



# BREEAM **V7:** WHAT YOU **NEED TO KNOW**

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# WHAT'S NEW?

The latest BREEAM update places greater emphasis on reducing emissions across every stage of a building's life, from design to operation. It aligns more closely with industry-wide net-zero and EU Taxonomy targets, introducing stricter requirements, new credit structures and a stronger focus on collaboration from the very start of a project.

## **Stronger Alignment with Industry Standards**

BREEAM V7 moves beyond 'tick-box' assessments. It now aligns with leading frameworks for operational, embodied, refrigerant and transport emissions, ensuring projects deliver real, measurable environmental performance rather than isolated compliance reports

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## **Tougher Minimum Requirements**

Minimum standards have been expanded and tightened, particularly around energy performance and whole-life carbon. Achieving certification will now demand earlier engagement, integrated design collaboration, and more comprehensive documentation throughout.

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## **Greater Focus on Net Zero and Lifecycle Impact**

The new version prioritises whole-life carbon assessments, energy efficiency, and EU Taxonomy compliance. These updates raise the bar for sustainable design and will likely increase upfront project costs — making early adoption and planning crucial for success.

## **New and Revised Credits**

BREEAM V7 introduces new credits and restructured sections, including:

- Separate criteria for natural and artificial lighting (replacing the old 'Visual Comfort' category).
  - New credits for installed controls (optimising HVAC and lighting systems) and predicting operational water use.
  - Revised weightings to prioritise energy and carbon performance, encouraging electrification and reducing reliance on gas.
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## **Tougher Minimum Standards**

- Life Cycle Assessments (LCA) and embodied carbon reporting are now mandatory for projects targeting Excellent or Outstanding.
  - An Excellent rating requires a whole-project stage LCA report.
  - Operational energy prediction and early-stage energy strategy are now core expectations.
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## **Closer Alignment with Industry and Policy**

- Designed to support EU Taxonomy and ESG reporting.
- Reflects upcoming Building Regulations favouring electric systems.
- Strengthened focus on performance-based outcomes across design, construction and operation.



## **Operational Energy**

Early-stage energy strategy now mandatory.

Projects must define an energy strategy during concept design, with credits for:

- Predictive energy modelling
- Risk assessment and mitigation
- Benchmarking and third-party verification

This will require more time investment and coordination from the design team to achieve Excellent or higher ratings.

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## **Circadian Lighting**

Health and wellbeing at the forefront.

New criteria emphasise natural and artificial lighting that supports healthy circadian rhythms, improving sleep, mood and productivity.

This reflects BREEAM's ongoing shift toward human-centric building design.

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## **Indoor Air Quality**

Mandatory for 'Very Good' and above.

Indoor air quality plans now earn one credit and are a minimum requirement for projects aiming for Very Good or higher.

Design teams must:

- Identify potential air quality risks early
- Outline mitigation measures
- Plan for long-term maintenance of indoor environments

## **Whole-Life Carbon**

Life Cycle Assessment is now non-negotiable.

- Mandatory for Excellent and Outstanding ratings.
  - Must be completed at early design, technical design, and post-construction stages.
  - The concept-stage LCA can now be submitted within 20 days of planning, giving teams slightly more flexibility.
  - Additional credits reward LCAs completed at every stage, in line with RICS guidance.
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## **EU Taxonomy Alignment**

Supporting finance and ESG transparency.

- BREEAM V7 introduces full alignment with the EU Taxonomy.
  - Projects can now generate an asset-level Taxonomy report, simplifying sustainability reporting for investors.
  - This ensures compliance with European financial disclosure requirements, a significant shift for developers and investors alike.
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## **Biodiversity Net Gain**

Full alignment with DEFRA's statutory BNG methodology.

- Simplified criteria, now reflecting statutory biodiversity net gain (BNG).
- Off-site enhancements can now count toward total calculations, offering greater design flexibility.
- Expect higher expectations for innovation and measurable ecological enhancement.



# KEY CHANGES

## **Low-Carbon Technologies**

Heat pumps no longer qualify for this credit.

They are now considered standard technology. To achieve the credit, projects must explore other innovative low- or zero-carbon solutions. Projects targeting Outstanding cannot include any fossil fuel combustion onsite.

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## **Flexible Demand Response**

Integrating smart energy systems.

Rewards buildings that can respond to grid signals, adjusting energy use to align with renewable generation and low carbon intensity periods.

This encourages grid-connected, flexible, low-carbon design.

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## **Installed Controls**

Optimised building performance through smart control systems.

Credits available for systems that intelligently control:

- Heating and cooling
  - Ventilation
  - Lighting
  - Based on occupancy, time schedules, and environmental conditions.
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## **Prediction of Operational Water**

New credit for data-led water management.

Encourages early-stage prediction of operational water use, considering real-world usage patterns. This supports performance-based outcomes and better alignment with project sustainability goals.

# FAQ'S

## **Q: When will BREEAM V7 assessments start?**

**A:** BREEAM V7 registrations officially opened on 30 September 2025. The current New Construction schemes 2018, V6 (UK and International), will close for registrations on 27 January 2026. After that date, all new projects must register under the V7 scheme.

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## **Q: Will BREEAM V7 be harder to achieve?**

**A:** In short, yes. BRE's benchmarking shows that scores under V7 are expected to be at least 5 % lower than under V6 (on average 3 % lower compared with 2018 projects). This reflects higher expectations around operational performance, carbon reduction and evidence quality, raising the bar for genuine sustainability outcomes

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## **Q: Should I register upcoming projects under V6 or V7?**

**A:** We recommend registering under V6 now if you can.

Although V7 is live, projects can still be registered under V6 or 2018 until 27 January 2026.

Doing so offers several advantages:

- **Cost-effective:** You'll avoid immediate compliance with the stricter V7 requirements.
- **Flexible:** Projects registered under V6 have five years (until January 2031) to achieve certification.
- **Future-proof:** You can always upgrade later to V7 —but you can't back-register once the older schemes close.

# NEXT STEPS

## Registration Support

Our consultants can guide you through every stage of BREEAM planning, from deciding whether to register under V6 or V7, to managing the full registration process on your behalf.

- BRE registration fee: £540 + VAT (no RedSix on-cost)
- V6 registration closes: 27 January 2026
- V6 certification window: 5 years from V6 closure

*Note: Projects can upgrade to V7 later, but not back-register to V6.*

## Book a Free BREEAM V7 CPD Session

We're offering complimentary 1-hour CPD sessions for clients, design teams and developers who want a deeper understanding of the V7 updates. These sessions cover:

- Key changes and mandatory standards
- Energy, carbon and EU Taxonomy alignment
- Practical steps for upcoming projects

Email [info@red-six.co.uk](mailto:info@red-six.co.uk) to enquire.