

## WHAT'S IN 'A' RATING?

With the expansion of rating systems in our sector there is a growing concern that architects, specifiers, contractors and industry representatives are becoming seriously confused and do not necessarily understand what it is they are specifying or offering.

Right now we have three schemes that contain references to 'A' ratings and which form part of most tender specifications. They are:

British Fenestration Rating Council (BFRC) – Window Energy Rating (WER) scheme with Bands A to E: [www.bfrc.org](http://www.bfrc.org)

BRE Green Guide (GG) to specification – Environmental profiling system for building materials and components with Bands A+ to E: [www.thegreenguide.org.uk](http://www.thegreenguide.org.uk)

BRE Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) – a range of products that use GG ratings as part of their building credits system: [www.breeam.org/index.jsp](http://www.breeam.org/index.jsp)

**The BFRC WER scheme** It is in **NO WAY related to the GG or BREEAM.** It is a way of measuring the thermal performance of a window assembly using its thermal transmittance ('U' value), its solar gain ('g' factor) and its air permeability. It is listed in the ADL1B and ADL2B Approved Documents for Part 'L' Conservation of Fuel and Power as one means of demonstrating compliance for replacement windows.

**The Green Guide** Launched in the 1990s, it is based on life cycle analysis (LCA) criteria and uses a weighting methodology to allow direct comparison of the environmental performances of ranges of building materials and products. These comparisons are published as a series of tables and accompanying text. Their chosen LCA methodology does not favour metals particularly aluminium with its bias towards recycled content rather than recyclability. However, it is important to understand that the GG is limited in its effectiveness as a means of selecting either materials or products – see CAB web site under 'Information' for the 'Misunderstanding the Green Guide' article and other relevant documents.

**BREEAM** This is another BRE product that has been in existence for several years and is a method of assessing the environmental performance of a building using a scoring system. Points can be gained in many ways but for materials and products it uses GG ratings. For windows it only awards points for GG 'A' or 'A+' ratings **but does not disallow the use of lower rated products.** The contribution of an 'A+' rated window to the overall building score is 1%, and to achieve a BREEAM 'Very Good' classification 55% is needed ie the window contribution is minor to minimal.

In summary, when you are asked to supply an 'A' rated product make sure you know what the specifier is referring to and does he/she understand what they are asking for.

**Aluminium windows can achieve BRFC band 'A' products.**

**Aluminium window systems for commercial use can achieve a GG 'A' rating.**