

EPC's- The Foundation Of An Energy Efficient Future

Why an EPC is a fundamental baseline in the campaign to reduce carbon emissions

The year 2007 marked the inception of the Energy Performance Certificate, an essential and intelligible metric tool providing homeowners, buyers and renters with a better understanding and awareness of how much energy a property consumes. This was part of a government directive to raise public consciousness around climate change and carbon emissions., in a responsive effort to achieve the reduction of carbon emissions produced by the UK's overall housing stock.

The EPC has become a necessary and informative tool in which residents can derive where their property falls on the efficiency scale from A-G, A being the optimal efficiency achievable for the property and G being the lowest efficiency achieved. By using this document in the way it was intended, residents can understand why the property is at the rating that has been established and more importantly, how they can achieve a better rating, thus a better outcome for the overall carbon reduction initiative.

Not only does the EPC provide invaluable intelligence on a buildings carbon footprint, it also aides in utility cost reductions , meaning residents can benefit from lower energy bills by understanding the actions they can take using the data the EPC provides. Therefore, if the incentive to reduce the carbon emissions produced by their property is not high on their list of priorities, the reduction in heating and power costs may prove more inviting to some savvy savers.

Considering at the time of the EPC's inception, buildings contributed for approximately 40% of the EU's total energy consumption, this was a significant development and somewhat formed the foundations of the overall directive to reduce carbon emissions and is a principle element in the evolution of energy efficiency in the UK. The EPC firmly puts property residents in control of the day to day running of the building and allows them, to a certain degree, to dictate how efficient and effective the buildings fabric and services are, by choosing to follow the recommendations provided in order to cut their carbon footprint.

Special points of interest

- The EPC first made an entrance into our property market in 2007
- An EPC is valid for 10 years at the point of lodgment
- The EPC can also be used as a cost reduction tool, alongside its main purpose of reducing carbon emissions
- All rental properties **must** have a valid EPC in place
- An EPC can be a valuable tool for buyers to gain a better understanding of potential running costs
- An EPC is an important document which assists in government funded energy efficient measures decisions

A Better Understanding Of Building Fabrics & Services

Before the Government began to raise our awareness of climate change and carbon emissions, before it started to become ingrained in our social consciousness, an average householder may not have paid much mind to the make up of the property they lived in, or the services in which provided them with heat and hot water. Unless there was an issue, such as a broken boiler and/or no running hot water, these things most likely just features in the background of their lives, much so taken for granted.

What the EPC has managed to do from it's inception to now, is start a conversation. This short and colourful document has created an awareness in our interactions with the building we live in and how we use it. No longer do people only look to replace their boilers when they are on their last legs and hanging off the wall. They are starting to look at the efficiency of these appliances and the longer term impact on the environment and the cost implications of running an older, less efficient system. There is a real understanding of different fuel types and their effects on the environment forming, and this is being factored into the decisions that are being made for the future of a property and its longevity. The EPC has given society the ability to look forward and consider not only the benefits that a more energy efficient building will provide today, but what it will provide in the future for their beneficiaries, in many cases, their children. Renewable technologies such as heat pumps and solar pv systems are becoming widely featured in the topic of conversations and are actively considered as standard services and features of a property today. There is a better collective understanding of renewables and how they play a vital part in the overall target to reduce carbon emissions.

This enlightenment is not prescribed only to renewable technology. The average householder, with an EPC at their disposal, is now informed and mindful of the heat loss performance of the building in which they reside. Whilst in some cases, the EPC can only assume the presence of insulation where it is not obvious, based on the building construction date, it gives rise to the potential of it's presence. It begs the question, is the property performing to the best of it's ability? Is the property sufficiently insulated to protect and entrap the heat provided by the system, or is the heat escaping as fast as the system is producing? Subsequently, is this causing the system to overwork and those utility bills to rise? It certainly gives credence to further assessment.

Attention is also turning to the smaller changes that can be made by following the recommendations of the EPC, such as energy efficient lighting and upgrading heating controls. Many homes will now only have energy efficient light bulbs and advances in technology means many of us can control our heating via mobile phone apps. Having that control available to us means that we can adjust the system to work for us specifically during the timeframes required, rather than wasting energy.

knowledge Is Power

The Energy Performance Certificate has certainly made its mark. This groundbreaking document of invaluable information plays a key part in the UK's collective incentive to reduce our carbon footprint. It provides us with a starting point, a base in which we can build a greener, more efficient and sustainable future. It gives us an achievable goal, an energy efficient plan for our homes by providing us with knowledge and awareness. Knowledge really is power, and this kind of power can only have a positive influence on the environment!

