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Dear Building Standards Managers , BRE and RIAS as Certification Scheme Providers

### **BUILDING (SCOTLAND) ACT 2003 – GUIDANCE ON SUNROOMS**

I am writing to clarify certain points which relate to the 2007 guidance in the Technical Handbooks. From recent enquiries received by the Scottish Building Standards Agency, it has become apparent that there are interpretational issues surrounding extensions and stand-alone buildings, when viewed in the context of 'sunrooms'. This information is being sent to each of the 32 Local Authority building standards managers and the scheme providers for Certification of Design (Section 6) for Domestic Buildings and Non Domestic Buildings.

Before clarifying these issues, I would like to take this opportunity to reinforce the policy which has driven the improvements to the energy standards in Scottish building regulations. The Scottish Government is committed to reducing carbon dioxide emissions. Buildings account for a significant proportion of those emissions and it is essential that energy efficiency measures apply not only for new buildings, but also for existing ones when they are extended, altered or converted. Indeed it could be argued that the existing building stock requires the greatest amount of attention in terms of improvement to its energy performance.

In the first instance it is important to distinguish between 'sunrooms' which are extensions to dwellings and those which are stand-alone buildings.

The guidance that we give does not preclude 'sunrooms' being highly glazed extensions. Where the compensatory approach is followed (based on heat-loss principles), in excess of 66% of the floor area of an extension can be translated into external wall openings. To achieve this it will be necessary for all the U-values of the elements of the extension to be improved by approximately 25% to 33%. It is important that the industry is encouraged to seek innovative energy efficient solutions and should they opt to use advanced glazing technology, such as warm edge spacer bars, the additional reduced heat loss could allow the glazing area to be over 70%. Although this will result in increased build costs, such an extension would still be bright, well lit, comfortable all year round and have reduced heating costs. As extensions usually remain in place for the life of the original dwelling, it is important that the heat loss from such a structure is not compromised.

'Sunrooms' like conservatories are subject to standard 6.2. However the guidance in clause 6.2.13 permits a 'sunroom' to be classed as a stand-alone building which can be attached to and accessed from the dwelling provided it has a thermal division and separate heating control from the dwelling. In this case (and where the 'sunroom' area is less than 50 m<sup>2</sup>) the U-value requirements given in the table to clause 6.2.9 should be met, but it should be noted that the percentage glazing of the sunroom is unrestricted in terms of the guidance to the energy standards.

Conservatories are classed as stand-alone buildings and they are not given the status of being a part of a dwelling as they are considered to be ancillary buildings. When they are not heated (and many are closed down for the winter months) they can offer significant benefits through the solar gains afforded by the large areas of glazed roof. This allows the dwelling occupant to take advantage of heat gains on winter days when the weather is favourable and transfer that heat to the remainder of the dwelling. Highly glazed, integrated extensions with no roof glazing that are used all year round do not offer quite the same benefits.

In summary, the guidance permits two types of 'sunroom'. Those that are fully integrated into dwellings, in which case the area of glazing is restricted. The second type is those that are attached to dwellings but thermally separated from them and the area of glazing is unrestricted.

The SNP manifesto commitments are looking for Scottish energy standards to be informed by those that exist in Scandinavia. We have been asked by Scottish Ministers to effect a review of energy standards within the next four years. We will certainly be revisiting the issues surrounding conservatories, stand-alone buildings, house extensions and window alterations. This will be done in the context of Scandinavian standards and as always, we will have a full public consultation.

Yours faithfully,

**Alec Millar**  
Head of Structure and Energy