

BESA agrees strategic alliance with CIBSE

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Two of the UK's main building services engineering organisations have agreed to work more closely to ensure progress on several key initiatives including the push for net zero in the built environment and the delivery of the Building Safety Act.

Contractors' trade body the [Building Engineering Services Association](#) (BESA) and the industry's professional institution [CIBSE](#) have drawn up a series of joint projects to help achieve their common aim of advancing and promoting the art, science and practice of building services engineering for the benefit of society.

The two organisations have a long history of collaboration but feel that the growing urgency to transform the built environment in line with the country's decarbonisation and healthcare aims calls for a more integrated approach.

"Talking about collaboration is one thing – doing it quite another," said CIBSE chief executive Ruth Carter. "The building services industry is in greater demand than ever as it increasingly accounts for a much larger proportion of the value of construction and facilities management projects.

"Therefore, our supply chains must be more closely aligned, and the different professions more joined up to deliver the higher levels of digital sophistication and integrated design necessary to meet growing client demand and legislative scrutiny."

The two organisations have agreed to provide deeper support for each other's key events including national conferences, seminars, and awards, while continuing their already successful collaboration on a range of technical guidance.

They will focus particularly on the Building Safety Act, developments linked to indoor air quality (IAQ),

retrofitting and refurbishment of the existing building stock to advance decarbonisation, and the growth in heat networks. They will also work together to understand the implications of artificial intelligence (AI) for the industry and its potential to improve productivity.

"There is now far greater awareness of the role played by the building services profession in addressing some of society's most pressing challenges, so this is the right time to deliver a programme of joint initiatives" said BESA chief executive officer David Frise.

"We have worked closely with CIBSE for many years and the two bodies have a huge amount in common, but our collaboration has always been somewhat 'patchy'. The sheer scale of the technical, legislative, and recruitment challenges now facing the industry calls for a properly concerted and joined up approach on behalf of the whole sector," he added.

Frise also congratulated [new CIBSE President Fiona Cousins](#) on her election and welcomed her focus on "reimagining building performance". He said this could be pivotal in achieving the industry's aims of tackling embodied and operational carbon as well as addressing some of the social and wellbeing issues linked to poor quality buildings.

The two organisations have a relationship that dates right back to the founding of BESA in 1904 by a group of leading engineers, many of whom were already members of the Institution of Heating and Ventilating Engineers (the body founded in 1897 and which became CIBSE in 1976).

Historically, BESA (originally the National Association of Master Heating and Domestic Engineers) represented engineering contractors, while CIBSE looked after the interests of individual engineers, many of whom worked for contracting firms.

The success of CIBSE's Building Safety Act awareness training and campaigns and BESA's work to explain the operational detail of the legislation to its members means the two organisations will deliver joint sessions on the topic at both the [BESA National Conference](#) on October 17 and at CIBSE's [Build2Perform Live](#) event on November 13-14.

Both bodies have active IAQ groups with members in common and have produced a series of guides aimed at improving professional standards around building ventilation. These have also prompted a closer liaison on the sector's training requirements and improved links to the healthcare profession which is keen to address the impact of poor air quality on a range of respiratory and cardiovascular conditions.

BESA recently revamped its young engineers' group, now known as the [NextGen Network](#), which aims to forge closer links with the thriving CIBSE's Young Engineers' Network (YEN) to give the emerging generation of building services engineers a stronger collective voice.

BESA is a supporting partner for this year's [CIBSE Young Engineers' Awards](#) for the first time. It is also a long-standing member of the CIBSE Patrons group which provides financial and networking support to many of the Institution's initiatives – particularly around recruitment and promotion of young engineers.