

Click a heading from the list below to proceed to the relevant section:

- [General BREEAM Communities 2012 FAQs](#)
- [BREEAM Communities Training and Qualification FAQs](#)
- [BREEAM Communities Registration and Certification FAQs](#)
- [BREEAM Communities International / Bespoke FAQs](#)

General BREEAM Communities 2012 FAQs

1. What is BREEAM Communities?

BREEAM Communities is a way to improve, measure and certify the social, economic and environmental sustainability of large scale development plans by integrating sustainable design into the masterplanning process. The scheme provides developers, local authorities and design teams with a framework for considering the sustainability issues and opportunities affecting communities at the earliest stages of the design process.

2. How can I learn more about BREEAM Communities?

Information about the scheme, including; a video introduction, a video highlighting experiences of using BREEAM Communities, case studies, and a downloadable version of the technical manual, can be found on our website: www.breeam.org/communities. Here you can also find details on upcoming introductory and assessor training courses, plus contact details for further enquiries.

3. How is BREEAM Communities 2012 different from the 2008 scheme?

The 2012 scheme was developed to streamline the BREEAM Communities assessment process. The 2012 scheme incorporates feedback from masterplanning professionals and reflects changes in the UK planning policy and planning system. As a result, BREEAM Communities 2012 is less prescriptive, allows greater flexibility for exploiting site specific opportunities, and integrates better with work already conducted for planning applications.

4. What types of developments can use BREEAM Communities?

BREEAM Communities assessments can be undertaken for both mixed-use and single-use developments. The BREEAM Communities framework recognises the variation in how developments will impact the surrounding community and environment. Rather than prescribe size thresholds for developments, the developer and local authority should discuss whether the framework will add value for a particular development. The scheme is appropriate for developments which are likely to have significant impacts on existing communities or infrastructure and also those which trigger new provision of services and facilities. The scheme can be used for assessments throughout the UK and internationally through the BREEAM Communities bespoke process (or a BREEAM National Scheme Operator with an approved version of BREEAM Communities).

5. What size of development can be assessed using BREEAM Communities?

There are no imposed size requirements for BREEAM Communities assessments. Instead the BREEAM Communities framework is advised for developments where the majority of the following points apply:

- The development will result in significant extra burdens on public transport systems or highways requiring extra capacity or new transport infrastructure (cycle/pedestrian routes, roads, parking, etc.)
- The development includes or makes use of adjacent areas of public realm for occupants and visitors
- The development will lead to the enhancement, diversification or addition of local employment, social mix and / or ecological value
- The development includes dwellings that require, additional capacity or the provision of, new medical centres, schools, retail centres, places of religious worship, or other similar facilities and services
- The scale of the development could create opportunities for community level utility provision including energy, water and waste services or where there would be potential for linking to other new or existing developments in the area to make such options viable
- The development is likely to have a significant impact on existing communities

This is not an exhaustive list of points but merely guidelines as to the types of developments that will benefit from the BREEAM Communities framework.

6. I'm a developer, what are the benefits of BREEAM Communities?

Using a recognised, third-party certification methodology provides credibility to the merits of a development. This can help gain the support of communities while also reassuring local authorities that the plans will help achieve sustainable development. Consequently, planning applications can move more efficiently through the planning process – saving the developer both time and money.

Feedback from developers has highlighted that BREEAM Communities facilitates more successful stakeholder consultation, in turn providing potential cost savings by considering issues at early stages and avoiding mistakes. Further benefits can be realised from fostering dialogue between involved parties at the earliest stages of design. Greater awareness and collaboration between different disciplines can lead to the discovery of previously unseen opportunities across the site.

Achieving certification under BREEAM Communities has the potential to support higher BREEAM ratings for building level assessments, not only through recognising and implementing sustainable design at the masterplanning stage of a building's life but also as many credits can be awarded under BREEAM building level schemes and the Code for Sustainable Homes without any additional work. A video highlighting experiences of using BREEAM Communities can be found [here](#).

7. What are the benefits of BREEAM Communities for a local authority?

As a nationally described, third-party certification methodology BREEAM Communities provides a credible and transparent process for assessing the sustainability of developments. This can provide useful assurance to planning committee members that a proposal is in line with planning policy requirements.

Having a local plan which requires or encourages the use of BREEAM Communities on large developments will ensure that environmental, social and economic sustainability will be a consideration from the outset of the planning and development process, resulting in a more sustainable development proposal.

A brief introductory [video](#) to BREEAM Communities, is available on our website.

8. How are local authorities using BREEAM Communities?

Local authorities use the BREEAM Communities framework as a way of focusing pre-application discussions, enabling case officers to quickly assess a development's performance against key sustainability objectives, demonstrating the merits of a development to the planning committee and local community, and to report on sustainable targets laid out in a local plan.

9. BREEAM Communities does not have the same categories as building level assessments, what are the differences in the issues covered?

BREEAM Communities and BREEAM building level assessments are similar in scope however the BREEAM Communities scheme addresses a wider range of social and economic sustainability issues. Furthermore the BREEAM Communities scheme is designed for the assessment of major developments rather than individual buildings. As such it considers sustainability issues at the earliest possible stage (the masterplanning stage) and addresses site-wide issues.

10. How can I obtain a copy of the BREEAM Communities technical manual?

The BREEAM Communities technical manual is freely accessible on the BREEAM Communities webpage, which can be accessed [here](#).

11. Where can I find information on the changes made to the BREEAM Communities Technical Manual?

The 'Schedule of changes' details the updates made to the previous version of the BREEAM Communities manual. These can be found in Appendix B of the [Technical Manual](#).

12. How does a development get a BREEAM Communities rating?

A licensed BREEAM Communities assessor will guide a development through the whole assessment process and should be appointed at the earliest opportunity. A directory of all licenced BREEAM Communities assessors can be accessed via [GreenBookLive](#). The assessor's role is to facilitate the assessment, explain the necessary requirements and collect the confirming evidence. The scheme is designed to align with the planning process and as far as possible, does not create additional work.

The certification process consists of two stages. An interim certificate is awarded when the principle of the development has been established and initial studies and / or assessments to determine strategies for maximising the site-specific opportunities have been carried out. The final certificate, and accompanying BREEAM rating, is awarded after detailed commitments (usually required for planning permission) have been made.

13. Is there a pre-assessment tool for BREEAM Communities?

BREEAM Communities 2012 does not have a pre-assessment tool. Qualified and licensed BREEAM Communities Assessors are advised to use the BREEAM Communities scoring tool as a guide at the pre-assessment stage, in order to get an idea of the issues to target. The BREEAM Communities scoring tool is only available to qualified and licensed BREEAM Communities Assessors via the BREEAM Extranet. If you are not a qualified BREEAM Communities Assessor it is possible to liaise with one directly via [GreenBookLive](#).

14. Is the rating different in the BREEAM Communities scheme compared with other BREEAM schemes?

The rating for BREEAM Communities is consistent with other BREEAM schemes as follows: Pass (≥30%), Good (≥45%), Very Good (≥55%), Excellent (≥70%), and Outstanding (≥85%).

Please note BREEAM In-Use operates a different classification.

15. Can BREEAM Communities help me to gain building level certification?

Achieving certification under BREEAM Communities has the potential to support higher BREEAM ratings for building level assessments, not only through recognising and implementing sustainable design at an earlier stage of a building's life but also as some credits can be awarded under BREEAM building level schemes and the Code for Sustainable Homes without any additional work. The BREEAM Communities manual highlights where crossover exists between issues and where credits can be achieved in other schemes. BRE Global is currently strengthening the areas of crossover between BREEAM schemes which will enable easy identification of "quick wins".

16. Are there any mandatory criteria in the BREEAM Communities Scheme?

Yes, all of the assessment issues in 'Step 1 – Establishing the principle of development' contain mandatory criteria. This is outlined in the introduction section of the manual. Mandatory criteria are not a minimum set of requirements for defining a sustainable development but are used to ensure that performance against fundamental sustainability issues is not overlooked in pursuit of a particular rating.

17. Where can I find the costs of licensing, registration, and certification?

All current costs are listed in the fee sheet (FS036) available from the 'BREEAM Assessor Guidance' section of the BREEAM extranet.

BREEAM Communities Training and Qualification FAQs**18. How can I become a licenced BREEAM Communities Assessor?**

To become a licenced BREEAM Communities Assessor the first step is to attend the BREEAM Communities Assessor training course. Details of upcoming courses can be found [here](#). The 3 day BREEAM Communities Assessor training course is structured as follows:

- Day one provides an introduction to and overview of BREEAM Communities 2012.
- Days two and three cover the technical content of the scheme and detailed information about the processes of assessment and certification.

At the end of day three, in order to achieve certification against BRE's Competent Persons Scheme, you are required to undertake an exam in controlled conditions. Passing this exam will result in achieving the BREEAM Communities Assessor qualification. Following qualification assessors have 1 year to apply for a licence. You are required to have a licence in order to carry out a BREEAM Communities assessment.

The one-day training sessions are suitable for planning officers, consultants and developers and are based on a combination of presentations and interactive workshops.

19. Are there any pre-requisites for attending the BREEAM Communities Assessor training course?

There are no pre-requisites to attend the assessor training course. Although an interest or active involvement in the delivery of large-scale developments and masterplans is helpful. This course is open to UK and international delegates. International delegates must have a good understanding of written and spoken English.

20. Is there a test assessment as part of the BREEAM Communities Assessor training?

There is no test assessment as part of the BREEAM Communities scheme. The assessor's competence is developed through the training and examination process followed by an appropriate level of auditing of BREEAM Communities Assessor reports.

21. Do I have to complete the BREEAM International Assessor course to carry out a bespoke BREEAM Communities assessment outside of the UK?

No, it is not necessary to undertake the BREEAM International Assessor course to be qualified to carry out a BREEAM Communities Bespoke assessment. By completing the BREEAM Communities Assessor course and becoming licenced you are qualified to undertake a bespoke assessment. Details on the bespoke process are outlined in the [BREEAM Communities and BREEAM Assessor Guidance sections of the assessor extranet](#).

22. I am a licenced BREEAM International Assessor do I need to undertake additional training in order to carry out a BREEAM Communities assessment outside of the UK?

In order to carry out a BREEAM Communities assessment anywhere in the world you must have successfully completed the BREEAM Communities Assessor training course and be a licenced BREEAM Communities Assessor.

BREEAM Communities Registration and Certification FAQs**23. How can I find out about projects that have been certified under BREEAM Communities?**

The [GreenBookLive](#) website contains a comprehensive list of BREEAM Communities certified projects, along with the details of the BREEAM Communities Assessors and Assessor organisations that carried out the assessment. A number of case studies from a selection of certified projects can be found on the [BREEAM Communities](#) website.

24. I have a phased development that will be completed in stages - Is it possible to certify sections / phases of a development?

BREEAM Communities is flexible and allows for potential phasing on large-scale developments. The following assessment options are possible:

- Each phase can undergo interim and final assessments as distinct units
- The whole site can undergo an interim assessment. Following interim certification each phase can undergo separate final assessments at the appropriate time.

25. A newer version of the BREEAM Communities manual has been released since I registered the development, which version should I use?

You should use the version of the manual that was available at the time of registration. However it is possible to use an updated issue of the manual (e.g. 0.1, 0.2...2.0). The issue used should be made clear on the scoring tool so that the Quality Assurance team checks the report against the correct manual.

BREEAM Communities International / Bespoke FAQs

26. Is it possible to use BREEAM Communities outside of the UK?

Yes, BREEAM Communities can be used anywhere in the world. There are two methods by which it operates outside of the UK:

National Scheme Operators

National Scheme Operators (NSOs) develop and operate country-specific local schemes that are affiliated to BREEAM and adhere to the BREEAM Core Technical and Process Standards. Where an NSO exists and has a country-specific BREEAM Communities scheme, any BREEAM Communities assessments in that country will use the local NSO scheme. Assessors would need to hold a licence with the local NSO to undertake the assessment. A list of NSOs can be found on the BREEAM website [here](#).

Bespoke BREEAM Communities assessment

Where the country does not have a country-specific BREEAM Communities scheme operated by an NSO it is possible to use BREEAM Communities outside of the UK through our bespoke process, which is similar to the building level bespoke approach. This process is used to tailor the BREEAM Communities scheme so that the key issues and challenges in the given country / region are fully recognised. More information on using BREEAM Communities Internationally can be found [here](#).

27. Can a BREEAM Communities assessment be carried out without having a BREEAM Communities Assessor in the same country?

Yes, there are a number of international companies with BREEAM Communities Assessors who operate across the globe. All BREEAM Communities Assessors are qualified to carry out BREEAM Communities bespoke assessments. [GreenBookLive](#) contains a comprehensive list of BREEAM Communities Assessors along with their contact details and location.

28. What does the bespoke process entail?

The bespoke process can be initiated by the developer or licenced BREEAM Communities Assessor. The first step is to download the bespoke application form from the BREEAM extranet or contact [BRE Global](#) to request a bespoke application form. Following completion and submission of the application form, BRE Global will issue a proposal to undertake this work. The proposal will outline the costs, timescales and terms and conditions for developing BREEAM Communities bespoke criteria. The fees for bespoke criteria development are quoted at a rate that is commensurate with the complexity of the project. BRE Global will commence with the development of the bespoke criteria on receipt of the client's acceptance of the proposal and the initiation of payment. The bespoke criteria development process involves discussing the local issues that should be reflected in the BREEAM assessment criteria. After the bespoke criteria development process is completed the licenced BREEAM Communities Assessor is able to assess the scheme via the normal process. For more information please refer to the [BREEAM Communities Guidance Note GN07 Bespoke Process](#).

Please note that if you aren't currently a BREEAM Communities Assessor you can initiate this process but you will need to appoint an assessor or complete the BREEAM Communities training course before the bespoke criteria development process begins.

29. How long does the bespoke process take?

The duration of the bespoke process will largely depend on the client's timescales and ability to progress the process. BRE Global commits to responding to the client within agreed timescales throughout the process. For more information please refer to the [BREEAM Communities Guidance Note GN07 Bespoke Process](#).

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