

BREEAM New Construction Version 7 raises the bar on evidence, carbon and operational performance

Aleksandra Orlova of Drees & Sommer comments on BREEAM Version 7, highlighting tougher evidence rules and mandatory whole life carbon.

BRUSSELS, BELGIUM, January 26, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [BREEAM New Construction Version](#)



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Aleksandra Orlova, Senior Consultant, Drees & Sommer Belgium

[7](#) will apply to all newly registered projects after 27 January 2026, introducing more stringent evidence requirements, mandatory Whole Life Carbon assessments for top ratings, and closer alignment with ESG reporting frameworks and the [EU Taxonomy](#).

The upcoming update represents a shift away from design intent toward measurable, lifecycle-based performance, with significant implications for how project teams approach sustainability certification.

According to [Drees & Sommer sustainability expert Aleksandra Orlova](#), Version 7 reflects a broader change in

expectations across the real estate and construction sector.

“BREEAM Version 7 marks a clear shift from sustainability intentions to demonstrable results. Certification is now driven by evidence, timing, and measurable performance across the entire project lifecycle,” says Aleksandra Orlova, Senior Consultant, Drees & Sommer Belgium.

Whole Life Carbon assessments become mandatory for top ratings

Version 7 introduces mandatory Whole Life Carbon (WLC) assessments for projects targeting Excellent or Outstanding ratings. Assessments are required at concept design, technical design, and post-construction stages.

“Whole Life Carbon is no longer a supporting credit; it has become a core requirement for high-performing projects. Structural systems, materials, and building services must now be evaluated

through a carbon lens from the earliest stages. Submitting life-cycle assessments late in the design process will no longer be sufficient, and in many cases will lead to unavoidable credit loss,” says Orlova.

The change reflects broader regulatory and investor focus on embodied and operational carbon across the built environment.

Circular economy moves from strategy to proof

Circular economy principles carry greater weight in Version 7 and are explicitly aligned with EU circular economy agenda. The updated framework prioritises practical circular potential over theoretical strategies.

“Version 7 makes circularity measurable. Projects must demonstrate how materials can be adapted, reused, or recovered across the building’s life cycle,” Orlova notes.

Design for disassembly, refurbishment, and long-term adaptability is increasingly treated as an expected outcome rather than an innovation.

Greater focus on operational performance

Several updates reinforce BREEAM’s shift toward operational outcomes. In the Water category, new credits focus on predicting and monitoring actual consumption.

“Water efficiency is now directly connected to carbon performance, which strengthens the role of MEP design in long-term environmental outcomes,” says Orlova.

Health & Wellbeing criteria have also been refined, with more precise requirements for daylighting, artificial lighting quality, glare control, and indoor air quality.

“The updated Health & Wellbeing credits place greater emphasis on measurable comfort and usability, reflecting growing expectations around occupant experience and long-term building performance,” Orlova adds.

Biodiversity and ecology: measurable environmental gain

BREEAM Version 7 strengthens its focus on biodiversity and the natural environment through updates to the Land Use and Ecology category. The revised approach places greater emphasis on



Aleksandra Orlova, Senior Consultant,
Drees & Sommer Belgium

biodiversity net gain, reflecting regulatory developments in key markets, including the UK, where biodiversity net gain is now a legal requirement.

In practice, this means projects are expected not only to minimise ecological damage caused by development, but to demonstrate measurable improvements to biodiversity value, with a target of at least 10% net gain where applicable.

“BREEAM Version 7 signals a clear evolution in the built environment, where ecological performance is increasingly quantified and integrated into project delivery,” says Orlova.

Alignment with ESG and regulatory frameworks

Overall, BREEAM Version 7 aligns certification more closely with ESG reporting requirements and regulatory developments, including the EU Taxonomy.

“What we see in Version 7 is a maturing of sustainability standards. Certification is increasingly aligned with investor expectations, reporting frameworks, and regulatory accountability,” says Orlova.

Daniela Tatarlieva
Drees & Sommer
+49 711 13172485
[email us here](#)

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