

3-year extension granted, but are building owners taking EPC seriously?

While the three-year extension gazetted this week grants building owners some reprieve in securing their Energy Performance Certificate (EPC), there's no time to waste, according to WSP in Africa, as formalising sustainability practices and standards locally have reached a tipping point.



Source: www.pexels.com

“For too long, driving sustainability and increased efficiency have been given lip service by many property owners. However, those who are found to be non-compliant with the EPC regulation could be [liable](#) for a fine not exceeding R5m, imprisonment for a period not exceeding five years, or both. Of course, how strictly this will be enforced remains to be seen, but the consequences could be significant,” says Alison Groves, regional director for WSP in Africa.

More must be done in the country to increase awareness of the need to be more sustainable, especially given government’s focus on decarbonisation and achieving net-zero emissions by 2050 as part of the Paris Agreement.



Our buildings are driving us closer to 'climate hell' - how do we get back on course to net zero?

Anna Hurlimann, Georgia Warren-Myers, Judy Bush 10 Nov 2022



Smaller companies see no perceived value

While many large corporates have adopted ESG (environment, social, and governance) practices as a core part of their financial reporting deliverables, smaller companies who form the bulk of the economic landscape in the country see no perceived value in doing so.

“The EPC process could herald the start of a momentum shift in the country. The UK has been doing this kind of

certification for well over a decade, resulting in a greater awareness of energy efficiency. For example, you cannot transfer property in the UK if the building has less than a B rating. Considering that A is the most efficient rating possible and G the least efficient rating, this is significant.

"As a first step, local property owners could be embarrassed by having to display a poor rating and will be inspired to work towards improving the energy efficiency of a building," Groves says.

EPC a step in the right direction

While a lot of work still needs to be done in South Africa to instil a culture of sustainability and energy efficiency, the EPC is certainly a step in the right direction. Of course, improving the energy performance of existing buildings through retrofits and designing more efficient buildings from the ground up will only truly yield the desired results if user behaviour changes in the country.

"Having an A rating means very little if tenants do not act responsibly around their own energy usages. Fortunately, we have seen that people are receptive to this and certainly understand the importance of being more energy efficient, especially given the continuous rolling blackouts taking place. However, there is still a great need for education and awareness campaigns, especially when it comes to EPCs and sustainability in the local market," adds Groves.

Misconceptions around decarbonisation, net zero

The challenge comes in around misconceptions when it comes to decarbonisation and net zero. The former refers to the deep removal of carbon from all stages of the building process. For example, the design of the building, and the materials used like the concrete, steel, and so on. Once the building has been completed, there is nothing to be done about decarbonation. Furthermore, it is critically important to promote locally sourced materials for the economy to grow.

For its part, net zero typically refers to just the operational carbon. For example, is the electricity being generated through coal or renewables?



Alison Groves, regional director for WSP in Africa



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1 Nov 2022



"We are fortunate in South Africa that the country is manufacturing a lot of the materials required for construction. Using these materials that align to decarbonisation efforts will have a significant positive socioeconomic impact. The challenge comes in to determine what carbon is in materials. This is a long and arduous process where every country has unique requirements and needs," Groves concludes.

The new deadline for the mandatory display of an EPC is 7 December 2025.