

BRICKMAKERS

QUALITY

CHARTER

THE BRICKMAKERS QUALITY CHARTER

The Easy Way to Identify
Responsible Clay Brick
Manufacturers

Guidance Notes

Version: February 2025

Section 1 - The Scheme

1.1

Introduction

The Brick Development Association (BDA) is the UK's technical trade association for clay brick manufacturers and chief authority on the production, distribution and use of clay bricks and pavers. It is charged with delivering market, technical and design advice to those who work with clay brick.

Through our everyday monitoring of brick statistics and UK market throughput, we have noticed and have evidenced through work with our partners, at University College London and others, a significant increase in the importation of clay bricks from outside of the EU into the UK. Most notably

from Asia. There is a large defined area across Pakistan, India, Nepal and Bangladesh as well as Sub-Saharan where bricks are manufactured seasonally, in large numbers, and more often than not using bonded or child labour. Those individuals making these bricks, work under extreme conditions with little or no regard to health and safety, poor sanitation, often with little or no pay. This is unacceptable in today's business world.



1.2

The Brickmakers Quality Charter (BQC)

We would always ask Individuals to check the provenance of the bricks they purchase, supply or use but this can prove complicated, with some manufacturers and re-sellers sometimes deliberately hiding the source of their clay bricks or evading simple questions as to the provenance and production methods used in the manufacture of the clay bricks they sell.

It is our view that some suppliers are simply re-branding poor quality bricks with heartwarming British-sounding names, in order to to associate themselves with the good reputation of UK clay brick and the potentially lucrative UK clay brick market.

The cost of transporting these bricks, often halfway around the world, is offset by the use of cheap and often unpaid bonded labour. And of course, transporting bricks halfway around the world also has a significant negative impact on use of carbon which is ultimately affecting climate change.

One always needs to ask a supplier or manufacturer where the bricks are made and if anyone is ever in doubt, simply ask if you can visit the factory. Any reputable manufacturer would be delighted to host you and show you around. If the clay brick or paver is manufactured in the UK (or in the EU), you can be certain that it is manufactured to the correct standards and to a suitable, consistent quality for use in the UK.

The BQC puts this potentially complicated checking process into an easy, useable and visible form.

Purchasers of clay brick can be assured that if a brickmaker is using the BQC logo on its branding and products, then they will have met a basic set of criteria, meaning it manufactures clay bricks and pavers to a set of internationally recognised product labour, quality, energy and environmental standards. A simple secondary check can also be made through the BQC's office.

Application to the scheme is not mandatory in any way, and manufacturers are still able to sell into the UK market without it; however, it provides a check to help identify those firms that have reached an acceptable level of best practice in business and manufacturing ethics and demonstrates that they have attained the credentials expected of a responsible brickmaker.



1.3

How to engage in the Brickmakers Quality Charter

Any clay brick manufacturer can apply to join the register of Brickmaker Quality Charter holders, since it is in all our long-term interests to ensure brick products are a properly sustainable product which minimises environmental impact and human suffering, both as manufacturers and suppliers.

Clay brick makes a significant contribution to the UK's safe, healthy and sustainable built environment. This is true also in Europe and many other nations. It provides the certainty and longevity people want in their homes and the flexibility and consistency that businesses seek from an established supply chain. Simply put, **the Brickmakers Quality Charter promotes the responsible sourcing of clay brick.**

To be accepted and credentialed under the BQC, companies must demonstrate their compliance with and adherence to, a range of internationally

recognised standards, which are applied fairly to all applicants.

The use of the Brickmakers Quality Charter logo provides architects, designers, merchants, specifiers and procurement teams with a valuable 'short cut' to identifying responsible clay brick manufacturers.

Specifically, applicants (who can only be clay brick manufacturers), will need to **provide evidence of their credentials in at least six of the following Critical Assessment Points (CAPs)**, three of which must be a public statement on Anti-Modern Slavery together with a Policy & Procedure that backs this up, as well as compliance in clay-brick products under the UK's Construction Product Regulations. These objective criteria are applied to all applicants.

CAP 1.  **Business Quality Management System (ISO 9001)**

CAP 2.  **Responsible Sourcing System (BES 6001)**

CAP 3.  **Energy Management System (ISO 50001)**

CAP 4.  **Environmental Management System (ISO 14001)**

CAP 5.  **Health & Safety Management System (ISO 45001 or OHSAS 18001 or the Ceramics UK H&S Pledge)**

CAP 6.  **Employment Practice System (that meets the brickmaker's National Standard)**

CAP 7.  **Anti-Modern Slavery Policy & Procedures*** (that meets the brickmaker's National Standard)

CAP 8.  **CPR Compliance in all Clay-brick Products *** (CE Mark or UKCA/UKNI Mark to EN771.1)

CAP 9. **Compliance with all UK Laws and Regulations***

* CAPs 7, 8 and 9 are **mandatory**.

Any clay brick manufacturer who can evidence six or more of these CAPs, can apply to join the Brickmakers Quality Charter Register and potentially display the Brickmakers Quality Charter logo on their livery, marketing collateral, packaging and products.

1.4 Recognition

There are two levels of recognition;



Two Stars ★★

If a brickmaker can provide evidence against six or seven CAP's they may display the Charter's Two Star logo.

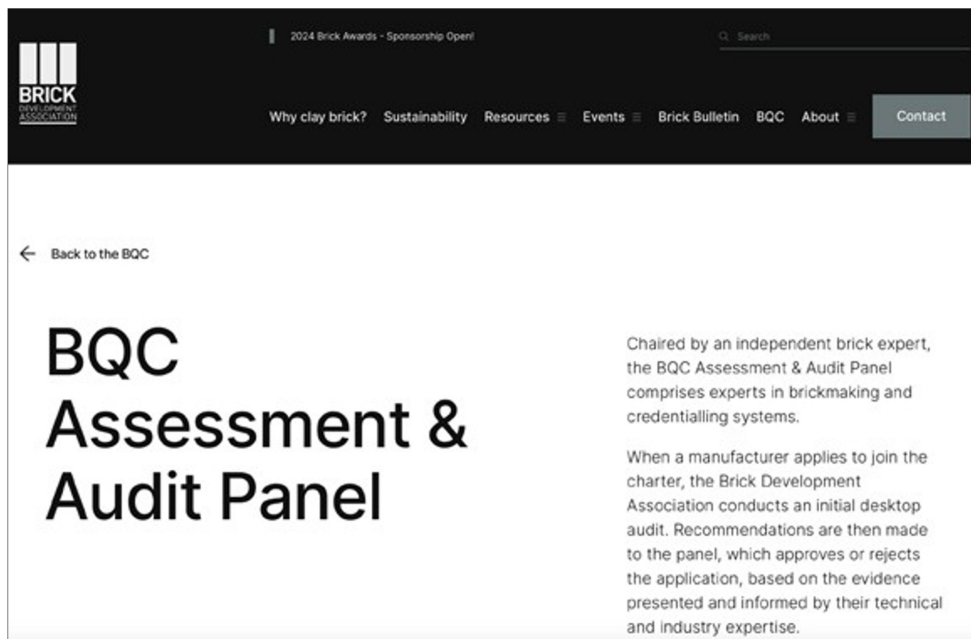


Three Stars ★★★

If a brickmaker can provide evidence against all nine CAPs, they may display the Charter's Three Star logo.

The awarding of the particular level of recognition, rests solely with the BQC independent panel. Currently the scheme is administered by the Brick Development Association on behalf of the panel.

The BQC panel's role is to ensure that the scheme rules are applied fairly and consistently, in compliance with UK competition law. The BQC Assessment and Audit Panel is independent of the BDA.



From 2024, given the significant legislative initiatives brought forward in the UK that raise the bar for brick quality and with the introduction of the UK's Building Safety Act 2022, the fire and structural performance of clay bricks with an uncompromising fire resistance (A1 rated), superior strength, and compliance with full construction product regulations, we believe it is time to remove the 1-star rating, signifying our unwavering commitment to improving the quality of materials procurement.

The legislation gives residents and homeowners and others more rights, powers, and protections creating lasting change and makes clear how residential buildings should be constructed, maintained and made safe.

Together these changes mean owners will manage their buildings better, and the wider industry has the clear, proportionate framework it needs to deliver more, and better, high-quality buildings.

By setting this new standard for quality, we want brickmakers to demonstrate commitment to continuous improvement; thus only the 2 and 3-star ratings are now available.

We appreciate this may be a disappointment to some brickmakers, but it is not a great leap for those certificated at 1-star to achieve 2 star certification or better. 2 star certification is available to all applicants. You can find information about what's needed and how to submit it to the scheme administrators, on the Charter Application page, which can be found here: <https://www.brick.org.uk/bqc>

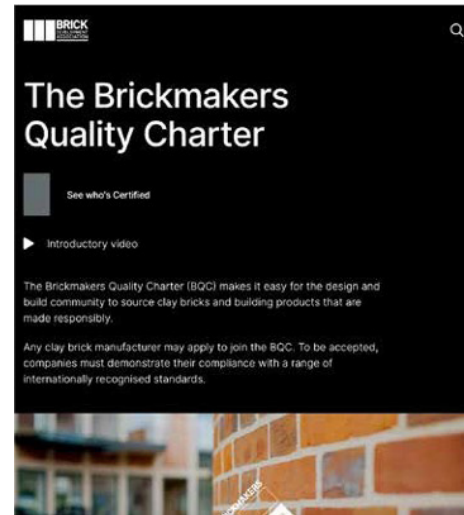
Section 2 - Make an Application

2.1 How do I apply?

The BQC scheme aims to promote the brickmaker's credentials to customers, architects, specifiers and other clients, through a simple branding tool.

It benchmarks businesses against a number of existing standards covering technical employment, quality and best business practice so that architects, buyers, users and specifiers can be assured that bricks they are using come from a brickmaking business operating to the high standards we expect in our sector.

Initial application is made through a simple on-line process and is available to any brick manufacturer who wishes to apply.



2.2 Making the Application

Firstly, the applicant will need to visit the BDA's website www.brick.org.uk and specifically, click on the 'BQC' tab, (on the Landing Page).

No payment is required during the process of making an application, but once the required information supporting the application has been submitted by the applicant, and checked by the Scheme Manager for completeness, a payment of £750 plus VAT, will be required.

Once the initial stage has been passed, the applicant's factories will need to be inspected. This on-site inspection will ensure that the policies and obligations under the scheme are met in practice. The full cost of travel and subsistence in carrying out the inspection will be met by the applicant.

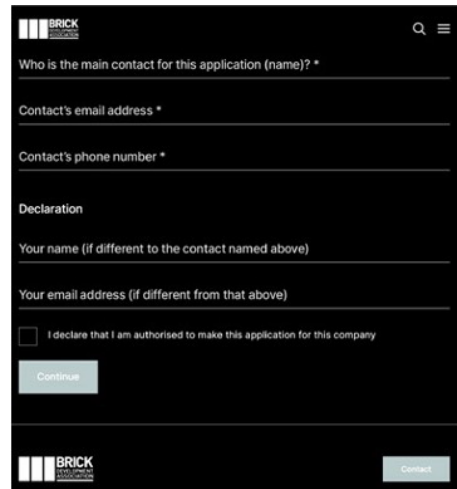
The scheme is a not-for-profit scheme and these costs are designed to cover the costs expended in processing the application, running the scheme, and marketing the BQC.

Payment will be invoiced to the person making the application on behalf of the brickmaker and will need to be paid, prior to any further assessment of the application. The applicant will be required to declare that they are authorised to make the application on behalf of the brickmaker.

You will only be invoiced if we believe you have submitted sufficient information to warrant your application being further processed. If you do not meet the basic requirements, you will be told and you will be unable to proceed further in your application. You will not be invoiced. All applicants must demonstrate that they meet the objective criteria to be considered.

Applying is an automated process so all applicants need to do is follow the prompts on the BDA website.

Following the initial assessment phase, the applicant will need to meet any upfront site visit costs. The invoice for all costs of the site visit must be paid in full before a decision will be issued on whether the applicant has passed the site visit.



The screenshot shows a mobile application interface for the Brick Development Association (BDA). The header features the BDA logo and a search icon. The form contains the following fields and sections:

- A question: "Who is the main contact for this application (name)? *"
- A text input field: "Contact's email address *"
- A text input field: "Contact's phone number *"
- A section titled "Declaration" with the text: "Your name (if different to the contact named above)" and a text input field.
- A text input field: "Your email address (if different from that above)".
- A checkbox with the text: "I declare that I am authorised to make this application for this company".
- A "Continue" button.
- A "Contact" button at the bottom right.

2.3

Before you start your application

Make sure you have (pdf) copies available of the requisite evidence as asked for in each CAP listed, so you may submit them on-line. The submission process will ask you to upload the documentation at each CAP question, from your computer. So, it's best to scan the documentation prior to you beginning your application and to save it somewhere useful on your computer. You do not have to submit for all CAPs, but you must for CAPs 7 and 8 as these are mandatory.

You cannot save your work as you proceed through the application. However, if you need a break in the process, provided you keep your web browser open, you should be able to continue with the application, on your return. **It should take you no more than 30 minutes to complete the process.**

A good place to save the files you want to upload, is in a folder on your desktop.





2.4 Providing suitable supporting evidence

Evidence, which may be submitted via electronic means for each Critical Assessment Point (CAP) should include, but need not be limited to that below for the following CAPs:

Cap 1. Business Quality Management System (ISO 9001)

An up-to-date copy of the brickmaker's current ISO 9001 certificate issued to them by a verifiable assessor and containing the awarding body's seal. The date(s) for which the certificate is valid must be shown. It must be signed, and the certificate must apply to the firm making the application. There is no need to submit detailed documentation supporting this certificate, but the applicant's supporting documentation, may be subject to further audit should the need arise. The acceptable format if submitting electronically is as a '.pdf' file.

Cap 2. Responsible Sourcing System (BES 6001)

An up-to-date copy of the brickmaker's current BES 6001 certificate issued to them by a verifiable assessor and containing the awarding body's seal. The date(s) for which the certificate is valid must be shown. It must be signed, and the certificate must apply to the firm making the application. There is no need to submit detailed documentation supporting this certificate, but the applicant's supporting documentation, may be subject to further audit should the need arise. The acceptable format if submitting electronically is as a '.pdf' file.

(Note: Achievement of this CAP which itself, could be considered as a 'Super CAP', may in due course, negate the applicant from having to submit evidence against some other CAPs in the series. This is with the exception of CAPs 7 & 8. We are working on a matrix of exemptions which we will publish in time. Please keep an eye on the website for further information).

Cap 3. Energy Management System (ISO 50001)

An up-to-date copy of the brickmaker's current ISO 50001 certificate issued to them by a verifiable assessor and containing the awarding body's seal. The date(s) for which the certificate is valid must be shown. It must be signed, and the certificate must apply to the firm making the application. There is no need to submit detailed documentation supporting this certificate, but the applicant's supporting documentation, may be subject to further audit should the need arise. The acceptable format if submitting electronically is as a '.pdf' file.

Cap 4. Environmental Management System (ISO 14001)

An up-to-date copy of the firm's current ISO 14001 certificate issued to them by a verifiable assessor and containing the awarding body's seal. The date(s) for which the certificate is valid must be shown. It must be signed, and the certificate must apply to the firm making the application. There is no need to submit detailed documentation supporting this certificate, but the applicant's supporting documentation, may be subject to further audit should the need arise. The acceptable format if submitting electronically is as a '.pdf' file.

Cap 5. Health & Safety Management System (ISO 45001 or OHSAS 18001 or the BCC H&S Pledge)

An up-to-date copy of the firm's current ISO 45001 or OHSAS 18001 certificate issued to them by a verifiable assessor and containing the awarding body's seal. The date(s) for which the certificate is valid must be shown. It must be signed, and the certificate must apply to the firm making the application. There is no need to submit detailed documentation supporting the certificate, but the applicant's supporting documentation, may be subject to further audit should the need arise.

Should an applicant instead desire to submit confirmation of their commitment to the BCC's H&S Pledge, then confirmation from the BCC in the form of a letter of confirmation of their commitment from the BCC or a copy of their BCC certificate will be required. The acceptable format if submitting electronically is as a '.pdf' file.

Cap 6. Employment Practice System (that meets the brickmaker's National Standard)

A copy of the firm's Employment Handbook and a copy of a typical contract of employment for individuals employed in the processes used in making bricks such as kiln operatives, plant operatives, drivers, equipment handlers and brickmakers will be required. If applicable, a copy of a standard service level agreement or contract for those individuals that are also engaged on a sub-contract basis, in any of these occupations will also be required. The applicant's supporting documentation may be open to further audit should the need arise. Acceptable format if submitting electronically is as a '.pdf' file.

Cap 7*. Anti-Modern Slavery Policy & Procedures* (that meets the brickmaker's National Standard)

A copy of the brickmaker's publicly facing statement and policy together with a copy of its internal procedures on how it is committed to combat modern slavery will be required. This information must be current. The applicant's supporting documentation may be open to further audit should the need arise. Acceptable format if submitting electronically is as a '.pdf' file.

Cap 8*. CPR Compliance in all Clay-rick Products * (CE Mark or UKCA/UKNI Mark)

Product Declarations Certificates from a sample of no less than five types of the brickmakers' clay brick, tile and paver products. If a firm does not produce any more than five types of product, then you should submit a declaration for every clay product you produce. You do not need to submit all declarations for all of the brickmaker's products but the applicant's product declaration for products that have not been submitted during the application process, may be called for and open to further audit should the need arise. Acceptable format if submitting electronically is as a '.pdf' file.

Cap 9*. Compliance with all UK Laws and Regulations

The firm must provide a signed undertaking that it complies with all UK laws and regulations including, but not limited to, compliance with sanctions against Russia. Copies of all relevant internal procedures for ensuring compliance must be submitted. Public-facing policies and internal procedures you should provide include but are not limited to: energy buying policies; health & safety policies; equality, diversion & inclusion; whistleblowing policy; environmental and waste management policies; anti-bribery and corruption policies; and working time policy.

***Denotes mandatory CAPs.**

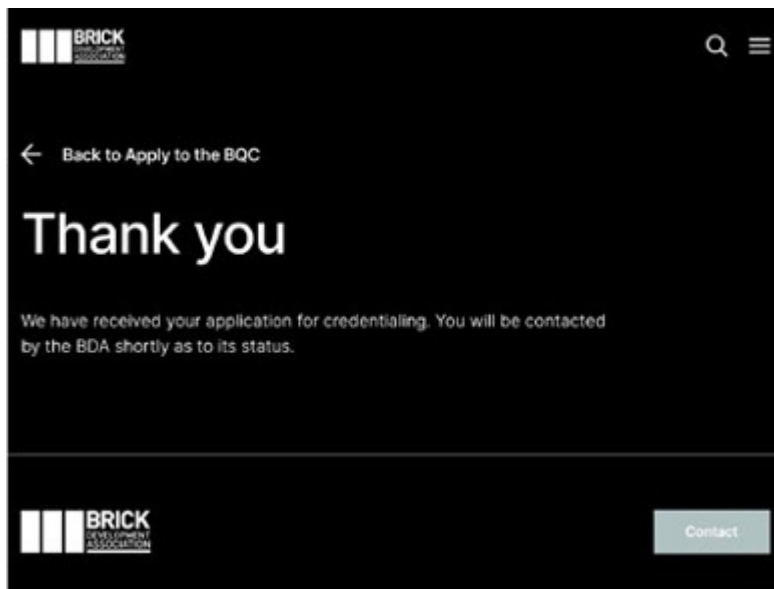
Applicants agree to opening their records to audit, following application and submission of any documentation against the respective CAP evidenced.

Any information viewed, held and audited, will be kept in strictest confidence between the applicant and the scheme manager and held under GDPR.

Section 3 - After you make an application

3.1 Notification to the applicant on the next steps following their application

The first thing to occur is that you will see a Completion page on the website, which tells you (and the scheme managers) that you have completed an application. (See below, The Completion Page).



Once the BDA, on behalf of the Panel, has completed a 'desktop' audit of the documentation submitted by the applicant, you will receive confirmation that this has been done. At this stage you will be advised if the base criteria have been met.

You will then receive an estimated cost for the site visit. For UK and Ireland, visits are generally one day, inclusive of travel. International visit durations will be determined by location and travel requirements.

Once the site visit has been completed, this information, together with a recommendation will be passed to the Panel for a final decision.

You will receive confirmation that this is being done together with the invoice as mentioned. You can expect notification within two weeks of your application being made that it has gone to the next stage.

3.2

Notification of results

Brickmakers will be notified of the success (or otherwise) of their application by email. We aim to have this completed within four weeks of the site visit being completed.

You will be notified of one of the four following outcomes:

A. You have not succeeded

This will be because your application does not provide sufficient evidence to warrant approval in at least six of the Critical Assessment Points listed, (three of which must include CAP 7, CAP 8 and CAP 9). We will try to provide feedback on where you need to improve your application.

B. You are successful and have achieved Two Star Accreditation

This will be because you have satisfactorily met the requirements of at least six CAPs, three of which include CAP 7, CAP 8, and CAP 9. You will be issued with an original and authenticated certificate saying so, together with the requisite information to enable you to use the **TWO STAR logo** detailed earlier in this document.

C. You are successful and have achieved Three Star Accreditation

This will be that you have satisfactorily met the requirements of all nine CAPs. You will be issued with an original and authenticated certificate saying so and the requisite information to enable you to use the **THREE STAR logo** detailed earlier in this document.

You may also require additional certificates to display at each of your business premises (again all of which will be originals and authenticated/stamped, dated and signed). If this is required, there is a cost of £20 plus VAT which includes P&P, for each additional certificate issued by us.

There is no limit to the number of certificates you may ask for.

BQC Certificates will normally be valid for one year.

Again, further certificates for display at your business premises will cost £20 plus VAT each.

Re-certification

For 2025 onwards, existing BQC member businesses will be required to have a site visit unless one has already been undertaken in the prior two years. The exact scheduling of the visit will be undertaken over an 18-month period to enable all existing members to be visited. Consequently, re-certification will be provisional on the basis that the business is found to be compliant when the site visit occurred. In the event of non-compliance, provisional certification will be withdrawn at that point. The costs of the site visit, as explained above, must be met before re-certification is confirmed.

Re-certification is annual and a renewal for a company that is an existing certificate holder, which must be processed via the website, will cost £500 plus VAT.

3.3 Use of Brand and Logos

It is not mandatory for you to use the logo and/or the branding provided to you upon achievement of charter status. However, using it will help you to promote your business and products to many prospective clients, re-sellers, merchants and other interested individuals, particularly those with an interest in working with a brickmaking business that respects and adheres to the CAPs and cares about responsible sourcing of clay brick.

The Charter brand is special and needs to be used, cared for, applied and managed responsibly. If you know of a company or other business that is using the brand and you believe that business has not gained the right to do so, then please report it to the BQC scheme manager.

Suggestions for the brand and logo use, include its placement on your company livery, website, packaging or indeed in any other promotional material you have. Please use it wisely.

The BQC scheme managers will monitor the use of the logo in general circulation to identify any potential misuse, (say for example, by a firm who does not in fact properly hold the charter). It will take action against any misuse.

Similarly, any data submitted by an applicant to the scheme will be held securely and under GDPR rules. We will not share your data nor sell it for any commercial reason whatsoever, to anyone. It will remain personal between you and the scheme manager, but it may be used to indicate to a potential enquirer, that the company is a BQC credentialled firm, holding a current certificate, or not. You can rest assured that your data will remain secure.



3.4 Suspicion of, or any maleficence by the applicant, following certification

Where a firm has achieved certification, but there is reasonable suspicion that the firm is not compliant with the scheme rules or where a complaint has been made to the scheme manager as to the provenance of the products being made, or where there is reasonable doubt as to the veracity of the applicant's business, then the applicant will be subject to a further audit.

Such an audit may take place at any time during the certification period and will be at the applicant's cost but only if the applicant was found to be in breach of one of the above conditions. Payment for such an audit will be required up front, or else the certification will be terminated. The Auditor will be appointed by the BQC Scheme Panel specifically for the purpose.

Applicants will be notified of any claim of suspicion made against them, prior to audit.

The rate charged for a site audit is £500 plus VAT per day plus reasonable travel and accommodation expenses for the auditor.

If it is proven that the Brickmaker does not have the required documentation to back up their application, then the certificate will be withdrawn immediately. Their business will be removed from the register of charter holders and that firm will not be able to use the Charter logo nor re-apply for up to 3 years from the date of that withdrawal.



3.5 Appeals against decisions made on your application, certification or audit

The scheme manager will facilitate an appeal against a decision made by the Panel as to the veracity of any site audit, or conclusion which has seen a certificate withheld, withdrawn or otherwise negated. This appeal will be chaired by the independent Chairman and may include an opportunity for the brickmaker to submit further supporting evidence which will be properly considered.

There will be a cost for this of £250 plus VAT. Only one appeal can be made in any one case, and the Independent Chairman's decision will be final.

3.6 Continuation of your certification and registration

Your certificate is normally valid for one year from the date of issue. In order to maintain certification, you will need to:

A. Submit a new application in the same manner as mentioned earlier in these notes.

B. Apply for an extension of your current certification based upon the evidence previously submitted and any further evidence you wish to submit, (perhaps because you may be moving from a certification level to another?) but this will be at a reduced cost of £199 plus VAT.

3.7 Where can I get further information?

Only clay brickmakers, can engage in this scheme at this point in time, although it may be opened up in future to producers of other clay or ceramic based products such as clay tiles, pavers or pipes.

It is envisaged that a **Supporter category for the BQC** specifically for suppliers, brick factors, component manufacturers and others will be introduced. This will have a special logo and will be aimed at those merchants, clients, re-sellers, specifiers and others who support the principles of the scheme and the need to ensure consistency and responsibility in the supply chain but do not in fact, make clay bricks.

Should you have any questions in the meantime, please feel free to contact the BQC Scheme Manager, courtesy of the BDA.

The BDA website will also hold the latest information on the scheme at www.brick.org.uk

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January 2025



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