



Display Energy Certificates - DEC's for all Public Buildings Clause 22 of The Energy Bill
The UK Green Building Council recommends the mandatory display of an A to G rating for the energy efficiency of all non-residential buildings - as early as 2012.

With the proposal of Clause 22 in The Energy Bill, Vicky Kenrick at International Sustainability Recruitment Consultancy, Allen & York explores the benefits of Display Energy Certificates (DEC) for all.

Introduced in 2008; Display Energy Certificates (DEC) were originally required in all public sector buildings/offices larger than 1000m²; that are frequently visited by the public. DEC's were not made compulsory for private sector property.

The aim of the DEC is to display the rate of the operational energy efficiency and performance

of a building, rating from A to G, they should be prominently displayed where all public visitors will be able to see them. There are large financial penalties for failure to display a DEC at all times, in a prominent place. For example, a maximum fine of £5,000 may be imposed dependent on the nature of the breach of regulations.

With the government's plan for delivering a low carbon construction and building services sector being broadly welcomed by the industry; the Low Carbon Construction Innovation and Growth Team (IGT), led by chief construction adviser Paul Morrell have proposed several recommendations to green construction. One of which is to create an existing homes hub that will monitor and enforce the mandatory use of DECs in all public sector buildings, not just those that are larger than 1,000 m². In May 2011 Construction Minister, Mark Prisk, hinted that the government would back this recommendation and ensure DECs were rolled out.

The UK Government target of an 80% cut in carbon emissions by 2050 (as outlined in The Climate Change Act 2008) has the full commitment of the independent Committee on Climate Change, who has suggested that we should be reaching the 50% point by 2025.

A barrier to the construction industry lowering their carbon emissions has been the issue of there not being a common method or rating system for the measurement of operational energy use in all non-domestic buildings: if you can't measure it, you can't manage it.

DECs provide data on how a building is performing which is essential to allow the design and implementation of an effective energy reduction strategy. Savings of between 5 and 30% can be made through simple, low cost changes to the way a building is managed and occupied, and mandatory ratings based on actual energy use, are a crucial first step.

The Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers (CIBSE) along with the UK Green Building Council supports the wider roll out of DEC. CIBSE's Technical Director, Hywel Davies, states that "There is now a clear industry consensus around making more use of Display Energy Certificates to identify potential energy and cost savings".

The Energy Bill, according to the Government, "has been designed to provide for a step change in the provision of energy efficiency measures to homes and businesses". In order to achieve that aim, we need to know how much energy is being used in the first place.

A mandatory roll-out of DECs would address this in a way that would bring significant economic, as well as environmental, benefits. In fact, some large property companies have chosen to carry out DECs on their buildings as part of their sustainability strategy and out of choice. These companies found that DECs can help provide them with information on which to base investment decisions.

The Energy Bill to recognise the benefits of DECs for all

DECs also provide a common methodology for measuring energy efficiency in buildings and could therefore also form the basis for monitoring other property-related policies, such as the Carbon Reduction Commitment and the Green Deal for Business and in the long term reducing

the overall cost of compliance.

Corporations have championed the efforts of Conservative MP, Zac Goldsmith, to amend the Government's Energy Bill.

Goldsmith tabled a new clause, named clause 22 and published in June 2011, which would see all commercial buildings require Display Energy Certificates (DECs) - A-G ratings for energy performance - a requirement which currently only applied to public buildings of more than 1000m². Zac Goldsmith states his intentions of the new clause: "mandatory A to G ratings are the crucial first step in helping businesses understand how to reduce their energy use".

Buildings are responsible for over 40% of the UK's total carbon emissions, with non domestic buildings accounting for 17%. In addition, it is estimated that 75% of the buildings that will exist in 2050 have already been built, which means that we must take action to improve energy efficiency and reduce carbon emission from existing buildings.

Whilst the carbon plan published in March 2001 includes a commitment to extend DECs to commercial buildings by October 2012, in order to fulfil that commitment the Energy Bill must be used to introduce the necessary enabling legislation, giving the Secretary of State the power to extend DECs through regulations.

The UK Green Building Council (UK-GBC) fears that if the Energy Bill is not used to introduce DECs they will not be adopted in time be able to reach the Government target, outlined in The Climate Change Act 2008, of reducing carbon emissions by 50% by 2025 and by 80% by 2050. Paul King, Chief Executive of the UK Green Building Council supports clause 22 and said: "there is widespread business support for the extension of DECs to commercial buildings because they help companies save money on energy bills and they provide a level playing field for comparing the market. This is an ideal opportunity for Government to fulfil the commitment it gave in March."

Going a step further, members of the UK property industry also support clause 22 and have asked for the Energy Bill to include legislation for the roll out of DECs for all buildings.

Commercial property agents Colliers International have also signed up to support the amendment to the Energy Bill. In addition, International Sustainability Recruitment Consultancy, Allen & York, who specialise in recruiting for the energy and building services industry also suggest that "rolling out DECs to all public buildings could provide better data on energy use in non-domestic buildings. This information enables better building management and results in energy, carbon and financial savings". Nikki Clark, Senior Recruitment Consultant, Energy Management – Allen & York

To conclude, the roll out of DEC's for all commercial buildings will aid the increase of workplace efficiency and cut carbon emissions – therefore making a significant step towards The Climate Change Act 2008 targets of a 50% reduction in carbon emissions by 2025.

There is substantial business support for the roll out of clause 22 in The Energy Bill and in regards to the progress within government; a Report is initially required in order to draft legislation and procedures that will enable the roll out of DECs for all.

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