

ASBP FAQs

Is there a need for the ASBP?

Yes. There are no organisations currently in the UK that have sustainability and products at their core, which has relegated building products to the periphery of the sustainability agenda. The ASBP will bring product specific clarity and rigour to an industry held back by confusing and often unsubstantiated green claims.

Why 'sustainable' and not 'natural' or 'low impact'?

We believe that sustainability remains the best roadmap for the development of the industry. Sustainable building products can be produced from a wide variety of mineral as well as biological raw materials. 'Sustainable' is a somewhat battle-weary word, but the ASBP is committed to its true meaning by applying rigid product specific criteria.

Does the sustainability agenda conflict with the low carbon agenda?

The ASBP believes that low carbon and sustainability must go hand in hand. Sustainable building products should also be low carbon in raw material production, processing and use. However sustainability must take a wider view and requires us to take a balanced and comprehensive approach to resources in addition to energy, and to other social, environmental and economic impacts.

Is the use of sustainable products as important as ensuring energy efficiency in-use?

They are both critically important. Our understanding of energy-in-use is well developed but the wider sustainability gains from products may be as, if not more significant than those from reduced energy-in-use. This means the aggregate benefits of taking a broader approach may be much more significant than we currently realise. For example, even if we limit our thinking to carbon, a recent DECC sponsored study indicates that the carbon sink from biomaterials in construction may have a carbon benefit twice as significant as that predicted from the zero-carbon homes policy by 2025.

What other gains could be realised by moving to more sustainable building products?

Buildings could be more energy efficient, healthier (reduced VOC and reduced damp) and more durable. Construction waste could be considerably reduced and toxic waste eliminated. Supply chains could be more robust, with improved resource efficiency and increased resource security. Employment opportunities can be generated and dispersed through more local production. A key responsibility of the ASBP will be to provide quantitative and qualitative evidence for these claimed benefits.

Why an alliance and not a Trade Association?

Trade associations are generally concerned with raising standards within a particular sector. The ASBP seeks to represent the best sustainability practice from across many product categories. We do not primarily seek to compare apples with oranges – but rather to identify the best apples and the best oranges. By doing this we aim to signpost the direction for product specification and use, and to aid future product development.

What interests do you represent?

We aim to be valued for our independence and support a broad set of interests although most of our members will have a products focus. The ASBP could be thought of as an environmental organisation that has sustainable building products as its means of delivery.

Why is sector-wide engagement important?

Sustainability is an all encompassing principal which requires all encompassing engagement. We are seeking active engagement across all product categories and all professions committed to the specification, distribution and use of sustainable building products.

Does the ASBP have criteria for membership?

Anybody can join the ASBP provided that they agree with our membership charter. However, we attach strict rules on whether a commercial member can use the ASBP to promote their products and services.

What are the rules for using the ASBP to promote products and services?

Simply stated, the member must be able to demonstrate high sustainability through a credible third party sustainability assessment process. One route to providing this proof is by achieving the Natureplus eco-label.

What is Natureplus?

Natureplus is Europe's leading eco-label (or trust mark) which has been developed by industry and environmental organisations in Germany, Austria and Switzerland and is now being rolled out throughout the UK and the rest of Europe.

Why do we need standards such as Natureplus?

Standards are critically important tool to drive change and form the basis for informed choice. However, where possible Natureplus builds upon existing performance and sustainability standards to create an overarching standard that minimises the burden of additional testing.

What is the ASBP's view on Environmental Product Declarations (EPDs)?

The ASBP welcomes the development of EPDs because they are transparent and third party accredited. However, it should be remembered that EPDs are simply a statement of environmental impact and do not in themselves imply that the product achieves a high standard of sustainability. Natureplus is also offering EPDs to manufacturers that meet the requirements of the Natureplus standard.

What about the impending Construction Product Regulation (CPR)?

Although the CPR does not spell out in detail what is required of product manufacturers in terms of demonstrating sustainability performance, the ASBP believes that Natureplus meets the sustainability aspirations of the CPR.

Does Natureplus cover all product categories?

Not yet, but Natureplus is continually developing new product standards. Currently Natureplus has standards to cover most of the product categories associated with the building fabric.

Who will conduct Natureplus accreditation for UK manufactured products?

Currently all Natureplus certification activity is undertaken in Germany. However, the ASBP is working with UK based certification specialists to enable Natureplus certification activity to be undertaken in the UK.

What types of products achieve the Natureplus standard?

Natureplus is principally concerned with the sustainable use of sustainable raw materials. This means products made from renewable, abundant mineral and secondary raw materials. Natureplus does not accept products made predominantly from finite fossil derived raw materials.

How does the ASBP view product categories not currently covered by Natureplus?

If a product category is not covered by Natureplus, the ASBP would firstly work with Natureplus to develop an appropriate standard. For products that fall outside the scope of Natureplus and other international standards (such as straw bale and rammed earth) the ASBP will work with partners to develop a range of appropriate product/workmanship standards.

How does the ASBP view specific brands that do not yet have Natureplus?

We accept that we are near the start of a long process. Not all sustainable products currently hold certifications such as Natureplus but it is our aim to greatly increase the number of products and categories that are recognised by Natureplus. In the meantime, we actively encourage and support those products and companies that are on a journey that leads to Natureplus certification.

Does the ASBP intend to develop other non-product standards?

Yes. Trust marks such as Natureplus are a proven market-based mechanism that helps to *identify* sector leading products which in turn encourages best practice and provides the rationale for manufacturers to innovate. However, the ASBP will develop other tools to encourage effective *specification, distribution* and *use* of sustainable building products.

Does the ASBP recognise other sustainability labels?

The ASBP believes that the Natureplus label is currently the best available standard but we do accept other approaches providing they match or exceed the rigour and scope of Natureplus.

How does the ASBP fit with the BRE Green Guide to Specification?

The 'Green Guide' is generally used for generic construction component assessment for the purpose of gaining credits within the Code for Sustainable Homes. The ASBP approach is very different. We take a product specific not a generic approach. We seek to identify leading products to encourage the greater use of demonstrably sustainable products. Although this approach does not currently fit

the points system within the Code, the ASBP anticipates that a move from generic to product specific measures is necessary and is in the best interests of sustainability.

How does Natureplus compare with the BRE Environmental Profiles Methodology?

The BRE Environmental Profile Methodology is a system based entirely on life cycle assessment (LCA). The Natureplus approach provides an overarching standard which includes criteria for product performance, health-in-use, raw material sustainability, social aspects as well as LCA derived impacts.

Is the ASBP restricting its activity solely to standards and eco-labelling?

No. Eco-labels help support good decision making. But they are only part of the story. Many areas are better influenced by regulation and policy change. Consequently the ASBP is also seeking to generate the evidence required to influence policy. Key policy areas include carbon reduction and resource efficiency.

How will the ASBP communicate its message?

Ultimately, lasting change is best delivered by changing attitudes and influencing behaviour, through informed choice rather than coercion. It is essential therefore, that the ASBP delivers a wide and effective communication and education strategy. Tools include the web site, seminars and workshops, trade shows and CPDs.