

Tuesday 17th May 2011

New Quality Mark Scheme Launched Today

IEMA's EIA Quality Mark will uphold quality practice within the green economy.

The Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA), the UK's largest environmental professional association representing over 15,000 practitioners, is today launching a unique stamp of approval for organisations that demonstrate a dedication to excellence in Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).

From today (Tuesday 17th May 2011) consultancies and developers that regularly carry out EIAs can demonstrate their dedication to such quality practice by applying to use the EIA Quality Mark and join a register of 40 pre-approved organisations. The scheme will help planners, consultancies, developers, infrastructure bodies and construction companies to locate and work with externally verified EIA organisations from a central register and subsequently deliver a successful EIA project as part of delivering the green economy.

EIA, an assessment process that can be applied to new developments, ensures that the environment is considered during the early stages of any development project. It provides a mechanism by which the environmental effects generated by a development can be predicted allowing them to be reduced or avoided. As such EIA forms a critical part of the decision-making process for proposed developments.

With the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive having been in place for 25 years and any updates some years away, IEMA identified the need for a new measure of EIA performance while the UK replaces major infrastructure in pursuit of the low carbon economy. As a result, IEMA has developed the EIA Quality Mark scheme to ensure future EIA practice in the UK continues to uphold high standards of quality.

Martin Baxter, IEMA's Executive Director-Policy, says "*Ensuring that development makes economic sense, is good for society and works with the environment are at the heart of delivering the green economy*", said Baxter. "*The 40 organisations that have so far gained the EIA Quality Mark have proven that they are capable of delivering sustainable development in practice.*"

Three key elements of the scheme's operations will ensure that the EIA Quality Mark generates improvement in EIA practice that hold benefits for developers, decision-makers, the environment and society:

1. Organisations joining the scheme agree to operate their EIA activity in line with a series of EIA Commitments, allowing developers to benchmark performance.
2. IEMA will independently check compliance with these EIA Commitments on an annual basis allowing decision-makers and communities to have greater confidence in the findings of assessments undertaken by EIA Quality Mark registrants.
3. The EIA Quality Mark places action to enhance practice at its heart. As a consequence, the environment impacts of future development can be reduced helping to generate more sustainable forms of development.

International consultancy services organisation Royal Haskoning joined the EIA Quality Mark scheme having transitioned from IEMA's previous EIA Register. UK Business Group Director of Environment Doug Ford says that the new EIA Quality Mark "*has teeth*" which will help the impact assessment industry achieve well overdue higher and consistent quality in this vital part of permitting, "*while further supporting our EIA practitioners*".

The EIA Quality Mark has been specifically designed to ensure it generates multiple benefits for each registrant, IEMA's 15,000 members and all those interested in improving UK EIA practice. Ultimately, the EIA Quality Mark aims to assist the environmental profession in addressing the bigger picture of sustainable development.

The Environment Agency's National Environment Assessment Service (NEAS) recently became the first developer to boast the EIA Quality Mark. Ross Marshall, Director of NEAS, welcomes the scheme and their position as a founding organisation; "*NEAS joined the EIA Quality Mark scheme to demonstrate the value as an asset operator that environmental impact assessments bring to our own infrastructure programmes and emphasise the need for continuous performance improvement. We are proud to be the first recipient of the EIA Quality Mark.*"

To find out more about the EIA Quality Mark, including its EIA commitments and the current registrants, visit www.iema.net/qmark. For further details, images and comment opportunities contact Katrina Pierce at k.pierce@iema.net or call 01522 540069.

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Notes to Editors

Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA)

The Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment (IEMA) is the UK's leading environmental professional association. IEMA is dedicated to creating a sustainable future through environmental skills, knowledge and thought leadership.

IEMA is an independent and international, not for profit membership organisation that represents the views of 15,000 environmental professionals.

IEMA delivers the following services:

Policy and Legislation – IEMA frequently contributes to the development of key areas of UK policy and legislation. Recent contributions include:

- The Department of Energy and Climate Change's (DECC's) consultations on proposed national policy statements on energy, carbon budgets and Guidance on Carbon Neutrality.
- The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) on the development of guidance for the measurement and reporting of greenhouse gas emissions, a requirement under the Climate Change Act 2008.
- The House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee inquiries in to green jobs and skills and climate change adaptation.

Professional development, training and qualifications – IEMA sets the standard for the development of environmental skills and knowledge, ensuring that environmental professionals are equipped to make a difference as sustainability becomes a key business driver.

IEMA's training courses and continuous professional development provision cover a range of subjects from resource efficiency to environmental management, auditing, carbon reduction and procurement, spanning many levels from diploma to foundation course, tailored courses for senior executives and for those at the top of their profession, including Chartered Environmentalist. IEMA provides opportunities for members to share best practice and develop their knowledge by hosting events and discussions.

Central source of information – IEMA acts as a central source of information providing events, publications and knowledge sharing. These activities include:

- The Environmentalist - the monthly professional magazine that is the resource guide for environmental professionals across the UK and internationally. With a growing circulation of nearly 15,000 the publication covers the latest research, technical news, policy updates, legislation practical tools and skills updates.
- Events and conferences including 3 national events and over 100 regional workshops for environmental practitioners across the UK.

- Practitioner guides, special reports and briefing notes that focus in on key environmental topics and issues. Recent climate change examples are: *Mitigating Climate Change: a guide for organisations* (2009), *Adapting to Climate Change: a guide to its management in organisations* (2009).

Go to www.iema.net to find out more.

The EIA Quality Mark

The scheme is designed to provide a regular and rigorous analysis of compliance on an annual basis. It will assess quality across registered organisations' EIA activities including their management processes and approaches. The new scheme also allows these organisations to make a voluntary commitment to ensuring its EIA activities maintain high standards of quality.

IEMA, as the body dedicated to creating a sustainable future through the development of environmental skills, knowledge and thought leadership, is responsible for the operation of the scheme and monitoring each registrant's on-going compliance to the EIA Quality Mark's seven commitments.

The EIA Quality Mark looks at quality across an organisation's EIA activities including its management processes and approaches to the development of staff competence. The scheme is designed to provide a regular and rigorous analysis of compliance reviewing both Environmental Statements and conducting staff interviews on an annual basis.

The EIA Quality Mark's scheme is based on a commitment to excellence in the following areas;

EIA Quality Mark Commitments

1. **EIA Management** – We commit to using effective project control and management processes to deliver quality in the EIA we co-ordinate and the Environmental Statements we produce.
2. **EIA Team Capabilities** – We commit to ensuring that all our EIA staff have the opportunity to undertake regular and relevant continuing professional development.
3. **EIA Regulatory Compliance** – We commit to delivering Environmental Statements that meet the requirements established within the appropriate UK EIA Regulations.
4. **EIA Context & Influence** – We commit to ensuring that all EIAs we co-ordinate are effectively scoped and that we will transparently indicate how the EIA process, and any consultation undertaken, influenced the development proposed and any alternatives considered.
5. **EIA Content** – We commit to undertaking assessments that include: a robust analysis of the relevant baseline; assessment and transparent evaluation of impact significance; and an effective description of measures designed to monitor and manage significant effects.
6. **EIA Presentation** – We commit to deliver Environmental Statements that set out environmental information in a transparent and understandable manner.

- 7. *Improving EIA practice*** – We commit to enhance the profile of good quality EIA by working with IEMA to deliver a mutually agreed set of activities, on an annual basis, and by making appropriate examples of our work available to the wider EIA community.

Visit www.iema.net/qmark to find out more.