

Raising the bar on energy performance

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BM TRADA Certification Senior Technical Consultant Andy Sumner applauds the window industry's response to energy efficiency challenges.

The British Fenestration Rating Council (BFRC) window energy rating scheme continues to grow. Manufacturers and specifiers have been quick to appreciate the benefits it offers in giving an at a glance measure of energy performance and an easy means of comparing one window with another. A rating is rapidly becoming a 'must have' for specifiers, which is definitely encouraging more manufacturers to join.

And many of those already in the scheme are working closely with glass and profiles suppliers to further improve the energy performance of their windows. At a time of economic downturn it is heartening to see this continuing investment in product development.

Glass manufacturers have played their part by developing improved flat glass options for IGU's, while PVC-U profile system suppliers have been re-designing their profiles and reinforcements to help fabricators achieve higher ratings.

Another growth area is the significant number of timber manufacturers achieving BFRC certification for a whole range of window types, including casements, tilt & turns, vertical sliders, fully reversible and others. Timber has always held a strong position in the environmental stakes, but suppliers have realised that they cannot rely on the material's properties alone to promote sustainability.

Door energy ratings are also still on the horizon and they cannot come quickly enough for some manufacturers. The expected launch of the doors scheme at Glassex this year has been delayed, possibly until the second quarter of 2009 or longer, as BFRC finalises the simulation rules for door energy ratings. Once in place, we are likely to see the same upward trend in door development and performance as we are seeing for windows.

The UK Government is clearly on a mission to respond to global warming by reducing CO₂ emissions. One of several tools at its disposal to develop more energy-efficient buildings is the *Code for Sustainable Homes* (CSH) and the individual thermal performance of doors and windows all have an impact on the points score. The BFRC rating system is proving a popular way of meeting the challenge.

- For further information on the BFRC window energy scheme visit www.bmtrada.com or email asumner@bmtrada.com.