



Science and Technology Committee

House of Commons London SW1A 0AA
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From Rt Hon Norman Lamb MP, Chair

Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP
Secretary of State
Department for Communities and Local
Government
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

24 October 2017

Dear Sajid,

DCLG Chief Scientific Adviser

On the 17 October, the Science and Technology Committee took evidence from the interim Government Chief Scientific Adviser, Professor Chris Whitty. I asked Professor Whitty about the remit of the Chief Scientific Adviser (CSA) in DCLG, given the numerous technical questions that have been raised by the disaster at Grenfell Tower.

He highlighted that DCLG does not currently have a CSA and that there has been "quite a long gap" since the role was last filled. Professor Whitty was clear that while Stephen Aldridge is listed on the gov.uk website as the CSA in DCLG, and is an "excellent chief analyst", he is not a scientist who could address the types of technical questions raised by Grenfell.

I was also concerned to hear from Professor Whitty that a previous Secretary of State in DCLG thought that having a departmental CSA "was not something that would be terribly helpful". It is disappointing to learn that such negative attitudes towards science advice were present at the very top of a Government Department. Furthermore, it should not require a disaster like Grenfell to exemplify how important it is to ensure that scientific evidence and advice are key parts of the policy-making process.

I agree with Professor Whitty that DCLG needs a "serious scientist" as a Chief Scientific Adviser. An appointment needs to be made as a matter of urgency and I trust that you, and your officials in DCLG, will work with him to address this gap.

Yours,

Norman Lamb

Norman Lamb MP
Chair