

Hot topic: Getting real value from BREEAM



Creating sustainable learning environments

Dear Member,

With UK institutions committed to carbon emissions targets; the sector is under pressure to find ways to improve its energy performance. So much emphasis is now placed on energy that the use of BREEAM, which rates a building's environmental footprint, is indeed linked to funding. For example the Skills Funding Agency requires an excellent rating for new builds and very good for refurbishments. A new report, commissioned by **Schneider Electric** (a Gold EAUC Company Member) and conducted by **BSRIA** – '**The Value of BREEAM**' – highlights there are still lessons to be learnt in order to get the most from the BREEAM process.

Here, in this special **hot topic**, James Thackrah, Green Building Segment Manager at Schneider Electric, a global specialist in energy management, offers EAUC Members some useful advice and tips for getting real value from BREEAM.

While to some BREEAM may seem like an arduous process, jumping through hoops to achieve credits, our recent report which looked into the value of BREEAM, did in fact show that the accreditation is encouraging educational establishments to make buildings better as well as make better buildings. BREEAM should be used in the spirit it was intended for; to inspire not contain innovation and this does appear to be happening.

Learning from others

However, to successfully glide through the BREEAM process with ease, there are a **number of lessons** participants shared in the report, which all organisations looking for accreditation could take note from.

- 1.** The importance of **considering BREEAM early on in the process**. By considering it at the design stages, organisations reported that it meant there were minimal extra costs associated with the build.
- 2.** The benefit of **involving experienced stakeholders in the early stages**. So working with consultants, contractors, manufacturers who have previous experience of BREEAM projects, will help ensure the technologies and solutions specified will not only achieve the desired credits, but will also make a long term difference.
- 3.** The report also highlighted that not all organisations consider **operational costs versus capital build costs**. Therefore, as part of the process to improve the end user's ability to measure savings, changes need to be made to ensure more focus is made on running efficiencies. It's also vital that the entire supply chain is privy to this insight as the report's findings show the current level of awareness is low.
This is a concern as it implies there is a lack of ownership of OPEX savings, which needs to be driven into the process to provide greater focus on delivering and measuring savings for the benefit of all. In addition, educational institutions need to **share these objectives** with all those involved, so there is a shared end vision for the project that goes beyond the initial build.



4. Furthermore, educational establishments need to ensure that they look at a **building's energy management beyond the initial build or refurbishment**, as the participants of the report highlighted that a green building will not be green on its own; it needs to be operated correctly to reach its full potential. Therefore any institution needs to continuously assess energy consumption and patterns of usage.

5. What's more, **maintaining equipment and ensuring services are up-to-date** is paramount if technology is to work efficiently. This is again where BREEAM comes into play as by ensuring the right technologies and processes are implemented to achieve effective credits, users will be able to capitalise on efficiencies as the building will have been designed with long term performance in mind and with good measurement systems.

To summarise, there needs to be a consistent approach to measuring and benchmarking the design and performance of sustainable buildings, and unless this is achieved more widely, the educational sector could fail to make the gain from BREEAM that could benefit so many.

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