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UK NZCBS Version 1: Summary of Updates since the Pilot Version

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10/03/2026

Introduction

Following cross-industry collaboration and rigorous testing, Version 1 of the UK Net Zero Carbon Buildings Standard (the Standard) has been developed, evolving from the previous Pilot Version. This Summary of Updates serves as a guide to be read alongside Version 1, highlighting the key changes made since the latest Pilot Version (Rev 2), which was published April 2025.

This document covers three key areas:

- **Amendments:** Revisions to technical content developed in response to industry feedback and data gathered during the Pilot Testing.
- **Annexes:** A summary of new Annexes included in Version 1, which make the Standard's application more flexible for various scenarios.
- **Supporting Documentation:** An overview of supporting documentation published as part of the Version 1 launch.

Please note that this summary is intended to highlight key updates and is not exhaustive. Please consult **Version 1 of the Standard** for full detail on its content.

Amendments

General

- Introduction of definitions for first generation, second generation and waste-derived biofuels.
- Where <10% of GIA is one sector, this now "may" be ignored when setting limits (ignoring the relevant floor area was previously worded as mandatory through use of "shall").
- Addition of a new 'Equation 1b', similar to the current 'Equation 1' (area-weighting for limits) but which works better for existing floor areas and retrofit.

- Introduction of a one-year leeway to the applicable limits, where year of commencement has been declared upfront, and where delayed commencement can be evidenced as being caused by programme delays outside the claimant's control.
- General amendments to the text throughout to simplify language and improve usability and accessibility. Inclusion of additional clarification notes into sections where industry feedback identified common areas of misinterpretation.

Section 5: Assessment, Submissions and Limits

Embodied Carbon

- Improved definitions of Shell & Core, CAT A, CAT B.
- Clarifications on scope of assessment, noting that:
    - Areas serving only the building being assessed shall be included in the scope;
    - Where areas of site-wide works and/or below-ground works serve other buildings only, those areas may be ignored;
    - Where areas of site-wide works and/or below-ground works are shared between buildings, areas may be apportioned based on the above-ground GIAs of each building.
- Clarification on GIA measurement where Retrofit Works are undertaken across only parts of the building.
- Clarification on treatment of Reportable Works when clearly not associated with any New Works or Retrofit Works.
- Removal of Shell & Core limits from offices (due to introduction of Annex E: PC-on-track).
- Additional requirements for scenarios where the EPD/dataset does not address processing stages undertaken between the modelled factory gate and the construction site.
- Introduction of an exemption from Upfront Embodied Carbon limits for PV panels bought prior to the publication of Version 1.

Operational Energy

- For Energy from Waste (EfW): Confirmation that the average fossil CO_2 emitted per tonne of waste should be used, and that annual waste input plus heat and electricity supplied by the EfW plant must be obtained from the supplier to calculate the carbon factor using the combined heat and power methodology in 5.2.3.7; where unavailable, an average UK value should be applied.

- Addition of note on cold-storage energy use, confirming it is included within the building's overall Operational Energy limit but should be reported as a separate end-use category (not under "space cooling").
- Updates to list of Additional Use Areas (AUAs) within Science and Technology buildings.
- Option to exclude more industrial processes under Version 1, rather than just those covered by the UK Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS). This will include manufacturing, production, waste treatment or other industrial processes (as defined within the Standard).

On Site Renewable Electricity Generation

- Addition of a clarifying note giving an example of an existing building where roof area or overshadowing restricts PV installation, requiring the submission to include a short statement explaining the physical limitation and demonstrating that the achievable generation still meets the adjusted Renewable Electricity Generation (REG) requirement.
- Addition of a worked example to illustrate scaling of the REG target with building footprint.
- If reused systems are being used for on-site renewable electricity generation, the renewable electricity target may be reduced by a further 15%.
- Note that renewable installations that are offsite may be included where all connection requirements are met, including that renewable energy generation is connected to the consumer side primary electricity meter. Where a renewable energy installation serves multiple buildings, the electricity consumption shall be apportioned to all the buildings supplied by the meter on a floor area weighted basis.

Operational Water Use

- Clarification of water sources that need to be metered.
- Clarification of carbon emission factors for sources other than public supply.
- Clarification on assumptions to be used where drainage data is not provided.

Fossil Fuel Free

- Clarification on treatment of biofuels.

Electricity Demand Management

- Clarification on methodology for reporting electricity-demand metrics, specifying that the following shall be derived and submitted and how these are derived:

  - Top ten recorded demand values [kW]
  - 50th percentile demand value [kW]
  - 1st percentile demand value [kW]

District Heating and Cooling Networks

- Clarification on calculation of District Heating and Cooling Network (DHCN) carbon intensity limits.

Space Heating and Cooling Delivered to the Building

- Finalised list of sectors for which a limit on annual space heating delivered to the building applies.
- Submetering of space heating and cooling to be mandatory for new buildings in the Standard from the publication of Version 1, and for existing buildings from 2040.
- Amendment such that if it is not possible to measure the heating/cooling delivered by any Variable Refrigerant Flow systems (VRF) in the building, then instead, the electricity used by those VRF systems shall be submetered and the heating/cooling calculated based on the system efficiency and expected annual heating/cooling split.

Refrigerants

- Exception to the limits may be made as follows:
  - For systems that were installed before the release of Version 1 of the Standard and where the RPEP occurs prior to 1st January 2030 and where no works on the refrigeration system have been carried out since the release of Version 1 of the Standard.
  - For existing systems where it can be demonstrated that it is not possible to retrofit the system to use a replacement refrigerant that meets the GWP limit due to health and safety concerns or physical site constraints.
  - For new systems where it can be demonstrated that it is not possible to specify a refrigeration system that uses a refrigerant that meets the GWP limit due to health and safety concerns or physical site constraints.

  Where these exceptions apply, refrigeration systems must be fitted with leak detection systems to detect refrigerant leaks and facilitate system shutdown to prevent further refrigerant leakage.
- Further clarification that the Global Warming Potential (GWP) limit will track R32.

Carbon Offsetting

No significant changes.

Section 6: Verification

Section made mandatory and rewritten to cover:

- Roles within the verification process;
- How the claimant shall engage with the verification process;
- Timelines and key sequences of events for verification, reverification and practical completion;
- Competency requirements for verifiers.

Section 7: Communication

Section made mandatory and updated to cover:

- Key principles of communicating claims of conformity to the Standard, whether past, current, or planned;
- Rules on use of language when referring to claims of conformity to the Standard, including dates of claims, and prescribed use of language at the following points:
    - Prior and up to verification;
    - Once verification is complete;
    - Validity and re-verification;
    - Following PC on track checks.
- Prohibited claims.

Annexes

Annex A: Limits and Targets

Limits were reviewed across all sectors as part of the Pilot period; following this, particular attention was given to those where less supportive responses were received on the achievability or level of ambition of the limits. This review was informed by additional evidence received during the Pilot period, and was carried out with attention to consistency across sectors and between New Build and Existing/Retrofit limits, as well as a 1.5°C trajectory for the UK built environment as a whole.

Annex B: Submission Proforma

- Updates in response to usability feedback received, including automation of limits calculation.
- Technical updates in line with amendments to Version 1.
- Addition of a new proforma to cover 'PC-on-track' claims.

Annex C: Other Schemes and Standards Deemed to Satisfy One or More Requirements of the Standard

Updated Annex on 'Deemed to Satisfy' (formerly Equivalence). This Annex allows alternative schemes and standards to be used to satisfy specific requirements of the Standard. At publication of Version 1, routes will be introduced for NABERS UK and Passivhaus. Further schemes and standards will be added in the future, as they become available. Enquiries on the process for achieving inclusion in this annex should be sent to NZCBS Ltd at info@nzcbuildings.co.uk.

Annex D: Roles and Responsibilities

No changes.

Annex E: PC-on-track

A core principle of the Standard is that in-use assessment and verification is the most robust approach to ensuring the decarbonisation of the built environment. However, it is also recognised that practical completion (of new construction or a retrofit) is an important point in a building's life, and an opportunity to assess the potential performance of the building based on what has been constructed. In response to industry feedback, a new Annex has been produced allowing a claimant to complete third party validation at the point of Practical Completion to demonstrate that - at this point in time - what has been built should be capable of meeting the Standard in the future, subject to full verification at the appropriate point.

Annex F: Landlord Only or Tenant Only Route

A new Annex, allowing landlords and tenants to separately apply for verification to the Standard, when is not possible to pursue verification on a whole building basis. At present, delineated limits have been derived only for the Offices sector. The intention is to extend delineation to additional sectors in future versions of the Standard, as and when sufficient data exists to support the derivation of robust, sector-specific limits and targets.

Supporting Documentation

These documents will be shared in the weeks following the publication of Version 1 to provide further information and support.

- Additional graphics and explanatory videos on complex of areas of the Standard (e.g. reporting periods, mixed use buildings, on site renewables) and a flowchart on applying the Standard.
- Guidance on Heritage and the UKNZCBS - An optional guidance note on the context of heritage buildings within a Net Zero Carbon UK.
- Documentation on how the limits were set has been published on our website. See 'How the UKNZCBS Limits Were Set' and our new Limit Setting Mini Webinar. These resources will be updated for Version 1.
- A primer for the legal profession on the significance of the Standard to the industry, the role of lawyers in developing Net Zero Carbon Aligned Buildings, and initial considerations for lawyers on embedding the Standard within built environment industry contracts.