

## Guidance for Clients employing Structural Designers

This leaflet has been prepared to explain the implications of the arrangements for certifying structural design of buildings, which were first introduced in January 2008. Whilst these have brought significant benefits to Clients in terms of improving structural design standards, and speeding up the approval process, they have also required changes to habitual custom and practice in order to realise those benefits.

### **The need for change.**

Prior to 2008, structural design drawings and calculations were submitted to the Department after building permission had been granted for checking. This approach was widely criticised by applicants and design professionals alike for being unnecessarily bureaucratic and was seen to be a significant barrier to achieving an early start to works on site. A further problem arose from a lack of common understanding as to how much of the building was “structure” for the purposes of the building bye-laws and how this should be treated.

Certification under the new arrangements is grounded in the principle that experienced, competent and responsible professionals can certify compliance with the Building Bye-law requirements relating to structural design without any further check by the Department, provided that they are employed by reputable companies operating proper checking procedures.

No change has been made regarding the inspection of works on site. Inspections for the purpose of verifying works are constructed as designed are still carried out by the Department.

### **The Structural Engineers Registration Ltd (SER) Scheme.**

The Minister for Planning and Environment has approved a Registration Scheme operated by Structural Engineers Registration Ltd (SER) to cover the design of building structure. This mirrors a similar scheme that has operated in Scotland since 2005.

Registration under the Scheme is available to individual Chartered Civil or Structural Engineers who have met certain criteria, have passed an independent assessment of their competence and experience, and agree to subject their certification activities to audit by SER.

Certifiers approved under this Scheme must also be employed by firms that have been accepted for registration as Approved Bodies and these will also be subject to audit.

### **Implications for Clients.**

In most cases the Building Permit will be granted subject to a condition that the structural design is certified under the SER scheme prior to the commencement of building work on site.

When considering the appointment of a firm to undertake the structural design, the client needs to ask whether or not that firm is also able to certify the design under the SER scheme, and if not, how a design certificate can be obtained. A list of firms (approved

bodies) which can provide this service can be found at :  
[www.gov.je/PlanningBuilding/MakingApplication/Building/Pages/CertificationDesign.aspx](http://www.gov.je/PlanningBuilding/MakingApplication/Building/Pages/CertificationDesign.aspx)

Once appointed, the Certifier is able to certify the design to discharge the condition attached to the Building Permit without reference back to the Department, thus allowing building works to commence to timescales set by the Client.

An important feature is that **one** Certifier is required to consider **all** load carrying elements of the building work covered by the Building Permit (the certificate covers the design of the building in respect of all structural requirements of the bye-laws – not just the main building structure) in a holistic manner. Consequently, the certifier must examine the design of all aspects of the proposed works for compliance with the structural requirements of the bye-laws and not limit his review solely to those elements designed by himself, or his company.

For many small scale projects this may simply involve confirming the design accords with the technical guidance published in support of the bye-law requirements, but for larger projects this will involve close liaison with any other parties in the procurement process (third parties) including Architects, suppliers and specialist contractors or designers each of whom will be required to provide information to the certifier to enable him to confirm that the design complies with the requirements of the bye-laws prior to issuing a design certificate in respect of these elements.

In order for the certification process to be completed, the Client needs to ensure that the design information for all relevant elements of the building is supplied to the Certifier in a timely manner. It is therefore important that the Client and the Certifier liaise at an early stage in the process to determine what information is required from “third parties” and ensure that these requirements are conveyed to the parties responsible for the design, specification and procurement of these elements as part of the procurement process. To assist with this the Department has produced guidance on the level of information that is required to be provided with a design certificate. This can be found at:

[www.gov.je/PlanningBuilding/MakingApplication/Building/Pages/CertificationDesign.aspx](http://www.gov.je/PlanningBuilding/MakingApplication/Building/Pages/CertificationDesign.aspx)

Failure to ensure the Certifier is provided with all necessary information may lead to delays in the completion of the project, or in extreme cases, to replacement or remedial works on site.

The scheme recognises that the Client may wish to commence works before the whole of the structural design is complete, and allows for this by permitting staged certification. The Certifier can advise on what would best suit your requirements however clients should be aware that it is a breach of the bye-laws for works relating to the structural design to commence without certification of the relevant building elements.

## **Further information**

Full details of the SER scheme may be found at  
[www.SER-Ltd.com/jersey/index.asp](http://www.SER-Ltd.com/jersey/index.asp)

For questions relating to the SER scheme please telephone 448421.