

# GBCSA launches pilot Energy and Water Benchmarking tool

The Green Building Council of South Africa (GBCSA) has launched the pilot Energy and Water Benchmarking tool for the commercial property industry, which allows property owners to see how their building's consumption measures up to industry norms.



The tool analyses existing building performance, and allows property managers to see how their buildings measure up in terms of energy and water consumption compared to industry norms. This launch is particularly relevant because until now, the GBCSA has focused on the certification and rating of new buildings to ensure a more sustainable built environment going forward. However, new buildings account for approximately 2% of the average property portfolio, and to truly minimise the impact of buildings on the environment, existing buildings must be considered.

## Certification not available

This is the fifth tool developed specifically for the South African market, and the GBCSA urges building owners to test it extensively, and provide feedback to the GBCSA before the first version of the tool is officially launched. The tool could also prove useful to prospective tenants, as the ratings assigned to a building will give a good indication of consumption and efficiency within a building. At this stage, certification under the benchmarking tool is not available, although this will be considered during the pilot phase.

Listed property giant, Growthpoint's office portfolio divisional director Rudolf Pienaar notes that upon establishing these energy and water benchmarks, Growthpoint will be in a position to measure each one of the company's office buildings and focus on the buildings which exceed the benchmark. With a total office portfolio in excess of 1.1 million m<sup>2</sup>, there is significant scope for useful analysis of this kind.

## Beneficial to tenants

"According to our calculations, energy consumption has increased from R8.66/m<sup>2</sup> to R30.46/m<sup>2</sup> over the past five years, in the case of some large office tenants. Any efficiency we can achieve in order to keep costs down will benefit our tenants. The benchmarking tool will no doubt be of similar use to the property industry in general. A combined focus by all property owners on reducing consumption will be of benefit to all occupiers of property, and contribute to a much needed reduction in national consumption," adds Pienaar.

The pilot tool incorporates a ten point rating scale that is based on the relative performance of buildings with respect to their peers. It contains the formulas that allow a building's consumption to be normalised according to the methodology developed, taking occupancy and regional climatic differences into account for example.

## Eskom to reduce own consumption

"This tool will be of use to our customers in assessing and reducing their consumption of electricity and water. Eskom manages office accommodation of about 1 million m<sup>2</sup>, and will certainly be using the tool to track and reduce our own

consumption too. We look forward to seeing the trends and findings, which emerge from usage of the tool. By learning from each other we will achieve a great result for our country," says Eskom senior general manager Andrew Etzinger.

Intensive development of the Energy and Water Benchmarking tool began in early 2011, thanks to sponsorship from Growthpoint Properties and Eskom, and the pilot tool is freely available on the GBCSA's website [www.gbcsa.org.za](http://www.gbcsa.org.za).

The development process involved surveying the performance of almost 350 office buildings located throughout South Africa. This data was statistically analysed and used as an empirical basis to develop a method of benchmarking the performance of one building against the industry norm of a similar type and occupancy, for annual energy and water consumption. Building owners would need to have at least one year's worth of energy or water data to input into the benchmarking tool in order to assess performance.

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