



national consumer agency
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putting **consumers** first

National Consumer Agency

Building Energy Rating Certificate

Cost Survey

May 2013



Table of Contents

1	Introduction.....	3
2	Methodology	5
3	Building Energy Rating Certificate Cost Survey – Results.....	7
3.1	Property Type I – 3 Bedroom Semi-Detached House	7
3.2	Property Type II – 2 Bedroom Apartment	9
4	Key Findings.....	11

Table of Figures

<i>Figure 1</i>	<i>Average, Minimum & Maximum Quotes - 3 Bedroom Semi-detached House</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Figure 2</i>	<i>Average, Minimum & Maximum Quotes - 2 Bedroom Apartment.....</i>	<i>10</i>

Table of Tables

<i>Table 1</i>	<i>Previous NCA Surveys.....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Table 2</i>	<i>Areas Surveyed.....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Table 3</i>	<i>Average, Minimum, Maximum Quotes & Range - 3 Bedroom Semi-detached House</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Table 4</i>	<i>Quotes by Price Bands - 3 Bedroom Semi-detached House</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Table 5</i>	<i>Average, Minimum, Maximum Quotes & Range - 2 Bedroom Apartment.....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Table 6</i>	<i>Quotes by Price Bands - 2 Bedroom Apartment</i>	<i>10</i>

1 Introduction

This report presents the results of a National Consumer Agency (NCA) nationwide sample survey of Building Energy Rating (BER) assessors, which involved surveying the fees charged for providing a BER certificate for two typical properties; a three bedroom semi-detached house and a two bedroom apartment.

The present study is the latest in the NCA's series of pricing and price transparency surveys. Table 1 details the price surveys undertaken since May 2010. The NCA advocates for and works towards the provision of transparent pricing information wherever reasonable and possible in the supply of both consumer goods and services. This work is done in the belief that such information empowers consumers to make more informed purchasing decisions, aids those seeking to obtain better value and should ultimately promote competition as informed and empowered consumers are more likely to play an active role in markets.

Table 1 Previous NCA Surveys

<i>Sector</i>	<i>Published</i>	<i>Price Display</i>	<i>Prices/Fees Charged</i>
<i>Prescription Medicines</i>	<i>March 2012</i>		✓
<i>Prepaid Payment Products</i>	<i>October 2012</i>		✓
<i>Home Heating Oil</i>	<i>September 2012</i>		✓
<i>Solicitors</i>	<i>February 2012</i>	✓	✓
<i>Opticians</i>	<i>October 2011</i>	✓	✓
<i>Home Heating Oil</i>	<i>September 2011</i>		✓
<i>Branded Grocery Products</i>	<i>July 2011</i>		✓
<i>Driving Lessons</i>	<i>April 2011</i>		✓
<i>Childcare Providers</i>	<i>February 2011</i>	✓	✓
<i>Wood Pellets</i>	<i>December 2010</i>		✓
<i>Baby Care Products</i>	<i>October 2010</i>		✓
<i>Home Heating Oil</i>	<i>September 2010</i>		✓
<i>Branded Grocery Products</i>	<i>August 2010</i>		✓
<i>Doctors and Dentists</i>	<i>May 2010</i>	✓	✓

The BER system is operated by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI). A BER certificate and accompanying Advisory Report is an indication of the energy performance of a building¹. It covers energy use for space heating, water heating, ventilation and lighting calculated on the basis of standard occupancy. BER assessments are carried out by registered BER assessors who have been trained under the National Framework of Qualifications, passed the SEAI BER assessor examination and are registered with SEAI. Approximately 800 domestic BER assessors are registered with the SEAI.

The European Union (Energy Performance of Buildings) Regulations 2012 (S.I. 243 of 2012) make provisions for the inclusion of BER information in property sale and rental advertisements. The regulations specifically require that any person, or their agent, on or after 9th January 2013, must ensure that a current BER certificate for the building is stated in any sale or letting advertisement.

The specific objective in conducting this survey is to assess the level of price variation in the market for BER certificates and to provide nationally representative fee information, in order to inform the purchasing decisions of consumers who require a BER certificate.

The NCA notes that the fee charged is only one of a range of factors which the average consumer may consider when choosing a BER assessor. Other considerations are likely to include location, recommendations, previous experience with the assessor and the expertise of the assessor in the event that additional or further work should be desired, for example advice on renovations. The NCA is firmly of the view, however, that in addition to these factors consumers should have access to pricing information so that they can make a fully informed choice. The methodology utilised is set out in full in Section 2.

The NCA would like to thank the BER assessors for the time given in the course of this study.

¹ Source: The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) has detailed information on the BER system on its website: http://www.seai.ie/Your_Building/BER/.

2 Methodology

The National Consumer Agency conducted a telephone survey of BER assessors between 19th and 28th March 2013 to determine the fees charged for providing a BER certificate for two typical properties; a three bedroom semi-detached house and a two bedroom apartment.

A list of BER assessors was compiled using SEAI's National Register of BER Assessors² for 12 locations across the country as detailed in Table 2.

Table 2 Areas Surveyed

	Area	Property Type I 3 Bedroom Semi-Detached House	Property Type II 2 Bedroom Apartment
		Location	
1	Dublin	Santry	Glasnevin
2	Cork	Douglas	Douglas
3	Limerick	Castletroy	Castletroy
4	Galway	Doughiska	Galway City
5	Waterford	Dunmore Road area	Dunmore Road area
6	Louth	Drogheda	Drogheda
7	Kerry	Tralee	Tralee
8	Tipperary	Thurles	Thurles
9	Donegal	Letterkenny	Letterkenny
10	Kildare	Naas	Naas
11	Westmeath	Athlone	Athlone
12	Mayo	Westport	Westport

The **telephone survey was conducted anonymously** and as a result different assessors were surveyed for the two property types. Each assessor was asked to quote their fee, all inclusive, for providing a BER certificate for the property requested. A specific address was not volunteered; where the information was requested, a general area, as per Table 2, was

² Domestic Dwelling assessors may be found at the following link:
<https://ndber.seai.ie/Pass/assessors/search.aspx>

used consistently for each location. The NCA requested the final cost to be charged to a consumer inclusive of the SEAI levy³ and Value Added Tax (VAT) where applicable.

In order to be consistent across all of the assessors surveyed when requesting quotes it was indicated that a BER certificate was required to comply with the new advertising guidelines and it was stated that the house would be put up for sale or the apartment rented. Assessors were also told where possible; that there was no intention to carry out work to improve the energy rating of the property and that the BER certificate was all that would be required.

A total of 210 quotes were received, representing approximately 25% of the total number of domestic assessors registered with the SEAI, 107 quotes in relation to a three bedroom semi-detached house and 103 quotes for a two bedroom apartment. To reiterate, different assessors were surveyed for the two property types due to the mystery shopping nature of the survey and also the desire to limit the amount of time required by the assessors to respond to the survey.

The quotes collated for the purpose of this report captured the first price stated. To ensure consistency across all of the 210 quotes collected, neither haggling nor bargaining was conducted. It is also important to note that the quotes received have **not been audited**; the Agency wished to replicate the experience of consumers and therefore a “mystery shop” methodology was used to obtain quotes. The quotes were therefore recorded in good faith and at face value.

The BER assessors surveyed by the NCA are not named in this report. The purpose of the survey is not to provide details of the commercial practices of individual suppliers. Rather, it is designed to identify general trends in price levels amongst BER assessors in Ireland at this time.

³ Assessors are charged a levy of €25 by SEAI to submit a BER assessment to the national BER database and this should be included in the price charged.

3 Building Energy Rating Certificate Cost Survey – Results

Detailed results of the telephone survey of BER assessors are presented in this section. The results summarise the quotes for providing a BER certificate from the 210 assessors surveyed by NCA staff between 19th and 28th March 2013.

3.1 Property Type I – 3 Bedroom Semi-Detached House

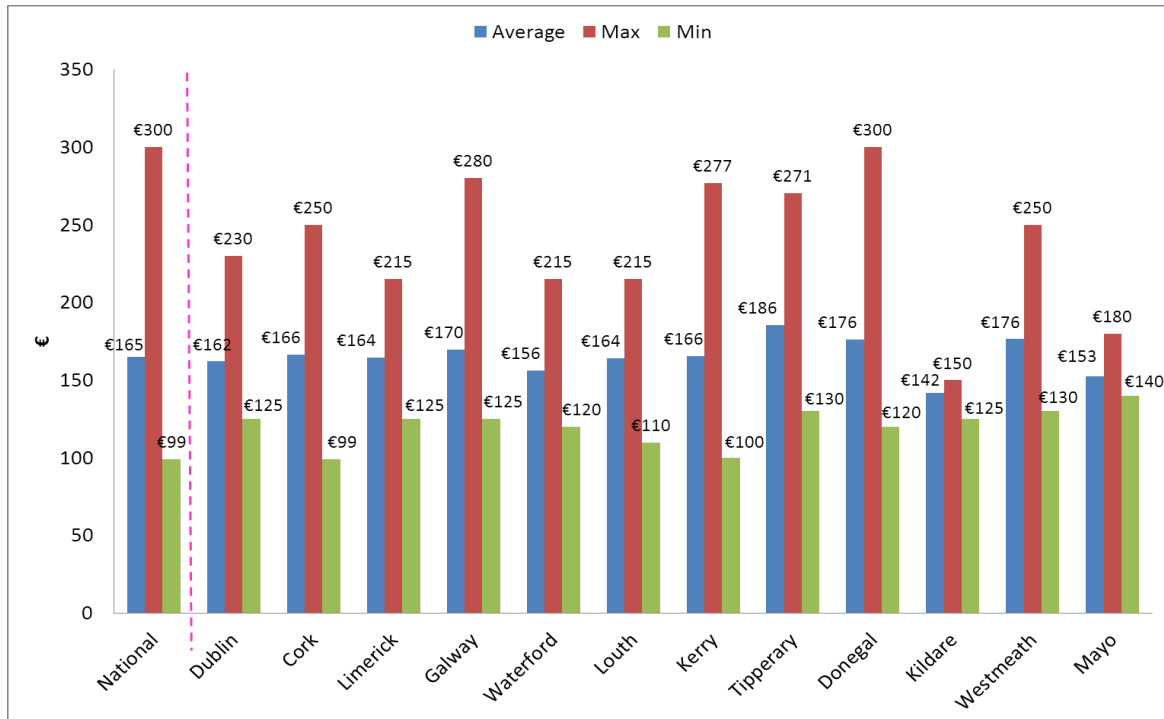
Table 3 and Figure 1 summarise the fees quoted by 107 assessors for a BER certificate relating to a typical three bedroom semi-detached house. Table 3 presents the average, maximum, minimum price quotations and range nationally and for the 12 locations surveyed. The range, being the difference between maximum and minimum quotes, highlights the benefits of contacting a number of BER assessors before choosing a supplier.

Nationally the average quote for obtaining a BER certificate for a three bedroom semi-detached house was €165. The lowest quote, obtained in Cork, was €99 while the highest quote of €300 was surveyed in Donegal. The overall range nationally was therefore €201.

Table 3 Average, Minimum, Maximum Quotes & Range - 3 Bedroom Semi-detached House

	Total No. of Quotes Received	Quote (€)			Range (€)
		Average	Max	Min	
Overall	107	165	300	99	201
Dublin	10	162	230	125	105
Cork	10	166	250	99	151
Limerick	9	164	215	125	90
Galway	10	170	280	125	155
Waterford	10	156	215	120	95
Louth	7	164	215	110	105
Kerry	8	166	277	100	177
Tipperary	10	186	271	130	141
Donegal	8	176	300	120	180
Kildare	10	142	150	125	25
Westmeath	7	176	250	130	120
Mayo	8	153	180	140	40

Figure 1 Average, Minimum & Maximum Quotes - 3 Bedroom Semi-detached House



In local areas the key findings are as follows:

- Kildare was found to have the lowest average quoted fee in a local area at €142. Tipperary was found to have the highest average quoted fee at €186.
- The Donegal area was found to have the largest variation within an area, at €180, quotes ranged from €120 to €300. Kildare recorded the lowest variation within an area, at €25, with quotes ranging from €125 to €150.
- Eight of the 12 areas surveyed had a variation of €100 or more, with a further two areas having variations of €95 and €90.

As shown in Table 4 the majority of quotes (57%) were within the price band of €101 to €150. A further 26% of quotes were between €151 and €200 with 15% over €200.

Table 4 Quotes by Price Bands - 3 Bedroom Semi-detached House

	≤ €100	€101 - €150	€151 - €200	€201 - €250	> €250
% of Quotes	2	57	26	10	5

3.2 Property Type II – 2 Bedroom Apartment

Table 5 and Figure 2 summarise the quotes from 103 BER assessors, nationally and for the 12 locations, for a typical two bedroom apartment. The average, maximum and minimum price quotations and range are presented in Table 5.

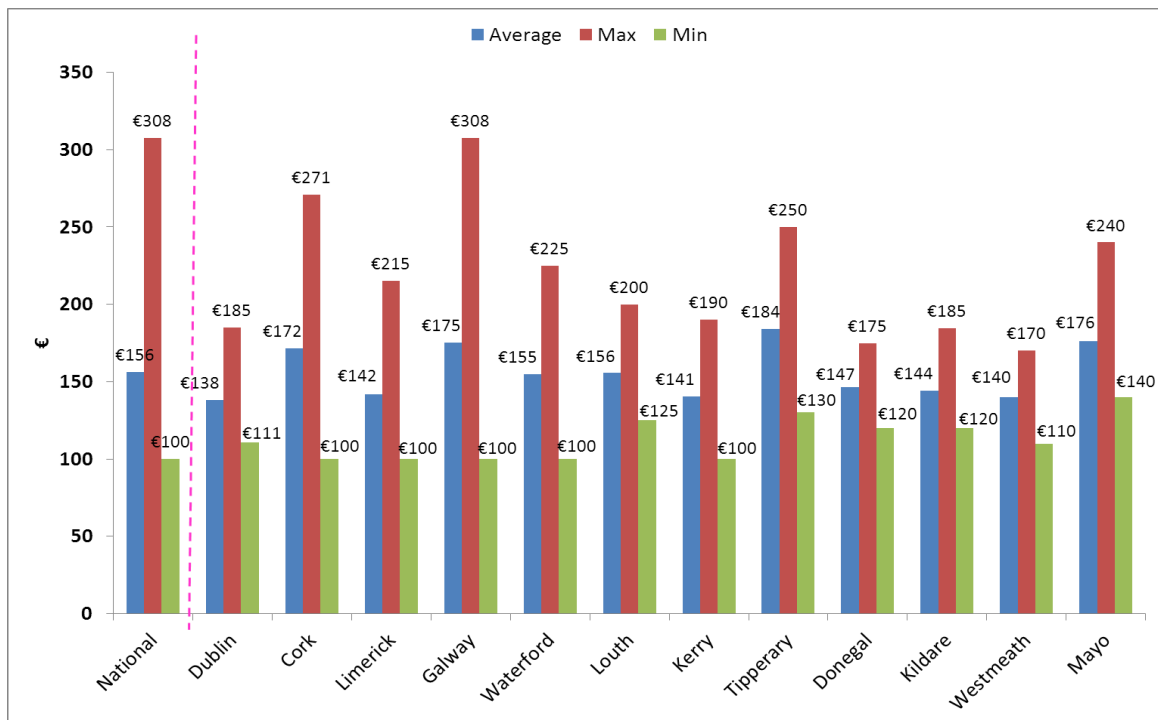
Across all the survey locations the average quote for obtaining a BER certificate was €156. The lowest quote, €100, was obtained in five locations – Cork, Limerick, Galway, Waterford and Kerry. The highest quote of €308 was surveyed in Galway, therefore the range nationally was found to be €208.

The national average quote for the two bedroom apartment was found to be slightly less than that for the three bedroom semi-detached house; this difference is most likely due, in general, to the relative amount of work involved in each scenario. The survey results indicate that renting or selling had no influence on the price quotation received.

Table 5 Average, Minimum, Maximum Quotes & Range - 2 Bedroom Apartment

	Total No. of Quotes Received	Quote (€)			Range (€)
		Average	Max	Min	
Overall	103	156	308	100	208
Dublin	10	138	185	111	74
Cork	10	172	271	100	171
Limerick	9	142	215	100	115
Galway	10	175	308	100	208
Waterford	9	155	225	100	125
Louth	8	156	200	125	75
Kerry	8	141	190	100	90
Tipperary	8	184	250	130	120
Donegal	8	147	175	120	55
Kildare	8	144	185	120	65
Westmeath	7	140	170	110	60
Mayo	8	176	240	140	100

Figure 2 Average, Minimum & Maximum Quotes - 2 Bedroom Apartment



For local areas the key findings were found to be:

- The lowest average quote recorded within an area was found in Dublin at €138. The highest average quote was found in Tipperary at €184.
- Galway had the largest variation within an area ranging from €100 to €308 – a difference of €208. Donegal recorded the lowest variation within area, at €55, with quotes ranging from €120 to €175.
- Six of the 12 areas surveyed had a variation of €100 or more. All areas surveyed had a variation of over €50 for this property type.

It was found that almost three in five (59%) quotes were within the price band of €101 to €150 as shown in Table 6. 26% of quotes received were between €151 and €200 with 10% over €200.

Table 6 Quotes by Price Bands – 2 Bedroom Apartment

	≤€100	€101 - €150	€151 - €200	€201 - €250	> €250
% of Quotes	5	59	26	8	2

4 Key Findings

The NCA conducted a “mystery shop” telephone survey of 210 BER assessors between 19th and 28th March 2013 in 12 areas across the country. The survey sought to collate quotes for obtaining a BER certificate from a registered assessor for two property types; a three bedroom semi-detached house (107 quotes) and a two bedroom apartment (103 quotes).

Property Type I – **Three Bedroom Semi-detached House:**

- The average quotation nationally was €165.
- The highest average quote within an area was found in Tipperary at €186. The lowest average quote was found in Kildare at €142.
- Nationally the quotes ranged from €99, recorded in Cork, to €300 recorded in Donegal, a difference of €201.
- Eight of the 12 areas surveyed had a variation of €100 or more, with a further two areas having variations of €95 and €90.
- 57% of quotes were within the price band of €101 to €150.

Property Type II – **Two Bedroom Apartment:**

- The average quotation nationally was €156.
- The highest average quote within an area was found in Tipperary at €184. The lowest average quote was found in Dublin at €138.
- The maximum quote surveyed was €308 (Galway) with the minimum being €100 (Cork, Limerick, Galway, Waterford and Kerry), a difference in quotes of €208.
- All areas surveyed had a variation of over €50 with six of the 12 areas surveyed having a variation of €100 or more.
- 59% of quotes were within the price band of €101 to €150.