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Overview

Launched in November 2009, the SKA rating is an environmental assessment method which rates and compares the environmental performance of office and retail fit-out projects in the UK. The SKA rating focuses more on specific energy efficiency improvements to services (e.g. boilers and lighting) and less on overall CO₂ emission rate.

Development of the rating

In 2005, Skansen Ltd commissioned a research project with Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) and AECOM to establish whether it was possible to measure either the impact of a fit-out on the environment, or measure good environmental practice on fit-out projects. During 2008-09 a collaborative team of development partners led by RICS evolved the concepts into the fully working SKA rating and it is now operated by RICS.

Other sustainability benchmarks

BREEAM

In October 2014, the BRE launched the BREEAM UK Non-domestic Refurbishment & Fit-Out scheme, tailored to take into account the challenges of improving existing buildings; ensuring projects are assessed against the issues that each project can reasonably be expected to influence and not on factors outside of their control. The scheme provides a modular set of criteria that are applied dependent upon the scope of works for a particular project type including:

- Part 1: Fabric and Structure
- Part 2: Core Services
- Part 3: Local Services
- Part 4: Interior Design.

The scheme is split into these 4 assessment parts to allow the scheme to reflect the aspects of a building that are tenant or landlord responsibilities, as well as the varied life cycle stages that each component or element is upgraded.

Parts 3 and 4 seem to provide a platform for BREEAM to challenge the RICS SKA scheme in the market for 'sustainable' fit-out assessments.

The table below indicates the typical BREEAM Refurbishment and Fit-out scheme assessment parts that are applicable dependent upon the type of refurbishment or fit-out project being undertaken. This table can be used to indicate which assessment parts are potentially applicable to the project; however ultimately it is down to the assessor and client to work together to identify which parts of the method they wish to gain certification against.

Project Type	Part 1: Fabric & Structure	Part 2: Core Services	Part 3: Local Services	Part 4: Interior Design
Full refurbishment	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Shell & Core Refurbishment to Cat A	Yes	Yes		
Cat B Fit-Out			Yes	Yes
Interior refresh				Yes
Upgrade of central services		Yes		

A project can be assessed at two stages; interim design stage and then a post construction review. Where an interim design stage assessment has not been carried out i.e. certified, and a BREEAM assessment and rating is required, a full post construction stage assessment can be conducted.



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To register a BREEAM UK Non-domestic Refurbishment & Fit-Out assessment with the BRE costs £195 + VAT. To submit an assessment to the BRE for a final Post Construction Assessment certificate will cost between £475 to £2240 + VAT. A licensed BREEAM assessor can charge between £5,000 to £15,000, depending on the complexity and size of the project to be assessed.

For more information on BREEAM, please refer to the WD Technical Briefing Note 16 BREEAM.

What the SKA rating assesses

SKA rating comprises over one hundred good practice measures across 8 issues: Energy & CO₂ emissions, Waste, Water, Pollution, Transport, Materials, Project Delivery and Wellbeing. The score is ranked in 3 thresholds; Gold, Silver and Bronze.

Benefits

Sustainable fit-outs result in more comfortable, cleaner and more cost-efficient working environments. Improving the sustainability of working environments through a SKA assessment can:

- Provide a set of standards which can be used to demonstrate environmentally conscious property occupation
- Encourage staff engagement
- Comply with 'green lease' provisions
- Improve wellbeing in working environments
- Reduce the cost of the fit-out through innovative sustainable solutions
- Reduce the ongoing operational costs related to the occupation of the refurbished space by reducing energy and water usage

- Improve an organisation's reputation as being environmentally aware

How do you get an assessment undertaken?

Anyone can use the free online SKA Rating tool to informally evaluate a project. Professional certification can be achieved by engaging a SKA assessor to rate and certify the project – the RICS operates an accreditation scheme to enable qualified professionals to undertake SKA rating assessments on behalf of organisations.

How much does it cost the client to get a SKA rating?

The RICS charge £295 + VAT for each certification the assessors carry out. The assessor could typically charge £2,000-£5,000 per certification, dependant on the nature and complexity of the project.

How is the assessment carried out?

The SKA assessment process is broken into three stages:

1.Design/Planning: identify the measures and issues in scope. Once these are identified, the client has the opportunity to prioritise which measures they want to achieve and make a decision against design, cost, programme and benefit, and add them into the scope of works for the project. This will also set the environmental performance standards for how the project is



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delivered, in terms of waste and energy in use, etc. Then, if the specification demonstrates that these measures are likely to be achieved, they will be reflected in an indicative rating.

2.Delivery/Construction: this involves the gathering of evidence from O&M manuals and other sources to prove that what has been specified has actually been delivered, and that the performance and waste benchmarks have been achieved.

3.Occupancy Stage Assessment: finally, there is the option to review how well a fit-out has performed in use against its original brief from a year after completion.

After you select the assessment type, the next step is to confirm whether the project works are Cat A, B or C and select the applicable works e.g. fully fitted out WC's, office carpet, basic M&E services, decoration and branding. From there, the 'measures' to assess the project against are automatically allocated. Some measures are considered more important (from a sustainability perspective) and therefore the measures are ranked from 1 to 109 for offices and 1 to 112 for retail (1 is the highest and 112 the lowest). To ensure that projects do not just target the easiest measures, the project being assessed has to achieve a number of the highest ranked measures in scope in order to score; these are called ('Gateway Measures').

'Measures' to assess an office fit out project against include:

- Lighting controls (energy & CO₂ issue) RANK POSITION 6
'Lighting controls meet or exceed the Energy Technology Criteria List (ETL Criteria, as on the Enhanced Capital Allowance website).'
- Designing out waste (waste issue) RANK POSITION 9 –
'The design team must use the WRAP "Designing out Waste Tool for Buildings" (DoWT-B) to identify opportunities to design out waste in the fit-out and to record the design solutions pursued in reducing material consumption and wastage.'

- Existing low flush WCs (water issue) RANK POSITION 8
'Existing WCs are retrofitted with flushing devices that provide a 20% reduction in flush volume (see guidance) and meet the Water Technology List (WTL).'
- Reduce chairs sent to landfill (waste issue) RANK POSITION 13
'90% of all chairs are:
 - reused;
 - recycled; or
 - diverted from landfill.'
- Considerate Constructors Scheme registration (project delivery issue) RANK POSITION 16
'When the construction period is 6 weeks or more: the site is registered with the CCS for site registration and the site achieves a score of at least 35 points out of 50.
When the construction period is less than 6 weeks: the contractor is registered with the CCS for company registration, and the contractor can demonstrate that over the preceding 12 months it has obtained a company certificate of compliance.'
- Cycle parking (transport issue) RANK POSITION 17
'Secure, lockable cycle racks are provided, and; where occupancy is unknown, one space per 100m² net internal area is provided; or where occupancy is known, one space per every 10 people is provided.'
- Fit out volatile organic compound (VOC) monitoring (wellbeing issue) RANK POSITION 109
'During the fit-out process, monitor VOC concentrations in the fit-out space. Records are kept and the site manager regularly reviews the VOC levels.'



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How many SKA certificates have been issued to date?

As of July 2015 there are a total of 191 accredited assessors, assessments in progress (formal and informal): 2070, completed assessments (informal): 981. Formally certified assessments: 369, these assessments comprise the following ratings:

SKA scheme	Gold	Silver	Bronze
Offices	84	91	34
Retail	13	114	28
Pilot*	1	1	3

*Such as Higher Education projects where an appropriate scheme may be developed in the future.

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Summary

Produced by Skansen Ltd with backing of RICS.

SKA 'measures' are very similar to the BREEAM credits but SKA rating assesses only the scope of fit-out projects, not the building, and has no measures relating to proximity of the building to public transport nodes.

BRE now has a scheme specifically to assess refurbishments and fit outs; BREEAM UK Non-domestic Refurbishment & Fit-Out scheme.

SKA rating certification is a quick process as once the delivery stage has been assessed by an accredited assessor and the supporting information has been added to the online tool, the certificate is automatically produced so it can be issued to the client (at the same time the certificate is automatically lodged with the RICS).

QA procedure by RICS will comprise checking a percentage of registered assessors projects.

References and further information

1. <http://www.rics.org/uk/knowledge/ska-rating/>
2. <https://ska-tool.rics.org/>
3. <http://www.breeam.org/page.jsp?id=381>

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