

Domestic Energy Assessor (DEA)

– Landscape Analysis –

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

- Provide an overview of the energy assessment field.
- Find out the number of assessors, both domestic and commercial, practising in the UK.
- Find out how many EPCs need to be produced, and the implications for DEAs.
- Determine the accreditation process for these assessment roles.
- Find the current and potential government regulations.

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 History

The Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) is part of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD), which was brought in to 'promote the improvement of energy performance of buildings within the Community, taking into account outdoor climatic and local conditions, as well as indoor climate requirements and cost-effectiveness.'

It is part of the government's commitment to address climate change through various legal, fiscal and voluntary instruments. The 160 million buildings in the EU create over 40% of its carbon dioxide emissions. Under the Kyoto protocol, Europe is committed to reducing emissions and the Directive is intended to contribute to this. The cost effective savings potential is around 22% of present consumption in buildings, to be realised by 2010.

Since 2007, the government has been working towards all properties having an EPC and for public buildings to have a Display Entry Certificate (DEC). In Oct 2008, it became law that all private dwellings being sold or rented must have an EPC.

1.2 Current government regulations

A leaflet entitled [Improving the energy efficiency of our homes and buildings](#), produced by Communities and Local Government (CLG), details requirements laid down by law.

1.3 EPC Details

Rating scale

An EPC rating uses the same calculations for all homes, so you can compare the energy efficiency of different properties. A building is given a grade from 'A' to 'G', where 'A' is the most efficient. The average efficiency grade to date is 'D'. An EPC has to be included in the Home Improvement Pack (HIP) that is compulsory for most homes on the market.

Costs

Although initially it was thought that an EPC would cost £100, some companies/individuals are now charging less than £50 to complete these. The current average is approximately £70, including costs. (Source: [HIPs: the facts, not the hype](#))

Length of Certification

The EPC is required by law when a building is constructed, sold or put up for rent. Once you have an EPC for a home for sale, it's valid for three years. If you are a landlord, you'll need to make an EPC available to prospective tenants the first time you let a home after 1 October 2008. An EPC is only required for a property which is self-contained, and is valid for 10 years. Certain public buildings must have a Display Energy Certificate (DEC). The DEC contains similar information to an EPC to enable visitors and users of the building to see its energy efficiency rating.

2. HOW INDIVIDUALS AND COMPANIES OBTAIN A EPC

If someone is building, selling or renting a property, they are required by law to get an EPC, even if they don't need a HIP because their property has been on the market since before December 2007. An EPC is automatically included in the cost of producing a HIP. (Source: [The Guardian](#)). People can produce their own HIP, but they would still need an accredited Energy Assessor to produce the EPC part. Estate agents accept HIPs produced by others, but some may charge a nominal admin fee to check its legality. (Source: [Neil Hammond](#), independent energy assessor)

Depending on the type of property, the assessment will take no longer than 45 minutes and will be non-obtrusive. The Energy Assessor will collect the data required, such as the type and age of property, all insulation in the property e.g. wall, roof, water cylinder, whether double glazing is present, heating systems and controls, the overall measurements of the property and any other energy saving methods e.g. low energy bulbs, solar panels. (Source: [EPC North Downs](#))

3. FACTS AND FIGURES

3.1 How many DEAs in the country?

The Government periodically announces numbers of Domestic Energy Assessors and Home Inspectors and breaks the figures down into the stage they have achieved.

Recent figures

On 23rd May 2008, the official combined numbers were:

- Accredited – 7,930
- Qualified – 1,464 (passed exams and qualified, but not yet accredited)
- Passed exams – 4,816
- Total in system who have passed exams or progressed further – 14,210

Regional breakdown

North East 368	London 644
North West 947	South East 1289
Yorkshire & The Humber 582	South West 1021
East Midlands 618	Wales 426
West Midlands 743	Unknown 503
East of England 789	

Please note that some are now not practising.

3.2 How many EPCs need to be produced?

The Communities and Local Government (CLG), in a publication from 2008, stated that between 3,000 and 4,000 DEAs (which includes HIs) would be required in order to implement a HIP service nationwide. This number has now reached over 5,000, is rising rapidly and will soon exceed 10,000. (Source: [HIPs: the facts, not the hype](#))

The crucial figure that many companies offering DEA training use is this: *“Up to two million properties every year are marketed in England and Wales”*, which suggests that up to two million EPCs need to be produced.

Figures show that house sales over the last few years have been relatively consistent. However, January 2009 is a very different place to 2005... The numbers of house sales and new homes being built are way down on previous years.

House sales statistics

Month	Sales 2008 (England and Wales)	Sales 2007 (England and Wales)	Difference (per cent)
January	57,777	87,688	-34
February	61,542	86,793	-29
March	57,802	106,152	-46
April	62,220	95,273	-35
May	64,777	108,040	-40
June	58,225	123,381	-53
July	52,222	116,816	-55
August	47,469	124,567	-62
September	40,340	98,087	-59
October	42,843	102,597	-58
November	33,404	100,730	-67

(Source: [Channel 4 News](#))

That's 578,621 houses sold – just over half a million – compared to over a million in 2007, and over two million in 2005.

House building statistics

- 14,738 applications to start new homes from the combined private and public sectors in the UK during the three-month period from November to January 2009 - 62% lower than the same three-month period a year ago.
- Of the 14,738 applications from November to January 2009, 7,768 related to private sector activity (i.e. excluding housing associations) - 75% lower than the same three month period a years ago (30,631).
- New build completions totalled 31,104 in the three months to the end of November - 33% lower than the same period a year ago (46,671).
- The average number of daily sales of new homes in the UK from November to January 2009 was 364 - 32% lower on the same period a year ago (538).

(Source: [NHBC](#))

3.3 How many of each type of assessor are there?

The number of DEAs is covered in the previous section. Below, we highlight a few other types of assessor, such as the public/commercial buildings assessors, or Non-Domestic Energy Assessors (NDEAs), who also produce Display Energy Certificates (DECs – see the Public buildings section below), and On-Construction Energy Assessors (OCEAs).

EPBD figures on accredited assessors

Commercial buildings

- 848 – OCEA: These are assessors who produce EPCs for new buildings.
- 232 – NDEA Level 3: This covers any size of building, but it must have a boiler size (heat input) no greater than 100kW and comfort cooling no greater than 12kW.
- 386 – NDEA Level 4: This covers new buildings that need to be signed off for building control, to confirm they comply with Building Regulations.
- 67 – NDEA Level 5: These are complex buildings that require Dynamic System Modelling. Assessors must be accredited to the given level to assess the building.

NDEAs are often called Commercial Energy Assessors (CEAs). On 1st October 2008, the number of accredited NDEAs was 751. The CLG originally estimated that 550 NDEAs would be needed.

Just like the domestic property market, the commercial property market is suffering. Clearly, many units will go to other retailers but some will not, and with the continuing growth in Internet retailing, the demand for retail premises is shrinking.

Public buildings

A DEC – Display Energy Certificate – is required by all government buildings larger than a 1000m², and any building regularly visited by the public. These can only be supplied by NDEAs with Level 4&5 accreditation. The figure from the EPBD puts the number of assessors who can produce DECs at 416, but it may well be higher than that.

(Source: [Commercial Energy Performance Certificates](#))

3.4 Is there enough work?

If we look at the statistics from above, the picture looks thus (in a very broad overview): 500,000 houses for sale, and 10,000 DEAs = 50 jobs per DEA per year, which is under one a week.

Of course, it does depend on the number of assessors in a region, and the predicted figures for the amount of EPCs that will need to be done. But in many cases, the market is so flooded with DEAs that there is not enough work to go round. Add this to the fact that the UK housing market is experiencing a slowdown in sales, the future looks very uncertain.

(Source: [HIPs: the facts, not the hype](#))

4. BECOMING A ENERGY ASSESSOR

4.1 What is the process to train for the different roles and who offers training?

To be an energy assessor, producing energy certificates and air conditioning inspections, you need to belong to an accreditation scheme as well as having the appropriate qualifications or experience and learning. (Source: [Communities and Local Government](#))

There are a number of different training courses offered up and down the country, and the prices seem to differ widely. The following examples are taken from [this list](#). A full list of training course and prices can be provided on request.

Existing non-commercial buildings – DEA

The course generally includes assessment, training and an exam, and costs appear to range from £1,350-2,650 plus VAT. Have a look at the details of the [Stroma](#) course as an example.

Public buildings – DEC

This course covers subjects such as the principles behind the certificate, measuring floor areas, working out occupancy levels, energy use, how to deal with renewable, along with many other areas. The cost of the training and accreditation seems to range from £975-£1,500. Have a look at the [BRE](#) course as an example.

Air conditioning energy assessor (ACSEA)

Registration for the CIBSE scheme as a Low Carbon Energy Assessor costs £345.00 plus an initial joining fee of £300 plus VAT (£345.00). Full costs can be found [here](#). (Source: [CIBSE](#))

4.2 How many are self-employed, or are employed by a big company?

At present, DEAs are gathered together in regional panels working at the behest of the HIP providers and at fees set by HIP providers.

It should be pointed out that DEAs do not need a HIP provider: they can source all the elements themselves. Many DEAs have realised this and started to work locally, providing a rapid, professional service. For example, DEAs can contact and work with local estate agents, who provide the remaining components of the HIP not covered by the training. The DEAs can then brand the EPC with their logo etc. Estate Agents may deal with large panel providers who provide them with the complete HIP, but there's unlikely to be a relationship between the estate agent and the EPC provider. The Panel will generally use the cheapest EPC provider, so there probably won't be the same EPC provider on each instruction - which isn't great from a continuity perspective.

By providing the whole HIP you can negotiate your own prices and build your own relations with estate agents and solicitors. You are then in much greater control of your business. (Source: [HIP counter](#))

It is worth noting that some panels and HIP providers are beginning to cease trading, due to lack of work.

4.3 Are there any nationwide big companies that offer EPCs?

It's difficult to tell from these companies websites which are the biggest. Three sample sites are:

- [EPC Brighton](#)
- [Sensum](#)
- [EPC Assessments](#)

There are lists of DEAs found in various places, such as at [Home Inspectors UK](#), [DEA Direct](#) or [EPCs4U](#). The latter lets you search for them by postcode, which will allow you to search in particular area you might be interested in.

4.4 How the next election could have an effect

The Conservative Party have indicated they will abolish the HIP regulation, but say they will KEEP the standalone EPC. (Source: [Tommy DEA](#))

If they win the election and scrap the HIP, the EPC would still end up being done at the point of sale, so would more than likely be undertaken by qualified building surveyors. Also, the Labour government is already showing signs of a reluctance to commit to the HIP in the long term. (Source: [HIPs: the facts, not the hype](#)). It is worth noting that nothing on the issue has been added to the Conservative Party website since April 2008...

5. WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING...

There is a great deal of discussion online about training to be a DEA. This mainly comes from people who are DEAs, who are training or who are thinking of training. The main question people ask on forums is whether they should undertake the training course. The responses are plentiful, with the vast majority of responses advising against it.

The main points of discussion on online forums include: there being too many energy assessors for the level of work available throughout the country; the prices per job suggested during training being unachievable due to over-saturation of the market; and the perceived irresponsibility of the training companies, who many feel give no thought to the numbers they are sending out into an already over-subscribed industry.

Below are a few comments selected from relevant forums. Please note these are the public's comments, so facts and figures may not be correct. This is, however, a useful insight into what people are talking about:

▣▣▣▣ ➔ **Over-saturation of the market**

"A big problem at the moment is that, if you are planning to do HIPs work, there are 6,000 people already qualified and 10,000 when they have finished training. The number of full-time assessors required to cover the 1.5 million EPCs per year was is 3,500." (Source: [Green Building Forum](#))

"If you are considering such a course having read misleading adverts in the tabloids, please think again. There are far too many now qualified and the market is over-saturated at the moment." (Source: [Learn Direct](#))

"The industry has three to four times the people it needs." (Source: [The HIP Consultant](#))

▣▣▣▣ **What you can charge**

"Correspondingly fees are now down from the expected £100 a visit to £50 a visit, with some people taking work as low as £30." (Source: [Green Building Forum](#))

"I can't see how any new entry into this industry can even hope to cover their costs, let alone make a profit." (Source: [The HIP Consultant](#))

"Do not believe the adverts claiming you can earn a good salary. EPCs in my area are going for £45 on average, some for as little as £30. So, by the time you have taken out petrol, upload costs of nearly £10, and advertising, there not much left to live on." (Source: [Learn Direct](#))

"There are so many DEAs in Essex that one woman I know of is offering DEAs for £25! And she is still not working." (Source: [Energy Assessors Forum](#))

▣▣▣▣ **Blaming the training companies**

"The training companies are in a feeding frenzy. They don't care about the eventual state of the industry and employment prospects for those that pass out. They make their money in training. They're coining it in!" (Source: [Shell Forums](#))

"Do not believe the hype of the training providers. Once they have your money, they lose all interest in you unless you are willing to work for peanuts." (Source: [The HIP Consultant](#))

"There is not much work around and I have been sold up the river by the "golden nugget" training centres." (Source: [Energy Assessors Forum](#))

▣▣▣▣ **Don't give up the day job**

Despite the many negative comments, there are other, more encouraging responses that suggest that this assessment can be carried out in addition to current work or as an added-value service as part of your current offering:

"I am a residential surveyor and have gained accreditation, but only as an add on to my existing core business. As an experienced surveyor, the costs were also significantly less for me to qualify and I already had a source of instruction." (Source: [Energy Performance Certificates](#))

"I consider myself quite lucky in that I am able to combine my DEA work alongside my full time job. I sympathise greatly with those who gave up a job thinking there was a career." (Source: [Energy Assessors Forum](#))

“My advice to anyone wishing to take up this line of work is don't unless you already have the contacts and the work streams in place.” (Source: [HIP Consultant](#))

Success stories

There clearly must be some individual/companies working successfully in this area. Someone is providing people with EPCs. However, examples of this were few and far between. There is so much discussion from disgruntled assessors online that perhaps there is a reluctance to post positive stories. Only one was found:

“There is a populous of 140,000 for my area, that's a lot of homes! We're doing 20 - 40 assessments each, so up to 80 as a company. The work's out there people, just gotta be aggressive and take charge!” (Source: [Green Building Forum](#))

6. MEDIA

Initial press coverage surrounded the introduction of the HIPs and highlighted that the lack of energy assessors had delayed plans to introduce the HIP as compulsory. This is seen as one of the reasons for the sharp increase in the number of assessors seeking training.

Home info packs delayed to August

The introduction of Home Information Packs is to be delayed until 1 August. ([BBC Online, May, 2007](#))

Inspectors home in on new careers

Thousands of people are about to embark on a new career, thanks to a radical shake-up in the way houses are sold in England and Wales. ([BBC Online, May 2007](#))

A few short months later, reports hit the press of too many energy assessors and a downturn in the property market, meaning that energy assessors (and home inspectors) were failing to find enough work to make a living.

Too many energy assessors leads to repossessions, says National Homebuyers

Too many people are qualifying as energy assessors and now many are running into financial difficulty because there is no work for them to do. ([UK PR Wire, Nov 2007](#))

Hip assessors claim lack of work

Too few homes are being put on the market to make a living, say newly qualified energy assessors. ([BBC Online, Nov 2007](#))

Reports have continued on the issue of there being too many assessors for demand:

Six times too many energy assessor set to flood market

More than six times the number of energy assessors for non-domestic buildings than are needed are set to join the industry, despite earlier warnings of a shortfall. ([Property Week, Nov 2008](#))

HIP Energy Assessors earn less than £10,000

Most energy performance certifiers inspect just over one home per day at a rate of £30-45. (Source: [Building, 2008](#))

7. OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS

Taking into consideration all that we have found out during this research, the likelihood of being able to secure enough work for your company to make it worth your while is less favourable than many training sites would like you to believe. However, it is clear that a company with expertise and work established in other fields is more likely to be successful than an individual wanting to pursue this as a full-time job.

If you were to pay for training for one or more members of your company, the main piece of advice given on related websites would be to ensure you have a source of EPC stock – i.e. properties that you know will require an EPC – before anyone embarks on the training, otherwise the company could be wasting money in the long run.

The 'HIP Consultant' site is a useful barometer of opinion of those either currently in training, or working as DEAs. [This article](#) on the site has many comments relating to the difficulties they have had.

[Here is a list](#) of DEAs in your area, some of whom are one-man bands, but some work in groups, e.g. The Pier Group.