

Briefing Paper

Health and Wellbeing Strategy

Alan Yates



Summary

With our built environment increasingly being designed and operated from a property investment point of view it is easy to forget the basic function of a building to provide shelter and accommodation to people and their activities whether they are at home, at work or out and about.

- On average, people spend over 90% of their lives in and around buildings and much of the rest traveling between them. As such the built environment is critical to our health and wellbeing as a result of the conditions and facilities that it provides and the behaviours that it encourages.
- Staff costs typically contribute 90% of the total financial burden associated with a building based business. The impact of productivity, attraction and retention, and general employee satisfaction on the bottom line means that staff wellbeing is vital to business success. The environment in which staff work, live and play are fundamental to these.

BREEAM has promoted the health and wellbeing of those that use buildings since its launch in 1990 and will continue to be at the leading edge in promoting healthier solutions as a key part of its drive to a more sustainable built environment.

BREEAM and the Health and Wellbeing agenda

The health and wellbeing of occupants and other users lies at the heart of any ethical and sustainable approach to the design, construction and management of the built environment.

BREEAM provides market differentiation for buildings that reflect best practice across a range of sustainability issues. Its aim is to empower change through assessing, rewarding sustainability throughout the built environment both in the UK and globally.

From the start, BREEAM has included a range of physiological factors covering key health and wellbeing impactors such as lighting, temperature, and noise and air quality. Over time it has expanded its scope to include a wide-ranging set of issues relating to the design, construction and operation of a building or other asset. These include issues beyond those included in the Health and Wellbeing section within BREEAM including pollution, transport, community engagement, and many other aspects linked to quality and amenity value.

Market trends

There is increasing interest in the health and wellbeing impacts associated with buildings and the built environment. This is reflected in the introduction of the WELL Building Standard™ (WELL), as well as the growing number of statements and claims made by developers and property owners in the UK and elsewhere through their policies and CSR reports.

However, to maximise benefits and avoid unforeseen risks health and wellbeing issues should always be considered alongside the full palette of issues that influence a buildings fitness for purpose.

Future direction

Through its BREEAM methods, BRE will continue to focus on promoting best practice in the design, construction and operation of buildings, infrastructure and the wider built environment that go beyond the regulatory minimum avoiding issues that fall outside the scope of those involved in the procurement and management of the built environment. It will encourage early and consistent consideration of these issues to maximise the opportunities for improvement and avoid or minimise the burdens associated with higher performance.

BREEAM will be developed to further consider the following promoting a robust and holistic consideration of health and wellbeing issues alongside broader sustainability ones and rewarding actions taken to improve the health and wellbeing of users:

1. Health and safety in the construction process

Construction sites are inherently high risk environments and although regulation provides a degree of protection in many countries, this can be variable in its scope and enforcement. According to the UK's Health and Safety Executive, HSE, there were 43 workers fatally injured in the UK construction sector during 2015/16. Each year in the Construction sector around 3% of construction industry workers sustain a work related injury and 4% suffer from an illness they believe to be workrelated. On average 64% of these are musculoskeletal disorders and 18% relate to stress, depression and anxiety. In total HSE estimate that work related injuries and illnesses result in the loss of 2.2 million working days per annum.

BREEAM will:

- Encourage the adoption of robust processes for the monitoring and reporting of safety and wellbeing covering all activities on and related to the construction site including the offsite assembly of major constructional elements.
- Encourage safety and welfare throughout the product and labour supply chains through our consideration of responsible sourcing and ethical labour policies.
- Continue to promote good neighbourliness on construction sites through the recognition of good practice actions and systems.

2. Occupant health and wellbeing

In the UK NSO state that 131 million working days were lost through sickness related absence in 2013. This equates to 4.4 days per person per annum. Of these, 31 million were for musculoskeletal complaints and a further 13 million were as a result of stress, anxiety or depression.

Typically we spend around 90% of our lives in and around buildings and so these can have a major impact on our physical and mental health through the internal environmental conditions relating to light, temperature, noise and pollution. Health issues impacted by our buildings include eyestrain, cardiovascular and coronary problems, bronchial complaints including asthma and allergies, dermatological complaints, musculoskeletal problems and a range of psychological impacts such as fatigue, stress, anxiety and depression. Higher risk individuals including the young, elderly, disabled and sick, can experience a range of other health impacts arising from their environment many of which can have major and sometimes life-threatening effects.

BREEAM will:

- Continue to measure robust internal and external environmental factors covering light, thermal comfort, overheating, noise and pollution.
- Encourage consideration of the quality of life issues including views, landscape, connections to nature (biophilic design) and accommodating or exploiting biological rhythms through technologies such as circadian lighting
- Promote the use of 'healthy' materials that do not contain or omit toxins and other chemicals that are injurious to health.
- Promote healthy internal and external environments that encourage healthier lifestyles. This will include the provision of spaces and facilities that allow choice to adopt behaviours and activities that have health benefits.
- Consider the impacts of an aging population on the built environment and adapt BREEAM to promote greater adaptability whilst avoiding unnecessary resources or cost.

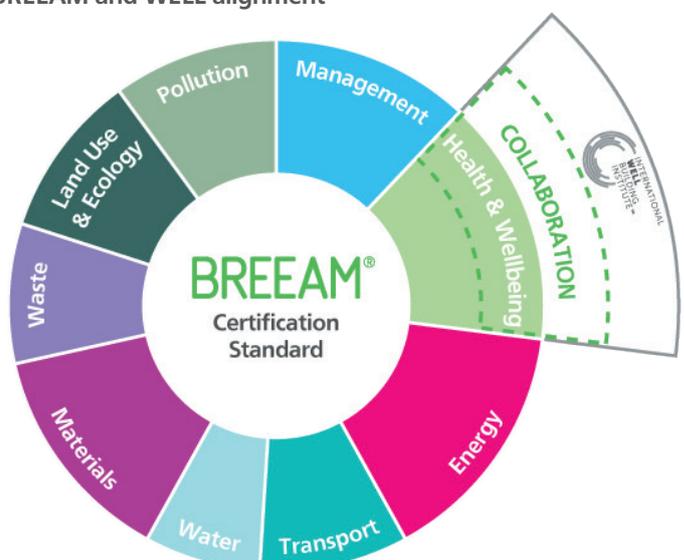
3. Neighbour health and wellbeing

In addition to the impact on the direct users of a building or infrastructure asset, many others may be impacted through local noise, air pollution, transport and in some cases flooding impacts. Development often creates opportunities to enhance neighbourhoods and provide communities with added value.

BREEAM will:

- Promote best practice engagement with neighbours and others impacted through development and occupation of buildings, infrastructure and the broader built environment
- Promote the design and location of buildings to minimise transport impacts providing good access for alternative means of transport including walking and cycling.
- Discourage development that negatively impacts on neighbours health and quality of life through pollution, disturbance and encroachment.

BREEAM and WELL alignment



BRE's approach

As a voluntary method BREEAM is used to provide an independent and credible evaluation of performance to demonstrate achievements and give confidence to a wide range of stakeholders. As such it seeks to work with interested parties to maximise take-up and the resultant benefits. We will adopt the following principles:

1. Practical enhancement

In developing BREEAM, BRE will consider the social, health and wellbeing benefits of its requirements and methodologies alongside the financial benefits and costs arising as a result of its requirements.

2. Beyond regulation and local practice

BREEAM standards will continue to go beyond local standard practice, often reflected by the standards required by local regulations. It will promote standards that are as close as possible to international best practice for each issue taking into account local practices, climate, economics and culture.

However, there are a number of fundamental requirements that would be treated as a prerequisite for certification anywhere. These relate to the rights to basic health and safety protection for construction workers, building occupants and others who might be harmed as a result of a major failure (including issues relating to structural safety, fire control and escape, toxic substances, sanitation, protection from natural disaster and ethical practices including the avoidance of slavery and exploitation, equality and the avoidance of corruption).

3. Harmonise BREEAMs approach across differing schemes to simplify processes enhance understanding and facilitate the incorporation of standard approaches in industry tools and practices

Collaboration and harmonisation

Many organisations are involved in research and the setting of standards to do with health and wellbeing in the built environment. BRE does not set out to duplicate these and will actively seek to collaborate in the interests of promoting a healthier and safer built environment for all.

We will:

- Seek active engagement with a range of organisations to share research findings and opportunities with a view to improving awareness and understanding and encouraging the adoption of higher standards globally and locally.
- Work with partners to harmonise BREEAM requirements with other schemes focusing on whole building sustainability and health and wellbeing. Where possible we will work with scheme operators to allow for mutual recognition where standards robustly meet or exceed those of BREEAM with a view to simplifying the assessment process and improving efficiency.
- Work in collaboration with the International WELL Building Institute™ (IWBI™) to ensure a harmonised and efficient approach to the consideration of these issues across the built environment. We will also work with health and social wellbeing research bodies to ensure that BREEAM remains at the forefront in promoting robust science based standards.

The need for Research

Construction is responsible for 6.7% of the UK's overall Gross Value Added (GVA) with only the transport and logistic; health and social care and finance making bigger contributions. However, it is a comparatively poor performer in terms of providing feedback loops and carrying out collaborative research to promote knowledge and innovation. This is partially a result of the fragmented nature of the sector which comprises a large number of SMEs and a diverse range of stakeholders across the supply chain. This structure limits the ability and effectiveness of commercial R&D activities to drive change across construction and property.

Given the challenges that exist socially and economically it is important that the industry establishes sound structures for collaborative research and sharing of experience and knowledge if it is to play its part in meeting the challenges of efficiency and cost effectiveness, economic growth, climate change, changing demographics and be able to accommodate rapidly changing technologies moving forward.

BREEAM's strength lies in the rigour and robustness of its underpinning science base. Knowledge, awareness, skill and technologies all change over time and so impact on the practicality of achieving enhanced performance. In order to engage the industry more actively in this, BRE is establishing a BREEAM Research Programme with support from the BRE Trust. This will provide a route for all industry stakeholders to engage with the development of the knowledge and understanding in connection with:

1. Underpinning Science
2. Scope of BREEAM and its methodologies and benchmarks
3. Sharing of experience and data on the use of BREEAM and the issues that it covers

Active engagement with the programme will provide stakeholders with a greater degree of engagement in the future direction of the BREEAM Schemes and make a valuable contribution to the future direction of the construction and property sectors. It will enable programme members to maximising the benefits and minimising the risks presented by BREEAM and allow the industry to collaborate for the good of all.

Further details on the BREEAM criteria can be found in the relevant scheme manuals. Copies of the manuals can be downloaded free of charge from www.breeam.com/resources



BREEAM25

Over the last 25 years BREEAM has evolved and grown to reflect advances in science, technology, policy and business.

BREEAM is the world's leading sustainability assessment method for buildings and communities, with more than 530,000 certificates issued and a global reach encompassing more than 70 countries. Find out more about BREEAM's achievements over the last 25 years by visiting our dedicated microsite www.breeam.com/breeam25

BRE Global

Bucknalls Lane
Watford
United Kingdom
WD25 9XX

T +44 (0)333 321 8811
E breeam@bre.co.uk
www.breeam.com

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