

THE FABRICATOR

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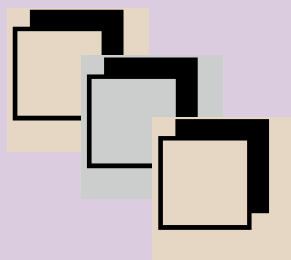
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They said it couldn't be done. Back when window rating became a thing. U values were calculated on a 'standard window'. Calculating the value of a whole window was not considered possible. Not really desirable. At the time I reported it, probably wrote about it but I never really believed the logic. That is beyond the fact that a 'standard' window did enable the boffins to compare like-with-like, prevented fiddling and entrepreneurs making outrageous claims.

Well guys, it's here: the whole window calculation and, according to a lot of technical people, things will never be the same (Page 8). True, it only applies to windows for new build properties but we can't be complacent, replacements will not be far behind.

So we must now take into account the frame, the hardware, any decoration such as astragals and Georgian bars. The sealed unit is now only one component and the whole window must achieve 1.2w/m²K as required by approved document L. The changes are not due to take place before 2027 but that is hardly good news given the complexity of the calculations that will need to be put in place by software manufacturers among others.

And if that weren't enough to be going on with, in an energy intense industry, we are having to contend with rising energy costs. Every thing we do, glass, both manufacture and processing, plastics – PVC-U – and aluminium all take lots of energy to manufacture. Even delivery costs are through the roof with the price of diesel spiralling.

Some reckon that it could work to our advantage making householders sensitive to the energy efficiency of their homes. But that's no quick fix. It will take several seasons for the domestic pinch to be felt. Householders are seldom quick to take decisions and we have to bear in mind that a lot of refurbishment is aesthetic. A new patio door to open up a garden view, a front door a roof light. None of these have to do with improving energy efficiency and are the type of job that will be put on hold if household energy bills are rising. And price rises will go beyond energy. Petrol prices are already out of control and food will follow. The cost of production and distribution will, eventually be passed down the chain and, even when they ease, will take time to fall for the consumer.

Another area is the housing market. When people move house they are very likely to do some refurbishment which, quite often, includes the fenestration. Now I don't recall anyone saying interest rates are going up but, with the economic situation worldwide, it is something we should expect. Certainly prospective buyers will be nervous about mortgage rates and postpone moves.

After a difficult 2025 we all entered 2026 with a great deal of confidence and expectation of better things. But they seem to be on hold at the moment. We may not be in the kind of world war we tend to associate with the idea. Not like WWs one and two but the world is at war right now and even we who are lucky enough not be contending with drones and missiles are feeling the impact

John Roper