

BREEAM In Use

A new BREEAM scheme will help building managers to evaluate the environmental performance of new and existing buildings and take the most effective action to improve it, reduce energy and other costs, and meet growing stakeholder and legislative demands for greater sustainability



In the era of climate change, businesses and organisations of all kinds are under ever growing pressure to not only operate more sustainably, but also to be doing so in a way that is clear and credible to all.

Financiers, clients, customers and employees increasingly expect to invest in, deal with or work for companies that are genuinely environmentally responsible. And legislation is rapidly catching up with the public mood for sustainability.

The introduction of the Energy Performance in Buildings Directive in the UK, for example, will mean that Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs), which measure the potential energy performance of a building, and in some instances Display Energy Certificates (DECs), which measure the building's actual performance, must be either displayed or produced when a building is sold, rented or leased.

The environmental performance of an organisation's built assets is a key factor in its sustainability credentials and carbon footprint. Operating a building also represents a major cost - with soaring energy prices and the current gloomy economic outlook, cutting energy, water, waste and other such costs can be a relatively easy way of improving profitability.

The question is, how do organisations assess, enhance and credibly demonstrate the environmental performance of their buildings? There are

already well established schemes for assessing the environmental performance of buildings at the design and construction stages - BREEAM, for example, being the most robust and long-lived of these. A new version of BREEAM - BREEAM In Use - is now being tested so that all those involved in occupying, procuring or managing existing buildings can evaluate - and improve - the performance of their property assets and the quality of their management regimes.

REDUCING OPERATIONAL COSTS AND IMPACTS

It is far easier making changes to a building at the design stage to improve its environmental performance, than it is with an existing building. BREEAM In Use therefore focuses on operational aspects and performance in use, comparing this to the potential performance of the building. It covers the major environmental issues which affect buildings, including energy and greenhouse gas emissions, water, waste, air quality, noise, lighting and property protection.

BREEAM In Use evaluates the building itself (giving it an asset rating), the operation of the building (operational rating) and the way the building occupiers manage their activities (organisational rating). The system is flexible enough for it to be applied to an individual building or a collection of buildings, or to an entire property portfolio or sub-parts of it.

The information obtained will allow building

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stakeholders to establish the sustainability of their buildings - including all non-domestic commercial, industrial, retail and institutional buildings - and of their operation and activities. This in turn will help them to both reduce their costs and demonstrably improve their environmental performance.

USING EXISTING INFORMATION

To make collecting the information needed for a BREEAM In Use assessment as straightforward as possible, the system allows data input from a variety of pre-existing sources.

With the introduction of EPCs for non-domestic buildings and DEC's for public sector buildings, for example, much of the energy/carbon performance characteristics of buildings will already have been collected and assessed - BREEAM In Use will accommodate EPC and DEC ratings in its assessment.

TIMESCALE

Following a series of pilot assessments to be carried out shortly, the new scheme will be reviewed to take feedback into account. An interim release is planned and a formal launch of BREEAM In Use is due in March 2009.

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