

# Catalysts for tackling climate change

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The Government has adopted a number of different policies with a view to tackling the problem of climate change. These include various legal and voluntary instruments designed to drive the industry increasingly towards energy efficient construction practice

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The EU Directive on Energy Performance of Buildings, (2002/91/EC) which should have come into force in the UK on January 3 2006, was not implemented until April 6 2006 following an announcement by the then ODPM (now DCLG) that it would fulfil the first stage of the requirements of the Directive at that time in order to allow the building industry sufficient time to prepare.

The Directive is the main legislative catalyst for addressing the energy performance and emissions standards of buildings. Its objective is to promote the improvement of the energy performance of buildings within the community, taking into account outdoor climatic and local conditions, as well as indoor climate requirements and cost-effectiveness.

The Directive lays down requirements as regards:

- Establishment of a common methodology for calculating the integrated energy performance of buildings.
- Application of minimum standards of the energy performance to new buildings and to certain existing buildings when they are renovated.
- Energy certification schemes for new and existing buildings.
- Public display of energy performance certificates and recommended indoor temperature and other relevant climatic factors in public buildings and buildings frequented by the public.

- Specific inspection and assessment of boilers and heating systems – including insulation levels.

According to the Directive, governments have two options regarding the inspection of boilers. The first is to incorporate the necessary measures to establish a regular inspection of certain boilers, under which boilers over 100Kw must be inspected every two years – for gas boilers this may be extended to four years.

The second option, which the Government has favoured in relation to boilers in dwellings, is to ensure that there is adequate provision of advice to users on the replacement of the boilers, other modifications to their efficiency, and their appropriate size. No regular timescale is required for such advice.

The requirement for an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) to be issued when a building is built, sold or rented will have a key influence, as it potentially allows the introduction of further legislation that could create market value for buildings with reduced energy demand.

The certification process, also referred to as energy labelling, is to be fully implemented by January 4 2009. Calculations for this certificate are expected to be on a scale of 'A' to 'G', depending on carbon emissions, and will consider a building's 'asset rating' (its energy performance) and its 'operational rating' (its performance while in use).

In order to implement such changes, the Government must

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introduce further legislation beyond the approved amendments to Part L of the Building Regulations which came into force in April. This sets standards aimed at achieving a 20-25% saving in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. A calculation of overall CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and comparison against the target value has replaced the previous methods of demonstrating compliance.

It must be noted that the ratings assigned under the certification process merely act as a benchmark and as a way of encouraging improved energy efficiency standards, especially in existing buildings. The Directive itself does not impose any requirements in terms of penalties or incentives for building owners.

Nevertheless, there are many factors encouraging developers to adopt more sustainable construction practices, and for these to be promoted more effectively through the planning system, such as the landfill tax, aggregates levy, climate change levy, and stamp duty exemption for deprived areas, which have all been introduced to provide economic incentive.

It is unlikely that the wider economic impact of the drive towards energy efficiency in buildings will be clear for some years, but it is anticipated that Government policy in this area will continue to use financial incentives in conjunction with energy performance ratings, and this in turn will encourage greater investment in the energy performance of buildings.



*The EU Directive on Energy Performance of Buildings calls for the regular inspection of boilers*