

NAPIT Responds to Call for Rethink of Third Party Certification Scheme

In 2013, amendments to Part P of the Building Regulations created provisions for a new scheme, the 'Third Party Certification Scheme', to be introduced that would allow suitably qualified and registered individuals to check the domestic electrical work undertaken by others and to certify its compliance with the Building Regulations.

This Third Party Certification Scheme has sparked significant industry debate and some are still opposed to the idea. However, when given the opportunity by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to operate it, NAPIT took the decision to opt in in order to help design the scheme and ensure that it was both robust and fit for purpose.

Nevertheless, as with all new initiatives, myths and misconceptions still surround the Third Party Certification Scheme.

The role of registered installers

One misconception is that the scheme will undermine registered installers. NAPIT initially had similar concerns but, noting that this work is already performed by Building Control Officers, and after working with the Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET) and DCLG, we have been able to put safeguards in place to prevent this from occurring.

These safeguards include the use of a specifically designed Third Party Certifier's Electrical Installation Report, which must be submitted for auditing after every job. The report requires certifiers to know about the installation in advance and to carry out inspections throughout the installation process, including at first and second fix and at final testing and certification.



Safeguarding safety

Another common criticism is that the Third Party Certification Scheme would undermine safety. This couldn't be further from the truth. Third Party Certifiers must have a Level 3 NVQ in electrical installation and a current Level 3 qualification in inspection and testing. They must also have been assessed in inspection work, and will be regularly assessed to ensure their competence remains. NAPIT will inspect Certifiers through a combination of employer and individual inspection and there are strict controls in place to ensure that they cannot delegate to, or supervise another, operative. This means that the scheme is more robust than using either Building Control or, indeed, the qualified supervisor model used by some scheme



operators to assess the competence of electrical enterprises. Also, it requires the certifier to carry out far more hands-on inspection and testing that is often carried out by many supervisors on unqualified or under-qualified workers.



In response to the recent call for a re-think over Third Party Certification, David Cowburn, Managing Director of NAPIT Registration, said: “The introduction of Third Party Certification effectively recognises that electricians can do the work of Building Control. It is important to stress that it is not a new approach but an adjustment on who can carry out the check. Done properly, it in no way weakens Part P or undermines registered installers’ work. If anything, it complements the work of competent, registered electricians, providing greater levels of supervision to those who chose to carry out electrical work themselves and gives us an opportunity to communicate with them about the disadvantages of the approach and the additional benefits that would accrue if they did choose to employ registered installers.”

The table below shows how the Third Party Certification Scheme compares with existing routes for demonstrating compliance with the Building Regulations, highlighting the scheme’s role as an alternative to certification via Building Control.

Route to certification	Who installs?	Who inspects?	Who completes the BS7671 Certification?	Who produces the Building Regulations Compliance Certificate	How is Electrical Competence Verified?
Self-certification	Registered installer	Registered installer	Registered Installer (EIC)	Registered Installer via their scheme	Via a Government Approved Competent Person Scheme
LA Building Control - inspection	Unregistered Installer*	LABC	No one	LABC	Internally by Building Control
LA Building Control –	Unregistered Installer*	Unregistered Installer*	Unregistered Installer*	LABC	It is not

acceptance of EIC			(EIC)		
LA Building Control - use of an inspector	Unregistered Installer*	Sub-contract inspector	Sub-contract Inspector (EICR)	LABC	Internally by Building Control
Approved inspector (private BC)	Unregistered Installer*	Approved inspector	No one	Approved Inspector	It is not
Third party certifier	Unregistered Installer*	Registered certifier	Registered certifier	Registered certifier via their scheme	Via a Government Approved Competent Person Scheme

Fig 1: Routes to Building Regulations Certification

- * An unregistered Installer can be someone operating an electrical installation business without being registered on a Competent Person Scheme, or someone carrying out electrical work privately, such as DIY. They may or may not be qualified.