

What is the
**Net Zero Carbon
Buildings Standard
(NZCBS)?**



UK Net Zero Carbon
Buildings Standard





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**Net Zero Carbon
Buildings Standard
(NZCBS)?**



Introduction

The NZCBS is a voluntary, science-led national performance standard that defines what a net zero carbon building is in the UK and how to measure and verify carbon performance for metrics.

The pilot, launched in 2024, tested the methodology on real projects and sought feedback from industry.

Version 1 of the NZCBS was published on 10th March 2026.

It states what evidence is required at design, construction, and operation stages and sets a standard for ensuring claims of “net zero” are credible, consistent, and comparable.

Future versions of the standard will expand to more building types, and refine limits and targets as more data becomes available.

Features of the standard

- **A set of rules, not guidance**
- **Informed by UK climate science**
- **Focused on Carbon and energy performance**
- **Requires measured in-use performance data**
- **Created by industry and refined through feedback**
- **Requires third party verification**



Limits and targets for key metrics

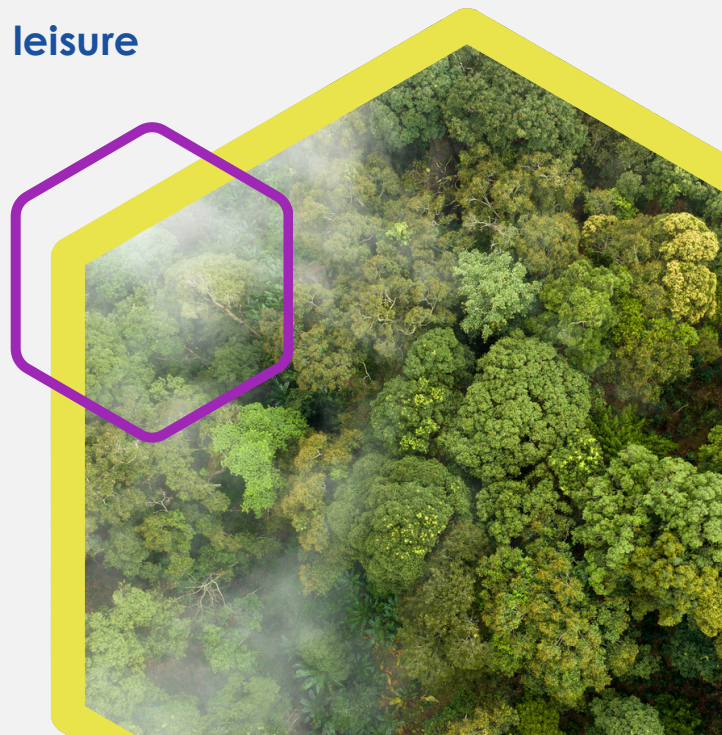
These include:

- **Operational energy performance**
- **Embodied carbon**
- **Renewable electricity generation (on site)**
- **Refrigerants and building services systems**
- **Metering and demand management**
- **Performance verification and reporting**

The standard applies to new buildings and major refurbishments, recognising the importance of decarbonising existing building stock as well as new builds.

Requirements are outlined for different sectors including:

- **Commercial residential (such as student accommodation or care homes)**
- **Culture, entertainment, sport and leisure**
- **Data centres**
- **Healthcare**
- **Higher education and schools**
- **Homes, hotels, retail and offices**
- **Science and technology**
- **Storage and distribution**



What buildings does the standard apply to?

It applies to new and existing buildings.

For existing buildings, there are two routes: the 'one-go route' and the 'stepped route' to accommodate for different levels of retrofit.

The standard uses pass or fail metrics.

The metrics are not dynamic; they depend on the date of commencement of the project and they tighten over time. The standard requires evidence of actual performance and does not rely on design intent.

What does conformity look like?

Mandatory requirements for

- **Operational Energy**
- **Embodied Carbon**
- **Fossil-Fuel-Free**
- **Renewable Energy**
- **Annual space heating and cooling demand**
- **GWP of refrigerant**

Reporting-Only requirements for

- **Water use**
- **Refrigerant leakage**
- **Grid carbon factors**

Routes to compliance

While NABERS UK and Passivhaus are recognised within NCBS Version 1 as deemed-to-satisfy routes for specific performance criteria, they only address selected elements of the Standard. Full NZCBS compliance is demonstrated through a holistic verification process that brings together evidence across all applicable requirements, including operational energy, embodied carbon, fossil fuels, refrigerants and on-site renewable energy generation.

Compliance is ultimately evidenced through NZCBS submission and verification process, with third-party certifications used where applicable and supplemented by project-specific calculations, modelling and performance data for the remaining criteria.

Under Version 1, recognised standards such as NABERS and Passivhaus can be used to meet some of the criteria of the NZCBS. This reduces the duplication arising from the application of multiple targets.

NABERS

NABERS UK is now recognised as a method to meet the operational energy performance in offices. A UK 5-star rating is considered equivalent to meeting the NZCBS operational-energy target.

Passivhaus

Passivhaus is recognised as a compliant pathway for residential, and some non-residential, building types to meet the operational energy, space heating and cooling demand and on site generation.

Reporting period

After the building has been built, and has the agreed minimum occupancy, there is a reporting period where metrics such as operational energy, heating and cooling energy need to be recorded and reported before the building can be verified as Net Zero Carbon Aligned.





How can Futura Bright help?

Help with compliance

Full compliance with the NZCBS requires a building to meet all applicable performance limits relating to operational energy, embodied carbon, fossil fuel use, refrigerants and on-site renewable energy generation, with performance evidenced through the Standard's prescribed assessment and verification process.

While Passive House and NABERS UK provide recognised compliance pathways for some requirements, projects not using these schemes can still achieve full compliance by demonstrating directly, through modelling, calculations and measured performance data, that all NZCBS criteria have been satisfied.

Futura Bright is ideally placed to help clients navigate this new standard from early strategy through design, construction, and operation.

We have expertise in:

- Operational energy modelling such as CIBSE TM54, CIBSE TM63
- Low carbon building services design
- Passivhaus-informed design techniques to optimise fabric performance and minimise energy demand
- Building physics
- NABERS
- Embodied Carbon and Whole Life Carbon Assessments to understand and minimise embodied carbon in fabric, services and processes
- Post Occupancy Evaluation (POE) to identify opportunities for further optimisation

We can guide projects to meet the UK NZCBS with confidence, clarity and integrity.

The full NZCBS is available here:

<https://www.nzcbuildings.co.uk/what-is-the-standard>



Get in touch



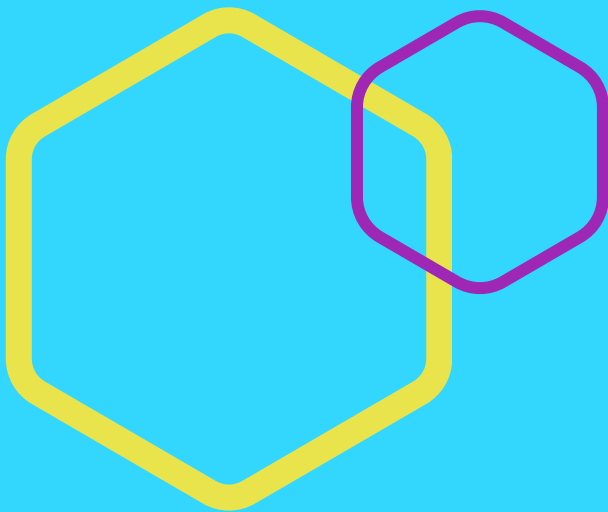
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