



GUIDANCE FOR CLIENTS, DESIGNERS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

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Introduction

This guide has been prepared to answer some of the questions that clients, designers and other stakeholders might have about the Scheme for Certification of Design (Building Structures) operated by Structural Engineers Registration Ltd (SER).

Guidance

1. What are the Building Regulations?

These are regulations made by Scottish Ministers under the Building (Scotland) Act 2003 to ensure that buildings are safe, efficient and sustainable for all.

2. What are Building Standards?

Building Standards are those levels of safety, efficiency and sustainability prescribed within the Building Regulations that are required to be met when building work or a change of use (conversion) takes place.

3. Why do I need a Building Warrant?

It is a legal requirement that a Building Warrant is obtained from the local authority before that building work or conversion takes place. This is to ensure that the proposed work meets the standards. (i.e. The system is pre-emptive). It should be noted that carrying out work that requires a warrant before the warrant is granted is an offence.

4. What is SER?

SER (Structural Engineers Registration Ltd) is a trading subsidiary of The Institution of Structural Engineers and was formed, with the support of The Institution of Civil Engineers, to provide and manage registration schemes for the certification of design of building structures.

5. What is the Scheme for Certification of Design (Building Structures)?

The Scheme for Certification of Design (Building Structures) is a certification scheme approved by Scottish Ministers and provided by SER. An engineer who is a member of the Scheme as an Approved Certifier of Design (Building Structures) is able to certify that the structural design of buildings in Scotland complies with the relevant Building Standards and can provide a certificate of design which may be submitted with the application to a Verifier (local authority) for a Building Warrant. This can reduce the time taken to get a Building Warrant as the Verifier must accept the certificate as proof that the design is compliant.

6. What is an Approved Certifier of Design?

An Approved Certifier of Design who is a member of the SER Scheme is a suitably experienced chartered engineer who is employed by an Approved Body and is able to certify the structural design of building works for the purposes of obtaining a building warrant.

The Scottish Government maintains a register of Approved Certifiers at <http://www.certificationregister.co.uk/>.

The Approved Certifier of Design does not have to be, but can be, the building designer.

7. What is an Approved Body?

An Approved Body is a firm whom a client engages to provide certification duties carried out by an Approved Certifier of Design. The firm is required to provide a suitable environment for its Approved Certifiers to carry out their duties and will carry appropriate levels of professional indemnity insurance.

The Scottish Government maintains a register of Approved Bodies at <http://www.certificationregister.co.uk/>.

8. Why is a certificate of design needed?

There is no requirement to provide a certificate of design for the purposes of obtaining a Building Warrant. It is permissible to submit structural design calculations together with suitably detailed drawings with the application for building warrant. However, this will require the Verifier to check the design for compliance with the relevant standards and this will take time. Where the option of using an Approved Certifier to provide a certificate confirming that the structural design complies with the standards is used there is no need for compliance checking by the verifier as they are required to accept the certificate as evidence of compliance.

9. What information will the Approved Certifier require?

The Approved Certifier will require sufficient information, such as reports, calculations, specifications, suitably detailed drawings, test certification, etc. to enable an assessment to be made as to whether or the structural design for the proposed building works complies with the relevant standards. The attached checklist summarises the information that may be required, depending on the size and complexity of the works.

The Scottish Government's Building Standards Division (BSD) has produced guidance on the structural information that should accompany an application for a Building Warrant when the design of the structure is being certified. See their publication Procedural guidance on certification including information to be submitted with a Building Warrant Application.

10. What happens if all of the information cannot be provided to the Certifier?

A Certifier must not issue a certificate if the design is incomplete or if it has not been appropriately checked.

On many projects the design cannot be completed until specialist sub-contractors or suppliers are appointed to provide design information. In such cases a staged Building Warrant application can be made, whereby the application is made to the Verifier in a number of steps (stages) dependent on the availability of information.

If a staged application is to be made the applicant, after discussions with the Approved Certifier involved in the project, should agree with the Verifier which stages are appropriate. The Certifier will then need to provide a certificate to accompany each stage of the application.

Further information on the above can be found in BSD's Procedural Handbook.

11. Some information will be provided by a sub-contractor or a supplier. What effect does this have on the process?

Generally, sub-contractors and suppliers are considered in the same way as other designers. Their designs should be comprehensive and sufficiently detailed so that a Certifier can assess whether or not they comply with the relevant Building Standards.

It is important that submissions by sub-contractors and suppliers are aligned with the warrant application programme such that there is sufficient time for scrutiny by the Certifier, and for comments to be resolved before certification can be completed. Delays to the submission of information may delay the issue of the certificate of design.

12. What are Schedule 1 and Form Q?

There is a procedure which permits the certification of the design of prescribed building elements, the final design of which is normally designed by a third-party designer employed by the supplier or contractor, to be undertaken on the basis of a performance specification provided as part of the Building Warrant application. These elements will be listed on Schedule 1 to the Certificate of Design.

The Certifier should advise Clients if items are subject to final design by a third-party and the need for the third-party designers to timeously provide their design information. The Certifier will review this information to see that the design complies with the performance specification. This should take place before the work commences on site to avoid any delays which might occur if the certifier considers the design to be non-compliant.

If the Certifier is satisfied that the design is compliant, he/she should complete an interim Form Q and this should be submitted to the Verifier before work commences on site.

A final Form Q will need to be submitted to the Verifier along with the Completion Certificate to confirm that designs for all of the items listed on Schedule 1 have been reviewed and that they are compliant. If Form Q is not provided the Verifier will not accept the Completion Certificate.

It is important that all stakeholders adopt a proactive approach to ensure that information is provided timeously to the Certifier to minimise delays from late issue of information or from unsatisfactory designs.

Further information can be found in the Procedural Handbook (see item 10) and in Procedural guidance on certification including information to be submitted with a Building Warrant Application (see item 9).

13. What needs to be done if the design is changed?

An amendment to the Building Warrant is required before work starts on areas of construction that do not follow the design proposals in the original approved drawings and/or specifications.

If the change to the design affects the work that has been certified, then a new certificate will need to be provided with the application for the amendment to the Building Warrant.

It is therefore important the Certifier is kept informed about all changes to the design so that their effect can be assessed and unnecessary delays are avoided.

It should be noted that changes made during construction without an amendment to the Building Warrant could be subject to a building warrant enforcement notice.

Changes to the design that occur after the design certificate has been signed but before the Building Warrant is granted may also require a new certificate. There is guidance on the SER website about how to do this.

14. A new certificate is required for an amendment to the Building Warrant (or further stage) but the Certifier, who is a sole practitioner, is no longer able to undertake certification. What can be done?

A sole practitioner would normally be expected to either complete all aspects of the certification of the projects for which they have been appointed. However, there may be situations, such as retirement, suspension or death which would preclude a Certifier from issuing further certificates. In such situations, the client should be consulted to seek agreement either to the certification work being sub-contracted to another Approved Body or to the Client making arrangements with another Approved Body to take on these responsibilities.

15. A Form Q is required; however, the original Certifier is no longer a member of the scheme? Can another Certifier provide this?

Yes. Another Certifier can provide a Form Q. SER will normally require the permission from the original Certifier to allow the new Certifier to access the online certification data.

16. I am an engineer based outside of Scotland but working on a project in Scotland. I am not a member of the SER scheme. What advice should I give my client?

Option 1: An Approved Body could be engaged to provide certification services. In order that the Approved Certifier can provide appropriate advice on the process of, and the information required for, certification. The certifier should be engaged at an early stage in the design programme so that the warrant application, including the staging of submissions, together with the delivery of information for certification can be properly planned.

Option 2: Design calculations, drawings and specifications could be submitted to the Verifier along with the application for Building Warrant. Sufficient time will need to be allowed for consideration of this information by the Verifier.

Option 3: You could consider applying to become a member of the scheme. The requirements for membership are given in the Scheme Guide which can be downloaded from <http://www.ser-ltd.com/resources/scheme-guide>. It should be noted that the application process can take anywhere from a few weeks to several months and it is likely that you will be asked to attend an interview with assessors from the Scottish Registration Board.