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Enhanced carbon database revealed after government report calls for action

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Major changes to the Built Environment Carbon Database (BECD) have been revealed after a recently published government report called for a national carbon dataset.

The improvements to BECD were announced just days after the report on the practical, technical and economic impacts of measuring and reducing embodied carbon in new buildings by AECOM was published.

Users of BECD, which captures embodied carbon data on construction products and buildings, will now benefit from an enhanced interface and data capture methods, as well as a cleansed and expanded product data library.

For the first time, the library features all data from the latest version of the Inventory of Carbon and Energy – an internationally used embodied carbon database for materials.

James Fiske, BCIS executive director and BECD steering group chair, said: *"The BECD refresh is incredibly timely. Coupled with the report's recommendations, it's a clear signal to the government to form a national carbon dataset.*

"As a newly updated, pan-industry initiative, BECD provides the essential building blocks for this. But as the report states, it's still in its youth. What's needed now is government investment in underlying data and a continued cross-industry effort to collect carbon data beyond that captured by Environmental Product Declarations."

The BECD interface and the way the service captures data has been enhanced, including improved user navigation, simplified data extraction and usage functions and a reformed data capture method that

complies with the latest RICS Whole Life Carbon Assessment standard.

BECD's updated product library is also uniquely linked with Building Cost Information Service (BCIS) cost data through the BCIS Life Cycle Evaluator.

Reflecting the report's call to make carbon data more accessible and to help streamline the process of measuring and reporting both cost and carbon, BCIS is making its Life Cycle Evaluator available to all users of its capital, operational and whole-life cost packages.

Fiske added: *"The government has a golden opportunity on the table. Greater data visibility and access will go a long way to supporting a national carbon data source, but it must be strengthened by standardising how carbon assessments are undertaken and by whom.*

"The answer is right under its nose. Quantity surveyors, as qualified, regulated measurement experts are a natural fit to carry out carbon assessments. They undertake similar tasks in estimation and cost control work and would need minimal upskilling or time to fulfil this new duty.

"Realising this requires the government to standardise tools that integrate cost and carbon assessment capabilities to improve the efficiency of assessments.

"I've no doubt the result will be game-changing for emissions reduction. As the report has shown, the government cannot rely on the Future Homes Standard alone to achieve decarbonisation."

Produced by engineering consultant AECOM, the report was commissioned by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

It provides recommendations and gives evidence to suggest carbon assessments could offer wider economic benefits.

The BECD was developed and funded by BCIS (Building Cost Information Service). It is free-to-access and is designed to become the main source of carbon estimating and benchmarking for the industry.

The BECD steering group, which is responsible for its development, promotion and adoption, includes representatives from BCIS, RICS, The Carbon Trust, IStructE, BRE, CIOB, the Environment Agency, CIBSE, ICE, RIBA, the UK Green Building Council and ACE.