

The rise and **rise** of WERs



By Mark Warren,
managing director,
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There is no doubt now that the introduction of Window Energy Ratings has had, and is still having, a major impact on our industry. Despite the fact that many fabricators and installers chose to criticise and disapprove of their introduction, WERs are now embedded into the Building Regulations as the government recognises that our industry can have a major impact on the energy efficiency of Britain's homes and their low carbon targets.

Forced upon us...

So why was there so much apathy and negative response to the introduction of WERs from our industry? Especially with their inclusion into Building Regulations in 2010? Well there isn't enough room here to start debating the accuracy of the calculations that upset some people and raised a great debate, but in truth it could just be that our industry tends to either ignore or reject change until it is forced upon them.

Now, there is no doubt that there are many proactive and forward-thinking businesses out there that embrace all that is new and run with it to the benefit of their customers and to stay ahead of the field. But having dealt with many changes within the industry over many years I have had to deal with this type of apathy on many, many occasions.

For example, on new products, it may have been the introduction of internal glazing, converting from simple cockspur

handles to complicated espagnolettes, introducing new foiled finishes or sculptured profiles; they were all met with rejection by installers or a simple lack of interest.

And yet now they are the norm. Looking back you will see similar responses to the introduction of Part L regulations and at the beginning of Fensa. So the reaction to the BFRC's excellent promotion and introduction of a workable Window Energy Ratings scheme could be seen as just a simple repeat of our industry's reaction to any type of change.

So here we are in 2011 with a workable and more flexible scheme. OK, the WER scheme may be slightly different now than was originally envisaged and there are more players taking an active role in its promotion which, while making it more competitive, also adds some complications, but we have a new tool that if embraced can really make a difference to our businesses and its growth.

Well-promoted

Lister Trade Frames was one of the original BFRC Scheme members to recognise its full potential for our business. I remember returning from a launch meeting and enthusing to my fellow directors about the advantages that WERs would give us, much to their bemusement. Needless to say they became converted and from 2005 we had a number of firsts in the race to get the best and most economical energy rated products on the

Energy Window
Lister Trade Frames Ltd.
Internally Glazed PVC-U Window
Ellitis Linear A

A	A
B	
C	
D	
E	
F	
G	

Energy Index (kWh/m²/year)
(Energy Index certified by BFRC and based on UK standard window. The actual energy consumption for a specific application will depend on the building, the local climate and the indoor temperature)

4

The climate zone is: **UK**

Thermal Transmittance (U_{w,indoor}) 1.4 W/m².K
Solar Factor (g_{w,indoor}) 0.45 W/m².K
Effective Air Leakage (L_{air,indoor}) 0.00 W/m².K

Reg. No.: 038
www.bfrc.org

This label is not a statutory requirement. It is a voluntary label provided as a customer service to allow consumers to make informed decisions on the energy performance of competing products.

The first retail 'A' energy rated window installation in the UK back in 2006 from Listers.

market, long before anyone thought that it would become compulsory. Our early adoption of the scheme was one of the key business drivers and it continues to be so today.

One of the key reasons for the success of WERs is the label system that the BFRC promoted so well. It was the first time in this industry's history that we could show a label or badge to a retail customer which they instantly recognised. They had seen the same labels hundreds of times on other products for years and knew that an 'A' rating was better than a 'B' or 'C' rating, and that the company who had a label had to be better than one that hadn't got one! Now while that may or may not be true you can't argue with the fact that today we are regularly being asked about our energy rating performance by the consumer.

This is creating pull through from the buying public, which is creating more demand in participation in the WERs Scheme from the trade. And with the launch of new BFRC Simplified Energy Labels (SELs) allowing flexibility and control of the compliant products it is even easier and more cost effective to

join up.

So once again a new idea, WERs, and a new way of doing business becomes the norm for our industry, despite the original antipathy to the opportunity. We have witnessed the rise and rise of WERs.

While some sections of the industry have found the scheme more challenging than others at times, and have raised some worries about a shift in market sectors, we have not seen a great change in customers' overall buying patterns. Yes, we do now have more trade customers buying a fully glazed product from us than we did some five years ago, but we still have a large proportion who continue to buy frames and sealed units separately. In fact we have supported and helped a number of these customers to join or comply with the scheme.

As the Scheme continues to succeed and becomes more and more embedded in the way we all do business will our industry see the advantages of embracing new ideas and opportunities quickly in future? I sincerely hope so.

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