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Navigating Sustainability – Key considerations when selecting aluminium cladding

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1. Outline the various types of aluminium cladding products available and the ways they differ from each other.

The various products, all of which have a different type of core include:

Solid aluminium panel

Aluminium composite panel

Corrugated core panel

2. What is meant by the term ‘Lifecycle assessment’?

Life cycle assessment (LCA) is a systematic method of assessing the environmental impacts associated with all the stages of the life cycle of a product or process. Products that carry EPDs have undergone lifecycle assessments.

3. What are Environmental Product Declarations (EPDs)?

Environmental Product Declarations (EPDs) are independently verified and registered documents that communicate transparent and comparable data and other relevant environmental information about the lifecycle environmental impacts of products.

4. Are there any specific environmental certifications that specifiers should look out for when considering aluminium cladding?

At a minimum an EPD. GreenRate and Climate Active are two other important environmental certifications. With the three of these, architects can achieve the maximum of 20 Green Star points.

5. Recycling is a crucial consideration when considering the sustainability of aluminium cladding products. Why is this the case?

Because, while the aluminium manufacturing process is carbon intensive, the material is also infinitely recyclable and can be recycled without any reduction in quality. Therefore, as a general rule, the embodied carbon of products made from recycled aluminium is significantly lower.

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6. What is meant by the term 'Circularity' and how this concept differs from the traditional linear economic model?

The circular economy refers to a system in which products are re-used or recycled for as long as practical and therefore the resources used to produce them are kept in the material cycle for as long as possible. It contrasts with the traditional linear model, in which products and the resources used to produce them are disposed of when their service life ends.