In terms of the cladding safety scheme, we are now sharing that openly with the building safety regulator, and have been doing so for several months, so that we can say, in six months' or nine months' time, "Here's the volume". There has to be something about how we interact together so that that pipeline is not a surprise and we do not have, all of a sudden, a high-rise building that needs to have a gateway 2 design. We need to make sure that that pipeline, whether it is bottom up or at the account level, is known about and is shared in collaboration with industry.

Baroness Harding of Winscombe: Are there other ways of improving the efficiency of the gateway process without risking safety? For example, we have heard that there might be room for further efficiencies by grouping gateway applications for similar buildings or by removing smaller, less safety-critical renovations from the gateway process altogether. What would you both recommend doing to improve the efficiency of the process without risking safety?

Helen Fisher: From our point of view, the efficiency will be driven by ensuring that you do not duplicate. There are already processes in government where you have teams that are auditing fire risk appraisals and setting out designs. There is a real need now to collaborate and to ensure that we are being lean and offering value for money across the whole sector, to ensure that we remove duplication of process while maintaining the important independence of the regulator. That is crucial.

There are processes, such as putting a fire alarm into a building that requires a gateway 2, where it would make immense sense, for those types of works—they are also responses to interim measures and requirements that impact on leaseholders and residents quite significantly, from a cost point of view—for us to look to streamline how some of them are given approaches.

However, part of our response in terms of mitigation is that I look at the stock I hold as a remediation programme. High-rise is, by its very nature and design, higher risk. Therefore, probably 10% to 12% of the work that will come through into the regulator will be offering any form of

mitigation as a remediation strategy; that is for the 320 buildings that are currently working through the cladding safety scheme. We could absolutely look at how to make that small percentage work through more seamlessly. More fundamentally, we need to make sure that the process works for those who are required to go through gateway 2, which is for new-build supply as well. There fundamentally needs to be something that works here—meaning that the requirements are understood and there is good communication on where the delays are. We need to understand what the delay is so that we can all move around, pivot and respond to it quickly. That is where we need to be.

Mark Reynolds: Building on that, there are three very different streams. There is new build, which can, clearly, be very complex. Then there is the remediation. Then there are the domestic, small changes. They all need different teams to look at them and to turn them around at different speeds.

This innovation unit, which has been suggested by and put on the table by the BSR, looks at various processes when it builds confidence. The process that it put on the table four or five weeks ago was a 13-week process. It is looking to engage the fire consultants in a different way to reduce that process, if they are comfortable with that. This would take the process from 13 weeks down to eight weeks; there is a more radical process to get it down to five weeks, but that is a long way off yet. Let us test it first. Let us give it time to work it through, see whether it works and see whether we can make any process improvement.

To give the teams in the BSR credit, they are looking at this. They have shared it with us and discussed the concerns and challenges that they face. If we can get them into a 13-week process, that would be a huge step forward.

Q44 **Viscount Thurso:** Mark, I come to you first. What is your view of the resources available to the BSR? Are they sufficient to do the job?

Mark Reynolds: Yes, they are—it tells me that they are—and they are sufficient in the industry as well. One of the things that we have encouraged at the BSR is it being quite clear about what it needs in terms of the number of multidisciplinary teams, or MDTs, to move that process forward. It is about how it engages, acts and responds quickly. It is also looking at category A and category B, in terms of the qualifications that people can approve. So that is what has been looked at.

Viscount Thurso: We have had quite a lot of evidence from people who have said that they need more funding, but you are saying, “No, that’s not true. They’re funded perfectly adequately”.

Mark Reynolds: That was true, and they have been given more funding. They do not have adequate funding to get rid of the backlog—that is true. I recognise that it costs more to employ someone through the private sector than to second them into the BSR, so I think that there will still be a funding shortfall.

Viscount Thurso: Should those funds be recovered from the industry as part of the application process, or should it be a contribution made by the taxpayer?

Mark Reynolds: I do not think that the industry would mind paying an additional contribution to get it through quickly, for the reasons I outlined earlier, because it costs more.

Viscount Thurso: That is the key question. If it happened quickly and there was not, therefore, a threat to the future project, would the industry be happy to pay what was necessary to get it done?

Mark Reynolds: I will speak for myself and the colleagues I deal with. We would all be happy to pay more money to get this through at speed and pace, so I do not think that that is an issue.

There have been some challenges around resource. Everything is a balance over everything—"Funding is not an issue. Funding is an issue. Resources are not an issue. Resources are an issue"—but these issues are solvable. As Helen said, if you have that transparency, we know that we need additional people from different areas. We have offered, as has the LABC (Local Authority Building Control), to provide people and second them into the BSR. There was pushback on that originally, then that was conceded.

So we are seeing some change, which is beneficial. When we look into the future, we see that there will be an opportunity to change, but we need to keep pushing hard at this.

Viscount Thurso: I was very taken by your thoughts in relation to moving what happens at gateway 2 towards gateway 3, which would presumably mean that gateway 2 would be more "in principle" and gateway 3 would be more "in detail". If I have got that right, would that have any impact on the funding requirement?

Mark Reynolds: Yes. You will have to do more intensive work later to sign things off, so it would have an impact.

Helen Fisher: Again, I think that there is something around the fact that the regulator itself has acknowledged capacity issues and constraints. That has not been a secret. I am not sure that all those issues are necessarily in technical roles, either. Some of them are pure operational stand-up and rigour—that is, how you ensure that something has worked.

There is also a need to ensure that, as we move forward now, there is a real, clear grip on pipeline expected volumes; and that we can see transparency there. These things allow you to build strong and secure resource models and, then, to look at where those capacities and constraints are, not just within the BSR itself but within the ecosystem of the built environment—that is, local authorities, fire and rescue services, engineers and so on.

In order to start looking at some of that, you do need that level of pipeline transparency and expected volumes, which I am not sure have been as clear or transparent as they could have been. The BSR has been working really hard to improve the picture.

I think that the question of who pays and how that works is more for MHCLG. However, I would say that any government department or arm's-length body needs to ensure that those operational rigours are in place, to ensure that it is offering value for money and that, again, it can be transparently held accountable for the money that it is spending. However it is resourced—whether from the private sector or from the taxpayer—there is a responsibility to spend that money well and to ensure that there is value for money being redeemed from that.

Mark Reynolds: I will just give you some figures here. I apologise; I should have done that earlier. The BSR has committed to having an extra 200 members of staff by the end of the year.

Viscount Thurso: I think my colleague is possibly going to ask you lots of detailed questions about that later.

Q45 **Baroness Valentine:** We have dived in and out of this question about staffing of the BSR. Just before I get into that, Mark, planning performance agreements, as we know, do not always deliver the performance enhancement that one pays for. I am just interested in that interface. If one was bringing in the same thing with the regulator, would you get it speeded up just by throwing money at it?

I will just leave that question hanging and do the question that I am supposed to ask, which is about the staffing of the BSR. The Government set out plans to increase the staffing of the BSR, and for the regulator to retain greater expertise in-house, rather than only contracting-in experts as part of its MDTs. Are there sufficient skilled staff available to allow the BSR to recruit the expertise in-house? Will this require a significant increase in the salaries it is able to offer?

Mark Reynolds: I will give you the headline. What was agreed back in the beginning of June was an extra 200 staff to streamline the operations by the end of the year and £2 million for additional funding. Breaking that down into the detail: the additional resources are 20 additional RBIs, 10 additional structural engineers and five additional engineers setting up wholly owned MDT teams comprised of regulatory leads, case officers and specialist resources. It is making those moves and working that through.

The BSR shared with us a best, medium and worst-case chart that detailed what that would mean if it was able to deliver the resources—the people—in that programme under a scenario 1, 2 and 3 to clear the backlog. We have had conversations to ask it how it is progressing. It is probably a little slower than we would have liked. To summarise, it has stated that it now has 25 RBIs, five inspectors, 12 structural engineers, 12 regulatory leads and four case officers. It goes back to the

transparency of what the plan sets out to do. We have a meeting next week to see how it is getting on.

Baroness Valentine: Can I just press you on the MDTs? Are the developers not always going to be employing people who can challenge, outwit or whatever it is the MDTs that are brought in-house because the salaries will be higher in the private sector than in the public sector? Can you just comment on that?

Mark Reynolds: I think it is the other way round. I do not think anyone is being outwitted. I think it goes back to the question earlier about compliance with the regulation and the detail being provided. I will not go through all the detail, but some quite extensive elements of the building require design in order to get approval, as I mentioned around the structure envelope and compartmentation. If we can get agreement to those points not being required at gateway 2 and developed before gateway 3, that would help the system. I do not think it is a case of being outwitted; it is about interpretation of what is really needed. If the regulations say we need everything, it is going to cause a problem for delivery.

Baroness Valentine: Helen, can I just press you on this? It is partly a salaries question; can one recruit the best staff into the BSR, in the MDTs or whatever it is, to manage everything?

Helen Fisher: I have a separate response to some of what we have said around the finite resource. On the specific salary question, I think public sector organisations hold a whole different package. It is an attraction for different reasons. You look at them from the different pulls of working in the public sector and private sector. I would say, being in a public sector environment, we have some really good expertise and attract really good talent. We certainly have not seen that there is a more skilled workforce in a private environment here. It is more the fact that there is only a finite level of capacity across the sector.

I think my answer would be slightly different of this investigation. This regulation is focused on high-rise buildings only. Building safety applies to 11 metres plus. It applies to all buildings that need to go through building control. My only plea for how we move forward on this now is that any market capability and capacity is reviewed on the entire volume that needs to go through. Otherwise, you are going to strip one part of the market and industry into a sector that stops the very needed supply under 18 metres that equally needs building control sign-offs.

For me, that comes back to anticipated volumes. How do we move that through? I think that goes back to the very early question of delays in construction being caused by lots of things. To help and plan for new supply, to plan for the remediation volumes that are coming through, there needs to be much more collaboration now between local teams, local areas, local authorities and SPAs to make sure that we are utilising all capability and capacity across the private and public sector to make sure that the job is done.

Baroness Valentine: Can I just press on the pipeline of skills needed both within the private sector and the regulator? Where are we on that journey since Grenfell?

Helen Fisher: If you look at things like fire engineers and people who administer fire risk appraisals of external walls, we have collaborated on a lot of work with the sector and with MHCLG, hand in hand and in partnership. We have really broad frameworks now that have been set up to help those who require a fire risk appraisal; an engineer can contact Homes England and we can help. There is a real resource there that can be used.

I think where we can collaborate greater is in making sure that people can understand how they maintain and pull off those resources. We have created those panels to be openly available to the BSR, the sector and fire and rescue services, because one of the real answers here is people unlocking resources and sharing them broadly. That comes back again to being transparent about there being a delay and the reason for it. Who can help solve that resource gap? Knowing how we can move people and being more fluid and transparent to solve that problem collectively will help us with that resource problem.

Mark, I think you were referring to the fact that there is construction capacity. We are hearing that and we are working with the construction sector to share pipeline. We are sharing pipeline with the BSR. MHCLG is leading with us with the national remediation system and a new supply role with Homes England and the new affordable homes programme. All of this together will start to really make sure we can see what those requirements are going to be moving forward.

Mark Reynolds: There is a challenge around RBIs. I think Graham Watts at CIC—he will kill me for that—said that something like 4,000 people left the building inspectors since Grenfell, which is an enormous amount of building inspectors who we have lost from the industry. One of the things that again is a collaboration between government departments and industry and training bodies is the Construction Skills Mission Board, which was set up two weeks ago. I co-chair it and the Deputy Prime Minister co-chaired that with me for the first meeting.

We have to look at where the demand is and have a demand-led system, rather than a skills-led system. What I mean is to make sure that we get the right people we need, rather than just train people and hope they get a job. There is no doubt that there are skills gaps but, in the majority of the skills, we have people who want jobs who just do not get jobs at the end of it. We have to make sure that we do not have that leakage of people leaving the industry and, where we do, we understand those challenges and how we address them in the short and medium term. We also have to attract people, which actually is not our challenge. We have to find the work and get them to be linked to the jobs. It is a complex issue, I am afraid, but you know that.

Q46 **Lord Best:** More or less everything we are talking about is about high-

rise buildings and the building safety regulator has this other huge role of looking at the safety of all new build and indeed, having that overall responsibility for regulating building control at large.

I get the impression that this has all had to be swept aside and put on hold while the high-rise buildings get all the attention because they are the post-Grenfell priority. Is that your impression, or is there work going on at the building safety regulator, perhaps in transitioning to its new format, that will look at the rest of the equation—mid-rise buildings, low-rise buildings and signing off building control generally?

Mark Reynolds: That has changed—really since the autumn last year. Catherine Adams has been leading in looking at the role of the single regulator to cover all buildings. She set up working groups. I sit on that advisory panel. We have had two meetings now about the role of the single regulator and how that should legislate over all buildings to make sure they are safe.

It is fair to say that in the past, it did not have the same level of prominence. It is being progressed now, and it will be worked through to this autumn with some recommendations going forward. It is being addressed and there is quite a large team supporting Catherine to do that.

Lord Best: You have quite a large team working on that?

Helen Fisher: I cannot comment on the size of the team, but I would say that our reflections on it are that this is not the case. We focus an awful lot on gateway 2, the new build and the new supply, and part of that issue has been that they have been standing up something far greater than the part that there is a lot of focus on because of the impact it has had on new supply and remediation programmes, and rightly so. There are leaseholders and residents at the heart of that, which means that it is incredibly important.

When we have met with them, there has been absolute transparency about the building certificate process, the wider role they are working on and where those teams are in place. That is part of the need for greater transparency on the arms of the building safety regulator and the structures they are working to, so people can understand the mammoth task in setting a new regulatory framework. It is not just about new supply; it is about maintained and ongoing safety for buildings in this country.

Lord Best: I wonder whether it is wise for the same regulator to have responsibilities for everything and for the specifics of high-rise buildings, which is a special aspect to this. They have been clumped together, really to the detriment of the rest of the agenda. Perhaps they should be separate or at least treated separately within the enterprise.

Mark Reynolds: This is a personal view—I think they should be together. We want to design buildings that are safe. You can have a building under 11 metres, and if you do not put the right fire doors or

firestop in place, you have a breach. To me, the right level of design is consistent throughout. Personally, I would have a single regulator to regulate all buildings.

There are different approaches for different situations, such as remediations or maintenance, but as for the requirements to provide safe buildings, it is quite frankly academic whether it is 11, seven or 50 metres. Once you get above the higher multistorey buildings, they are very different and need different requirements, but the principles are broadly the same. It also helps to have that broad knowledge from the industry.

Helen Fisher: You are referring to the ongoing oversight versus the gateway process of construction. For me and Homes England, our policy department, MHCLG, would be better to answer how that is now going to be structured and where that should sit longer term. It is a huge role, and whether that is one organisation or many needs to be thought through by our policy department.

Q47 The Chair: Looking forward, thinking about the building programme and going back to the industry's concerns about what is required at gateway 2, for low-rise, has the industry got more confidence in how it deals with local authorities and traditional building regulations? Do perhaps the parameters and way of working that are there need to be reflected in how gateway 2 and then gateway 3 actually work, doing it in a more staged way, which is traditionally what building regulations at a local level have done?

Mark Reynolds: You need a safe compartment in a building, whether it is a domestic home, a block of apartments or a very tall building. The compartmentation and means of escape principles apply, so I would apply those principles throughout. They need to be safe and protected for the occupants to either evacuate or live in the building. We could go on to other aspects that have become prevalent, like mould and other things.

I do not think you can deal with this as high-rise or low-rise: buildings need to be safe, and the principles need to be consistent throughout and adapted for different types of building. We are very much focused on homes, but it is the same for offices and different facilities, such as airports, railway stations and stadia. They all have those same principles—you have to make sure there is compartmentation and evacuation.

The Chair: I think that leads to what Lord Gilbert wanted to bring up.

Q48 Lord Gilbert of Panteg: Yes, I wanted to talk about the Government's approach to the single construction regulator. Before I do that, I want to touch briefly on resources, because, as always, it comes back to resources. We have talked about the need for more resources, but it has basically been about more money and more people. We have talked about some smarter working, but you have not really talked about whether this is going to significantly increase productivity; whether, like

in the private sector, AI should be playing a significant role in improving the function of all the bodies in this space; or whether the bodies are working optimally and we just need greater co-ordination.

Mark Reynolds: We have to digitise the planning and construction system. We have been talking about BIM (Building Information Modelling) today. We still approve drawings on a PDF; that is not digitising the system. We need to have records so that, if you have a BIM model, you can attach asset codes very easily to the main important things around compartmentation. The industry has the capability to do it. It will resist it to begin with because of the cost but not once you have got that baseline. We are involved with Euston station. The amount of money that has been wasted doing underground surveys again is enormous—we could have digital twins. These are all concepts.

The first place to start is digitising the planning system, because that is the front entry to everything. Then, you could start applying AI tools to drive productivity and efficiency. Because you have started at the planning system, you almost carry on through the building control and maintenance. For the industry in the future, there is a real benefit to driving to digitise planning then move it through, particularly on large complex schemes. You could start there.

Helen Fisher: To add to that from a more delivery arm's-length agency point of view, I can talk only about the example of the cladding safety scheme that worked with MHCLG to significantly improve the operational access and management of the building remediation programmes themselves. There is an awful lot of work we can do with the BSR on what is now an end-to-end digital journey—it was not two years ago for the predecessor programmes. There are self-serve natures and upload tools—all of that to me means operational efficiency, low operational cost and that you are starting to allow that transparency again regarding where in a process it is, because it is a digital-designed process. There is a lot to be said for really ensuring that the processes that are now set up have that digital, government layer to them, to ensure that we keep these lean and good value.

Lord Gilbert of Panteg: It seems to me that somebody really should be driving this agenda of digitisation and, in future, the use of AI in a digitised set of platforms. This needs to come from pretty high up, and it needs to be across the piece. That generally seems far less evident in the public than in the private sector at the moment; this is something that we might want to come back to.

Briefly—you have already touched a lot on the building safety regulator's work in relation to construction products—how do you see the relationship between the BSR and the Office for Product Safety and Standards developing? Will the move towards a single regulatory approach significantly improve that co-operation and its outcome?

Mark Reynolds: The Green Paper was published and the response to it from the Construction Leadership Council, led by Peter Caplehorn from

the Construction Products Association, was comprehensive. It goes back to collaboration: the industry is working closely with MHCLG—Louise Barr has done an excellent job leading that from MHCLG—on bringing together the OPSS, the regulator and us to work together. So everyone is in the camp. For me, the most important thing is that we come up with something that is deliverable. It has to be deliverable; that is the importance of everyone working together. It is a big challenge—of all the issues we face, it is an even bigger challenge than gateway 2 or gateway 3.

Helen Fisher: Homes England does not hold a direct role in regulation of the construction sector, nor of the product sector, but we have worked with MHCLG to build new programmes such as the cladding safety scheme. Now, every building of 11 metres upwards that is going through that is asked: what is the new insulation? What are the new materials going on there? Who has manufactured them? All of that data is captured, regardless of whether it is 18 metres or below; that is all part of the greater collaboration in the market and, again, the transparency around knowing what we have remediated these buildings with and so on. It has to be a response to how these 11-metre buildings are going through this process. That pipeline across is equally as important as making sure that we understand products' use and patterns across the whole sector; we are part of that data-capture work with MHCLG.

Q49 **Baroness Harding of Winscombe:** Earlier, you alluded to some things that we could learn from Australia and New Zealand. Accelerating housebuilding and ensuring building safety are not UK-specific problems; this is a global challenge. What could we learn from other jurisdictions in how to get this twin challenge right?

Mark Reynolds: Let me start with a couple of things. First, you mentioned this from a safety point of view. We have not touched on that—it goes back to trust—but there is work being done through the Construction Products Association, such as on the CCPI where you can begin to trust in the materials that you are procuring. That is important. We need to put these sorts of foundational things in place. For those positive actors, licensing is important; that is a lesson from other areas.

On delivering at volume, many people have said this but I am not sure that the housing system works if it is delivered by just private development and social housing. The gap that we have is in affordable housing at volume and scale. If we really want to deliver 1.5 million homes, can the current system deliver at that scale? Personally, I do not think that it can. We need a mechanism for delivering, a bit like with energy, a baseload of 75,000 affordable homes a year every year. How we fund and deliver that will be different but, again, it needs to be done in the same way as how Helen and Homes England are looking at remediation from a programmatic perspective. Until Helen and Homes England did that, we would never have got hold of and delivered the remediation in the way it has been done. It has visibility, a supply chain and transparency around who does what and when. We are not doing

that at the same level. Socially, our biggest risk at the moment is probably affordable homes.

All of this can be funded by other means. This could be funded off the government balance sheet through private sector finance. It could be done in collaboration with local authorities. The scheme that we are delivering in Stevenage would not be delivered if the local authority took a different approach. Stevenage Borough Council took a very businesslike and collaborative approach and got a private sector scheme away. Affordable homes need a slightly different approach, but this is solvable. We know how to solve it—we just have to get in a room and agree the plan.

Baroness Harding of Winscombe: From the building safety regulator's perspective, are there other jurisdictions that are getting the balance right on safety?

Mark Reynolds: There will always be things from a safety point of view. In our industry, there were 35 fatalities last year; that was an improvement from 41, but it is still far too many. There are lots of things that need to be done to improve. Digitisation is a good way of doing that, because it will help people to identify the risks more easily, but we know that culture change is needed as well.

The biggest thing that I have seen in the past few years has been collaboration. If we can collaborate and put ideas together, and if we have the transparency and the will to deliver this more quickly, we will do it—but we have to work together.

Baroness Harding of Winscombe: Helen, what can we learn from other countries?

Helen Fisher: It is not just about learning from other countries. When we put the cladding safety scheme together, we heard quite positive remarks about how that programme collaborated to learn and listened to what was working and what was not. This was not just across the sector; we reached out to Victoria at MHCLG. Again, volume and scale are different, as are other elements of planning and the things that they work through, but they also sent over obvious things that were really good best practice. We shared operational processes digitally and asked how they had worked through things. There is value in making sure that you look across and ask, "How are people doing? How have they done well with this, because they have almost solved their building safety crisis in their country?"

We did that with the cladding safety scheme but, equally, we looked at predecessor programmes that had gone on for the past eight years and how those things could be improved. A lot of that came back to digital data, transparency, trust and getting traction in the sector. That traction will build the trust to move forward on this, but there are definitely learnings from not just other countries—it is valid to look across at who does this well—but other good government services that are operating

across, such that we can say, "Let's take some of that operational oversight and try to apply it here".

The Chair: We have been incredibly timely, as have you with your answers; that is much appreciated. You have given us a lot of useful information and covered a lot of areas that we are concerned about. If there is anything that you wish to add, by all means, write in and tell us more. Thank you very much. I shall now close this public session; we will do a quick changeover because I am told that our next panel is sitting outside waiting.