



“The standard enables organizations to improve their processes so they deliver more sustainable outcomes, while improving business performance”

Dr Miles Watkins, BRE Group Business Development Director

Why the revised version of BS 8900 is even better placed to enable organizations to embed, manage and assess sustainable development

In August 2013 we published the revised version of BS 8900, which enables organizations to embed the management of sustainable development in their everyday activities and decision making, as well as assess how well they manage their sustainable development.

BS 8900 was originally published in 2006, but now it's been superseded by a two-part document: *Managing sustainable development of organization – Guide*, BS 8900-1 and *Framework for assessment against BS 8900-1 - Specification*, BS 8900-2, which reflect latest sustainability management practices.

The committee that worked collaboratively to revise BS 8900 included sustainability experts from government, academia, industry, employee, construction and procurement organizations. Stakeholder workshops were also held to gather opinions on how the standard could best be improved.

Minimum principles

Dr Miles Watkins, BRE Group Business Development Director and Chair of the BSI committee that oversaw the standard's revision, comments: “The intent and spirit of the original standard have been preserved – it was a great piece of work – and the stakeholder section has been improved and we've added minimum principles, which makes

the standard even more useful.

“BS 8900-1 and 2 can help organizations of all sizes and types to think through sustainability issues relevant to them, using their own strategy and stakeholder input as primary feeds. The whole point is that the standard can be integrated into *existing* businesses practices.”

BS 8900 is *not* a management system standard, Watkins stresses. “There are no prescriptive details about how to achieve requirements – the focus is on outcomes rather than processes. The idea is to provoke thought and action, not to dictate, which makes things more strategic.”

Greater clarity

Part 1 of the revised standard adds greater clarity, for example, on the role of principles, stakeholder engagement and maturity assessment in sustainable development.

“It provides useful examples of sustainable development maturity matrices for different types of organizations, while the key principles of sustainable development – inclusivity, integrity, stewardship and transparency – are now minimum principles that can be used by all organizations,” says Watkins. “The maturity matrix was very popular in the first edition, so we've improved it and included

examples to aid understanding. If all organizations created a matrix of this type, it would be a powerful agent for change.”

Holistic approach

Part 2 provides a methodology based on Part 1 against which claims of compliance can be made. The framework in BS 8900-2 enables flexibility in the approach to sustainability an organization can take when applying the guidance in BS 8900-1, as well as clarity on how conformity can be demonstrated.

So, how should an organization work with the standard to achieve the best outcomes? Watkins replies: “The board or senior management team should read the standard thoroughly and make changes based on their ‘best fit’.

“It requires a holistic approach and responsibility shouldn't just be given to one person, it should be shared. Essentially, the standard enables organizations to improve their processes so they deliver more sustainable outcomes, while improving business performance,” he concludes.

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