

“Everyone dies”: Grenfell Tower, regulation, and what the ruling class want from Reform UK

Paul Bond
13 April 2026

Nigel Farage’s Reform UK has sacked housing spokesperson Simon Dudley less than a month after his appointment, following his comments that the 2017 Grenfell Tower fire was a “tragedy” but “everyone dies in the end.”

Dudley was calling for a relaxation of building regulations, opposed as obstacles to profit. Farage sacked him as a PR gesture, while doubling down on his message. For the last year, exploiting widespread hatred for the Starmer government, the far-right Reform has topped the polls. Therefore, Dudley’s sacking elicited concerns in sections of the ruling class looking to cultivate Reform as a future government capable of implementing devastating attacks on the working class and social conditions.

An op-ed piece in the *Telegraph*, agreeing that Dudley “was right” on Grenfell, used the incident to instruct Reform on what it requires from a future government. Reform, it said, “needs to embrace some harsh truths.”

Dudley reflects the real class interests represented by Reform, hidden behind a populist, “anti-establishment” veneer. His background is in finance and banking. A former Conservative council leader, he worked at the housing and regeneration agency Homes England 2017-21 and is on the advisory board of right-wing construction campaign group Build for Britain.

Build for Britain’s manifesto states “net migration [is] no longer assumed to remain at unsustainable levels under the next centre-right government.” On this basis they call for the Building Safety Regulator’s scope to be limited “only [to] genuinely high-risk issues.”

Dudley joined Reform in February, making an anti-migrant housing policy central to his decision. His defection video criticised the Tories for “failing to build the number of new homes Britain needs and letting record numbers of people in from abroad.”

This followed Farage’s recent statement that “A move towards net zero migration would ease pressure on rents; it would ease pressure on house price affordability. And we

will commit to the biggest building programme of genuinely affordable housing that this country has ever seen.”

Reform appointed Dudley housing spokesperson a few weeks later. Ahead of an interview with *Inside Housing* magazine, a party leader said Dudley “feels that a more swashbuckling approach will be able to get us building the houses that we very much need.”

Dudley suggested reforming the regulator so “building can proceed and capital can be deployed... in a fast way.” He called the safety regulations introduced after the Grenfell Tower fire, which killed 72, “poor regulation” that has “stop[ped] housebuilding in one of the world’s capitals. So the pendulum has just swung too far the wrong way.”

Interviewer Jess McCabe asked whether the Grenfell fire was not the exact opposite, a warning about insufficient regulation. Dudley replied, “Sadly, you know, everyone dies in the end. It’s just how you go, right?”

“Extracting Grenfell from the statistics, actually people dying in house fires is rare,” he said. “Many more people die on the roads driving cars, but we’re not making cars illegal, so why are we stopping houses being built?... You can’t stop tragic things happening. You can try to minimise excesses, but bad things do happen.”

Grenfell United, representing survivors and the bereaved, said Dudley’s comment “suggests this was just fate, just ‘how it goes,’ rather than the result of years of ignored warnings, poor decisions, and a failure to value the lives of residents.”

Sadiq Khan, Labour mayor of London, felt able to denounce Dudley’s comments as without “an ounce of decency.” However, Labour’s own approach can be seen in statistics from the Regulator of Social Housing. The day of the interview, they reported that 1,924 social housing blocks taller than 11 metres still have “life-critical fire safety” defects relating to their exterior walls. *Inside Housing* report that more than 250 social housing blocks—one in seven of the most at-risk buildings—face up to a decade without this

necessary work.

Dudley was in fact sacked for saying out loud what they all think. Under conditions where no restraints can be placed on profit and ever greater military expenditure will be required, sections of the ruling class are demanding a future government that will not hold back. Matthew Lynn, writing in the *Telegraph*, said Reform must demonstrate “whether it is serious about changing anything.”

Saying Dudley was “completely right,” Lynn criticised “post-Grenfell over-regulation.” He called for Britain to “escape the suffocating ‘safety-ism’ that stops anything from being built.” He cited the requirement for buildings over 18 metres to have a second staircase for fire safety:

“It might sound desirable, but it hugely increases the costs as well as reducing the amount of floorspace that can be sold or rented out.”

Reform, said Lynn, could have “ticked [Dudley] off for the words, while backing the message.”

They will take the advice. Before the sacking, a Reform spokesperson had already reiterated Dudley’s “broader point that the regulatory pendulum has swung too far in response to the tragedy,” calling for “ensuring that more homes are built safely without too much red tape.”

Dudley wrote on X/Twitter that tightening fire regulations after the “utter tragedy” of Grenfell was right, but insisted new regulations were “throttling housebuilding.”

Farage dutifully called Dudley’s comments “hurtful and insulting to an awful lot of people,” before complaining that governments respond to tragedies by writing “masses of regulations” which “doesn’t necessarily stop these tragedies happening again.”

Asked if he would apologise to the Grenfell victims, Farage was contemptuous. “Oh, I’ll apologise for everything that has happened over the last couple of years. This is modern journalism, isn’t it? Apologise, apologise, apologise to victims of the Amritsar massacre, etc.”

There is a critical shortage of housing, above all affordable housing. Reform scapegoat immigrants for the crisis of available affordable housing stock, under conditions where current projections suggest the UK might in fact enter net emigration by the end of this year.

But this is not about social provision. Reform’s deputy leader, Richard Tice has called for a sovereign wealth fund to invest in housing and infrastructure. This fund, established with capital from combined local government pension funds, would be used to fund private construction. “You aggregate [the sovereign wealth fund] with grant income to buy down that, and you can create a lot more affordable housing,” claimed Dudley. This is a recipe for handing pension funds to construction magnates.

Farage told a Leave Means Leave rally in 2019 that

leaving the European Union “means we can slash unnecessary regulations and let British companies compete properly again.”

Dudley’s Grenfell comments were made under conditions where Reform’s party treasurer Nick Candy had just completed London’s most expensive house sale. The billionaire property developer sold his Chelsea mansion—Providence House—for more than £275 million, one of the most expensive property deals in the world. Providence House is located just over 3 miles from the wreckage of Grenfell Tower—in a city where super-wealth and entrenched poverty are cheek by jowl.

Candy, who last year gave Reform £990,000, communicated several times with Jeffrey Epstein. He joined Farage in meeting Elon Musk at US President Donald Trump’s Mar-a-Lago resort in 2024 to discuss “the Trump ground game” and Musk’s strategies for “saving the West.”

Electoral Commission figures on donations reveal backing for Reform from layers of the super-rich in construction and property development. The removal of regulatory constraints from all aspects of big business is also attractive to a parasitic layer of financial speculators. Tice has funnelled money into Reform through the companies Leave Means Leave (£990,000) and its rebrand, Britain Means Business (nearly £655,000). He is sole director of Britain Means Business.

Hedge fund manager Jeremy Hosking has given Reform more than £1.7 million. Thai-based businessman Christopher Harborne, has given Reform more than £22 million since 2019, nearly two-thirds of its funding. This includes individual donations of £9 million last August—the largest by an individual in British political history—and a further £3 million in November.

Harborne previously gave £1 million to Boris Johnson’s private office, accompanying the former prime minister as an “adviser” on a trip to Kyiv. He has stakes in several military contractors, and is a shareholder in the cryptocurrency Tether, which Farage has publicly promoted in his calls for London to “embrace” and “become a global trading centre for” cryptocurrency.

The *Telegraph* piece was an instruction to step up to the fight on behalf of this parasitic layer. After all, “everyone dies.”



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact