



In This Issue

- Current News
- DEAP4.0.2 Evidence Uploading
- Coronavirus
- New Website
- New Projects, New Members

Current News.

January/February has been an extremely busy period for BERAA. In addition to launching a new website & embarking on a membership recruitment drive, we have also been corresponding with SEAI on a number of critical fronts.

In early February, we wrote to the BER Program Manager on the following issues:

1. Completely unacceptable communications policy on the part of SEAI in relation to Assessors in general and BERAA in particular.
2. Multiple ongoing issues with DEAP4.0.2 (library, negative ergonomics, multiple tripping hazards, potential calculation issues, etc)
3. The mental stresses that are being imposed on Assessors and their families by the regressive and penal COP & QADP regimes. We strongly made the case that imposition of penalty points based on human error, with the resultant overhanging threat of professional suspension, is unconscionable. The said regimes must be re-negotiated as matters of highest priority.
4. Evidence uploading (see comments below).
5. The absolute criticality of holding a DEAP4 workshop at the earliest possible date.

No response has been received to date.

Due to the ongoing paucity of response on the above and other matters, BERAA decided to write a comprehensive letter directly to the Interim CEO of SEAI on February 23rd last. In addition to the foregoing issues, we drew his attention to the following issues:

1. The poor morale and general lack of respect felt by Assessors resulting from their treatment by SEAI over the years.
2. The legacy issues that continue to cast a shadow since the disastrous roll-out of the BER Program in 2008/2009: a race to the bottom in terms of price & the commoditization of the BER Certificate, with little or no intrinsic value; also, the huge decline in the registrations of competent and experienced BER Assessors over the intervening years
3. The unacceptable "silent treatment" policy that is being imposed by SEAI on representatives of Assessors.
4. The multiple counterfactual statements included in a recent letter received from Solicitors acting on behalf of SEAI.

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5. The disastrous roll-out of DEAP4.0.2 in November last, wherein no independent testing was carried out and the BER Team was, and continues to be, dependent on Assessors to identify and highlight all manner of defects.
6. The mental health implications of the current COP/QADP regimes were illuminated at length and in no uncertain terms, ending with the following statement:

The power of your words & actions through threat of suspension can push someone over the edge, and it is NOT OKAY!

Make mental health a priority.

7. We advocated the efficacy of formal CPD for Assessors in lieu of the current expensive & valueless biannual examinations requirements.
8. We emphasized the many opportunities that exist going forward for the BER service to be re-branded and enhanced in order to fill key roles in the decarbonization of the built environment in this country.
9. The absolute necessity of engaging in open dialogue without further delay.

This letter has been acknowledged, with a commitment to respond within 5 – 10 working days following consultation within SEAI.....

Details of this response will be notified to BERAA Members at the earliest possible date.

DEAP 4.0.2 Evidence Uploading.

As you are all well aware, evidence uploading has been a very vexed question over recent weeks. The opinion of the BERAA Committee on this matter is as follows:

1. The actual purpose of real-time evidence uploading must be clearly and unambiguously disclosed by SEAI. The value proposition to all BER stakeholders must be clearly transparent. If there is any lingering doubt that the total or partial purpose of such evidence uploading is an enablement of forensic & covert auditing, then BERAA will vigorously pursue the entitlement of Assessors to fair procedures. By way of example, we have recently been advised by the Helpdesk that certain files are being viewed in advance of audit selection – this is completely out of order.
2. The issuing of diktats by SEAI on evidence uploading in advance of clear guidance to Assessors is indefensible. (We successfully made this case to SEAI in recent weeks, who in turn reversed their interim “transitional period” policy). This writer is already aware of differences of opinion between Auditors and

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SEAI on the constitution of complete evidence on certain matters. This is unacceptable. Evidence uploading requirements must be fully disclosed, be clear & unambiguous, be practical, be representative in nature and be clearly demonstrated in a workshop setting.

3. Long-awaited SEAI guidance on GDPR must be issued in advance.
4. The appropriateness of uploading images or other evidence in the absence of the express permission of the Homeowner must be resolved.
5. The appropriateness of uploading intellectual property, particularly in the context of new-build, may potentially expose Assessors to civil actions – this concern must be resolved.
6. The Code of Practice states that every BER Assessor is responsible for retention and maintenance of all records and calculations that may be required to support or verify assessment – Assessors are now being mandated to upload the very same documents to locations outside of their control. This paradox needs to be somehow resolved.

Coronavirus.

SEAI have not issued any advice on this issue. None of us involved in BERAA have any expertise in this area. However, it would seem prudent to consider the following guidelines:

1. If you begin to display any symptoms of 'flu, you should consider deferring appointments to contain the spread of Coronavirus to members of the public that you may come into contact with, especially if visiting the infirm/elderly/children in Nursing Home/Medical/Childcare facilities.
 2. In order to prevent yourselves from coming into contact with Coronavirus, you should consider asking Clients in advance of making appointments whether there are any persons at the property displaying signs of Coronavirus or who have recently returned from COVID-19 affected regions.
 3. Assessors should avoid shaking hands.
 4. Where feasible, properties should be surveyed when vacant, though this will not be possible in many cases.
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New Website.

Please do check out our new site at www.berassessors.com We intend to promote this site going forward as a marketing tool for BERAA Members, so that property-owners can locate BERAA Members in their local area, when seeking registered Assessors to carry out BER's Technical Assessments, DEC's, etc.

We would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank the following companies for providing financial assistance towards the costs of building and maintaining our website:

Grant Engineering	www.grant.eu/
Bpd Limited	www.showersave.com
StelRad Radiator Group	www.stelrad.ie
Unitherm Heating Systems	www.unithermhs.ie

Please inform Eleanor administrator@berassessors.com of your particular SEAI registrations so that she can update your details on the site.

New Projects, New Members.

As stated in the last newsletter, BERAA has embarked on a number of projects which are of critical importance for Assessors. We are expecting a report in the next couple of weeks from a HR Consultant on the COP & QADP regimes under which Assessors currently operate. In particular, an assessment on fair procedures will be considered.

We also have arranged for an expert legal opinion on the COP & QADP regimes to be completed on behalf of BERAA in the next few weeks – a meeting with our legal team has been arranged for Monday next, March 9th. With this in mind, we would be very interested in hearing of any misgivings, frustrations or stressful experiences that you have personally encountered with respect to QADP (audits, suspensions, examinations, etc). Eoin Burns, Hon Sec of BERAA, has set up a separate email account qadp@berassessors.com for this purpose, with the absolute assurance that he will have the sole access to this account, and the content will not be shared. It would much appreciated if any responses can be forwarded in the next 2-3 days.

Based on the outcomes of the foregoing, BERAA will lobby strongly for the governance of the BER Program to move from Cromwellian in nature to a 21st century progressive, inclusive approach.

Also, we have had numerous approaches from companies operating in the energy industry to make presentations to BERAA Events/Workshops. We are currently preparing a schedule of events for the months ahead.

It is very heartening that there has been a huge upsurge in BERAA membership in recent weeks, as the efforts of our hard-working Committee are being increasingly recognised and appreciated. However, we would appreciate getting the moral & financial support from even more BER Assessors throughout the country.

Please join BERAA today by visiting
<https://berassessors.com/apply-for-membership/>

Kevin Curtin, Chair

05/3/2020



**BER Assessors
Association of Ireland**