

Centurion & Brecon Q&A - Gunwharf Quays, Portsmouth

	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Will the cost of the Waking Watch be spread across the whole estate and not just the buildings concerned?	No, the cost of the waking watch will need to be paid by the individual blocks. The estate may have to cashflow this, but it is hoped that Berkeley Homes will agree to meet some or all of these costs.
2	We are also property owners in Admiralty Quarter(AQ) where the waking watch was also introduced. This was quickly curtailed due to the excessive costs involved. However, at AQ these costs will be covered by the government grant which was successfully applied for within the correct time limit. We note that this has not occurred in Gunwharf, and we question why these costs must be passed on to leaseholders.	Initially costs will need to be paid by the Leaseholders as there is no other form of funding available to GQRC unless Berkeley Homes admits liability. We have now applied for the Waking Watch Relief Fund and whilst they don't cover the cost of the waking watch, if successful, they will pay for the cost of the fire alarm installation.
3	The exterior of Brecon house appears to be identical to Anson which is not included in this report. Centurion has visible external cladding, so is Brecon included purely because it is physically attached to Centurion?	Anson Court is currently being tested for its external wall construction. As it is below 18m, however, Anson would not have qualified for the Waking Watch Relief Fund. Brecon has combustible materials on its external walls and so does Centurion. We are waiting to hear on Anson Court.
4	After the terrible Grenfell Tower fire in June 2017, and the subsequent checking of cladding on flats, why has it taken so long for these checks to be undertaken on both the Centurion and Brecon complexes?	Dack Property Management (DPM) was alerted by Portsmouth City Council re the need to carry out intrusive investigations to five blocks in October 2019. This was only instructed in September 2021. We are not aware of the reasons this was not carried out sooner and have asked DPM for clarification so we can share this with the Board and affected leaseholders.
5	What do landlords need to say to the Letting Agents and their tenants about this problem in terms of their safety?	They need to inform them that there are combustible materials on the external walls of the block, and that the fire strategy has changed to simultaneous evacuation. Inform them of the need to leave the property in the event of a fire and point them to the recently circulated guidance. This is being circulated by letter drop this week to occupiers and updates to the noticeboards are being done.
6	When will we get further answers from yourselves and Berkeley Homes?	We hope that this Q&A will help leaseholders understand the picture. We have written to Berkeley Homes and chased a reply. So far, we have not received any formal acknowledgement or indeed a response. Our original letter was dated 22 nd November.
7	Did Dack know about the findings before they pulled out of the management contract?	DPM would have known the five buildings needed to be investigated further.
8	When did AFP get the full results of the survey?	The external wall survey was received by AFP on the 12 th of November.

Centurion & Brecon Q&A - Gunwharf Quays, Portsmouth

9	What date was the formal inspection findings received by AFP? All impacted flat owners should be sent a copy.	The external wall survey is to be followed by a draft fire engineers' report. Although this report remains in draft form awaiting sign off by chartered fire engineers, we were able to discuss its contents with the fire engineers and façade specialists on the 6 th of December. This is where the recommendation for waking watch and fire alarm system came from.
10	Can the cladding not be removed immediately for safety, even if this impacted the building façade for a while, until the next steps are known?	It takes time for a specification to be produced detailing the exact scope of the works, materials to be used, quantities, methods, access. This then needs to be quoted for and if Berkeley Homes does not acknowledge fault and come forward to help fund the remediation works, we will need to undertake a Section 20 consultation over the cost of the works as this will fall to leaseholders. There is a lot of work that needs to take place behind the scenes before any remediation can actually start. We will be instructing the preparation of a specification as soon as practicable.
11	What will the total cost of the work to remove and replace cladding be? Is there insurance that covers any of this work?	This is not yet known. There is no insurance to cover the cost of the works unfortunately. The blocks are outside the builders' 10-year warranty and combustibles on the external walls do not constitute an insured peril so the buildings insurance will not pick up these costs.
12	Why is the proposal to fit a temporary fire alarm system, why not install a proper system and save money on the cost of a temporary system?	The system is prescribed by the National Fire Chiefs' Council for when a residential building has to have its fire strategy changed due to combustible materials being found in the make up of the external walls. Once installed it can remain in place with minor modifications.
13	When will owners get an update on next steps, and a formal plan of action? This is vital for safety and so owners can sort their own plans.	We will aim to issue updates as often as practicable, as matters develop. We will make available all important documents and communications to leaseholders on the GQRC website in the near future so there is clarity and ease of reference. A plan of action will be confirmed in the near future. At present we don't know Berkeley Homes' position, or the exact cost of the fire alarm installation, or indeed if our application to the Waking Watch Relief Fund will be successful.
14	Can you ensure communication is made to all flats via letter and posters on the walls, as many of the flats are tenanted (as is mine), and the tenants need to understand what's going on?	We would ask that leaseholders decide what information to release to the occupiers of their apartments if these are rented out. We will inform occupiers generally about the change to simultaneous evacuation, but anything else should come from the legal apartment owners themselves to their agents/tenants. We will not know which apartments are owner-occupied or tenanted, and who the tenants may be. For consistency, leaseholders must pass the message on to agents and tenants if appropriate.
15	Can you please ensure all questions are collated and responses provided quickly? Where answers are not known that a	Yes, that is our intention.

Centurion & Brecon Q&A - Gunwharf Quays, Portsmouth

	response is published and follow up dates are given so all owners have a complete picture, and no one gets their questions left unanswered?	
16	Can you consider a better way to communicate than email attachments? Why not set up a simple website so owners can see the latest and ask questions?	This Q&A document will be uploaded to the GQRC website in the next few days, as well as all the other important items of communication sent to leaseholders in the past few days.
17	How is the change of fire evacuation strategy to simultaneous evacuation justified?	It is recommended by the fire engineers upon analysis of the construction of the buildings.
18	How can the recommendations by Buildtech be taken as conclusive without the EWS1 sign off?	It is not Buildtech's recommendation that is being taken into account, it is the fire engineer's report that analysed Buildtech's findings and assessed the situation further. The EWS1 will be provided with their final report, but this will merely state what we already know – that there are combustible materials on the external walls which will need to be remediated as soon as practicable.
19	Why has there been no discussion to date with Berkeley Homes?	AFP wrote to Berkeley Homes on the 22 nd of November. We followed up with calls and emails, but a reply has not yet been forthcoming. A copy of the Buildtech report was provided. It is unclear what discussions DPM may have had with Berkeley Homes but we will try and ascertain the position through DPM.
20	How can the insurance company not have raised issue with this previously? And why have they not been consulted?	The onus is on the insured – GQRC – to confirm to the building's insurers any material changes to the insured asset or to the risk. We cannot see evidence that the insurers were ever contacted before. We have now informed them of the circumstances, and they have already come back with a number of additional questions. GQRC were not aware of the presence of combustible materials on their buildings' external walls until the 12 th of November 2021.
21	What authority and responsibility will the waking watch have?	They will be in charge of raising the alarm in the event of a fire and evacuating the building as required by the National Fire Chiefs' Council guidance.
22	Are the decisions really being made by "the board" or by AFP?	AFP came onboard as the intrusive surveys had already been instructed by DPM. As the results of the survey landed with AFP, we had to brief the Board about the various steps that needed to be considered or taken given the findings of the reports. We provided guidance and made recommendations; we provided the forum for discussions. Two additional Board meetings were called to discuss the findings, seek clarification from the façade specialists and fire engineers and agree the next steps. The Board voted on all

Centurion & Brecon Q&A - Gunwharf Quays, Portsmouth

		decisions before they were implemented by AFP and the Board's majority approved the decisions.
23	Isn't the real urgency due to a published December 10th deadline for the waking watch fund?	There was urgency in trying to take advantage of the Government funding available for the installation of the fire alarm systems – Waking Watch Relief Fund. We had sight of the fire engineers' draft report, we knew what the recommendation was going to be. It would have been short sighted on our part not to advise GQRC to get the application in. The fund will not cover the cost of the waking watch but it may cover the cost of the fire alarm installation.
24	Can 3 quotes be obtained for Fire Detection system ASAP?	They have already been obtained and submitted to the Fund as part of the application. They were overstated, however, because of time constraints. We have already asked the fire alarm companies to return to undertake full surveys and amend their quotes. So, we will hopefully be in a position to undertake the work as soon as detailed quotes are submitted and compared.
25	Can a reputable civil engineer be hired to review report?	I suppose we could and that would be at an additional cost, but the current set up includes the façade specialist (Buildtech), the fire engineers' (Pyrosafety Risk Management Limited) and the Chartered Fire Engineers who will finally sign off the EWS1 forms. A civil engineer may not wish to pass comment on the fire engineers' recommendations as this is a much more specialist area and some will not carry the adequate professional indemnity insurance.
26	Can estimates at least 3 for repair be obtained?	Absolutely, but the specification of the works will need to be prepared before tenders can be obtained. It is likely a Section 20 consultation will need to be carried out.
27	How, as leaseholders, can we ensure the final fix is guaranteed for at least 10 years and final fix does not fall foul of future regulations?	It will be down to the fire engineers or façade specialists to recommend the best way of approaching the repairs. They will be the suitably qualified professionals in the eyes of the law to make that decision. Contractors will be selected based on experience and expertise and depending on the extent and nature of the remediation works they may or may not offer a 10-year guarantee. This will need to be covered once the specification is ready and contractors are selected to quote.
28	What is scale of problem with render and are there plans to estimate costs for repair?	We are circulating both the external wall and the fire engineers' report to leaseholders so they can better understand the concerns. As confirmed above, we will move to specifying the require remediation works as soon as possible.
29	How much will warden cost per leaseholder?	The cost of the waking watch is equivalent to £424 plus VAT per month per leaseholder.

Centurion & Brecon Q&A - Gunwharf Quays, Portsmouth

30	Will addition of suitable fire alarm negate need for warden?	Yes, the sooner the alarm system can be installed, the waking watch can be stood down.
31	Can fire alarm just be paid for and cost reclaimed later?	Yes, we have managed to submit an application to the Waking Watch Relief Fund before it closed last week. If successful, the government will pay for the cost of the alarm installation to the buildings.
32	Can fire alarm installation be expedited to negate excessive warden costs?	Yes, that is very much the intention. Surveys of a sample number of flats is taking place on Tuesday next week.
33	Why have Berkeley rectified other buildings in a timely manner but neglected Brecon and Centurion?	Berkeley Homes did not rectify anything on the external walls. They did some amount of internal fire proofing to landlord's service risers.
34	Will Gunwharf Shopping support residents with warden costs?	The commercial units pay a proportion to the upkeep of the building via their service charges. They will end up contributing towards the cost of the waking watch through their service charges.
35	Will E&M who manage the freehold support residents with Berkeley Home discussions?	We have written to E&M/Fairhold Athena Limited and provided a copy of the fire engineer's report. We have asked for help – practical and financial – and a formal response is awaited.
36	The blocks have been in place for 20 years with NO fires. What is so urgent that we need to employ wardens at this stage.	The buildings have been found to be covered in combustible materials and the assessment of a competent person (Pyrosafety Fire Engineers) was that the risk that they pose to life is considerable and that immediate changes to the fire strategy are required. As the "responsible person" in the eyes of the law, the Directors of GQRC had no option but take the fire engineer's advice and follow the government guidance.
37	Has there been a Fire Engineer's Report submitted yet?	Yes, this is still in draft format as it is waiting for a Chartered Fire Engineer to sign off the EWS1 form. This will be a category B2 which confirms the presence of combustible materials on the external walls and requires remediation.
38	Is the real reason you guys took the website down was to go into hiding?	The website was taken down as there was a lot of content out of date. The Director that looked after the GQRC website resigned at the AGM on the 4 th of November and the new Board only agreed the new Director taking over responsibility for the website on the 24 th of November. New content is being produced for the website and this will go live as soon as possible in the new year. The information relating to the cladding in Brecon and Centurion will be uploaded ahead of the new content in any event.

Centurion & Brecon Q&A - Gunwharf Quays, Portsmouth

39	Please provide me with a copy of your contract with GQRC	Our management agreement is a commercial document between AFP and GQRC. We do not normally circulate this to leaseholders but if GQRC are happy to make this public, we will have no issues with sharing this out.
40	When did Dack instruct the intrusive survey and what triggered this?	An instruction to Buildtech was issued by DPM on the 9 th of September 2021. The need to carry out intrusive investigations to Centurion and Brecon had been confirmed by a desktop survey done by another fire engineering consultancy (IFC) in October 2020. Before that, it had been communications from Portsmouth City Council requiring DPM to have a Tall Buildings' Survey carried out in October 2019.
41	Are you able to tell residents of Brecon and Centurion anything about what is happening with cladding issues on the various other buildings on the Gunwharf estate that are of the same, or similar, design? Does AFP act as managing agent in respect of any other of these buildings? If not, are you attempting to liaise with other managing agents to coordinate your approach to Berkeley Homes?	Since the findings of the external wall survey done on Centurion and Brecon, GQRC has commissioned intrusive surveys on Anson Court, Arethusa and Blake. These have only just been undertaken by Buildtech. We will wait for the reports to come out on those blocks to decide what interim measures, if any, are required. AFP manage all the residential blocks in Gunwharf Quays on behalf of GQRC (excluding the East Side Plaza Lipstick and Blue Building and the flats above Tesco) so if there are similar issues in the other blocks, we will ensure Berkeley Homes are informed about this and asked for help – practical and financial.
42	Please provide me with details of which firm conducted the intrusive survey and a copy of their written report or findings.	These are attached. The intrusive survey was undertaken by façade specialists Buildtech UK and their findings analysed by Fire Engineering Consultants, Pyrosafety.
43	What options for remediation have Buildtech UK and their fire engineers suggested? Please provide me with a copy of the report/correspondence on options that have been suggested. Have you sought suggestions for remediation from any alternative sources?	This is included in the Pyrosafety report. We have not sought a second opinion so far as this would attract considerable costs that could turn out to be a duplication. We will raise the point with GQRC as to whether they feel there is any need for a second layer of checking.
44	What will the costs be to each leaseholder of (a) the introduction of the “waking watch” and (b) the fire alarm system as interim measures, assuming that the leaseholders are requested to pay and do so? Please provide me with copies of the relevant costs estimates.	The waking watch costs come to about £424 plus VAT per month per household. Preliminary costs of fire alarm systems vary from £80,000 plus VAT to £100,000 plus VAT for Brecon House, and £43,000 to £48,000 plus VAT for Centurion Court. The estimates were obtained last week in order for an application to be made to the Waking Watch Relief Fund. They are most likely overstated, but surveys are taking place next week so these estimates can be reconfirmed/adjusted. If the application to the government fund is successful, they would cover the cost of the alarm installation.
45	Please provide me with a copy of your recent correspondence with Berkeley Homes and confirmation of which firms of solicitors you will ask to tender for any legal work that is necessary.	A copy of our letter to Berkeley Homes is attached. GQRC wish to hear formally from Berkeley Homes before instructing solicitors and a decision about what firm to use has not yet been made. It is the Board's intention to appoint specialist solicitors if and when required.

Centurion & Brecon Q&A - Gunwharf Quays, Portsmouth

46	You refer to time for applying to the Building Safety Fund (BSF) having expired in 2020 and that time is not in your favour for applying for a grant in respect of the fire alarm system. Please confirm whether you are making enquiries of Dack as to why they did not initiate the intrusive survey at a much earlier stage, so as to enable costs to be covered by the available Government schemes. Please also confirm what costs could have been covered by the BSF.	QORC have made formal enquiries with DPM about the timeline of events relating to cladding under their management. This will be shared with the leaseholders in due course. If DPM had applied to the Building Safety Fund, the recoverable costs would include all remediation to the external walls, scaffolding access, legal and professional fees. It probably would not include the cost of remediating the balconies but in the greater scheme of things, this is still the smaller cost. The BSF would not cover the cost of waking watch or fire alarm installation.
47	I assume that Berkeley Homes (or possibly Dack, if they should have commissioned the intrusive survey earlier) will be asked to compensate leaseholders for all additional costs incurred that relate to this issue, including all increases to service charge caused by the fire risk, but please confirm.	It is Pyrosafety's opinion that the buildings did not comply with the required standards when they were first built. Having said that, the buildings are now outside any type of warranty and further, Berkeley Homes sold the Freehold interest to Fairhold Athena Limited and passed the control of the Management Company to the residents. So legally it is arguable that they have no liability, morally, it is arguable that they do.
48	What is the amount of the current reserve for major works that is available to be applied towards the remediation works and ancillary costs, if no other sources of recovery are available? Do you expect the reserve to be sufficient to cover any works and the costs of the waking watch and fire alarm system?	Gunwharf Quays have in excess of £800,000 in the reserve fund, and this is apportioned to different blocks. This amount is unlikely to be sufficient to cover the cost of remediation to the buildings. It is hoped that the fire alarm systems will be paid for by the Waking Watch Relief Fund which we have managed to apply for just before it close. There are no options of funding for the waking watch and the remediation works other than potentially Berkeley Homes. If Berkeley Homes does not admit fault and agree to fund the works, the leaseholders would have to pay for the costs themselves.
49	Does the cladding cover more than 25% of the building?	Yes, it does. The white/cream-coloured walls are polystyrene insulation boards covered in a thin layer of render. The brickwork walls are made of a thin layer of brick (100mm) with combustible insulation behind, poor cavity detailing and missing fire breaks.
50	I assume due to the extreme measures being put in place that the type of cladding fitted to both properties has had testing carried out with regards to its fire rating, could I see a copy of this report?	Render on EPS insulation (expanded polystyrene) is classed by the RICS (Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors) in its "Risk Status Table for Different Materials" as high-level risk. This is based on previous testing of cladding materials.
51	I am assuming the cost of these wardens is going to be considerable. It's quite scary. When will we find out how much and was there any choice of provider?	The cost is estimated to be around £424 plus VAT per month per household. Two quotes were obtained for the service, and the cheaper implemented.
52	How soon can we realistically get the fire alarm system installed? How intrusive will the installation be in our apartments?	Surveys of a sample of apartments are going ahead next week and we hope to have the confirmed quotes before Christmas. An order can be placed immediately after the tender is carried out. The actual installation date will depend upon the contractors sourcing the equipment and booking the works The system will be radio controlled/wireless, so there will be no need to run extensive cabling within the apartments. Access will be required into every property, however, so

Centurion & Brecon Q&A - Gunwharf Quays, Portsmouth

		owners will be asked to cooperate with providing access so the system can be fully commissioned and go live as quickly as practicable. Only then can the waking watch be removed.
53	I hope that the exterior decoration schedule whenever that is due for our building is put to one side until remedial work is complete. Indeed the remedial work should be considered as the next redecoration of the exterior.	Priority will be given to making the buildings safe.