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uilding Management Systems

The Building Research Establishment (BRE) carries out research, consultancy and testing for the construction and built environment sectors and in 1990 they developed the Environmental Assessment Method known as BREEAM. This was established as a tool to measure the sustainability of new non-domestic buildings and has been updated regularly in line with UK building regulations.

BREEAM is regarded by the construction and property sectors as the UK's principle measure of best practice in environmental design and management. The analysis covers a wide range of factors from a building's energy use and carbon dioxide emissions to the ecological value of the flora planted up around a building's car parks. The methodology is designed to take account of everything involved at all levels of construction and eventual occupation.

This thorough process provides clients, developers and others with market recognition for low environmental impact buildings and assurance that best environmental practice has been incorporated into a building.

Designers and operators are motivated by BREEAM to find innovative solutions that minimise the environmental impact as the methodology provides a benchmark that is higher than regulation and a tool to help reduce running costs, improve working and living environments.

BREEAM assesses buildings against set criteria and provides an overall score which will fall within a band leading to a Pass, Good, Very Good, Excellent or Outstanding rating. The assessments are carried out by licensed assessors who are usually involved in a project from a very early stage, ideally beginning with the concept design. It is important to implement appropriate details into designs as early as possible to obtain a higher rating and a more cost effective result.

BREEAM can be used to assess the environmental performance of any type of building both new and existing. Standard versions exist for common building types and more unusual designs can be assessed against tailored criteria under the Bespoke BREEAM version.

Buildings outside the UK can be assessed using BREEAM International although equivalent models exist in other regions such as LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) in the USA, Green Star in Australia and HQE (Haute Qualité Environnementale) in France.

For full details of BREEAM and how to find an assessor see www.breeam.org