

Quality Assurance Information – Stock Images and Implications of Use

Since the start of 2017, Quidos has permanently struck-off four domestic energy assessors for the use of stock images in their assessments. The following information should act as a guide, and warning, about the implications of using stock images in your assessments.

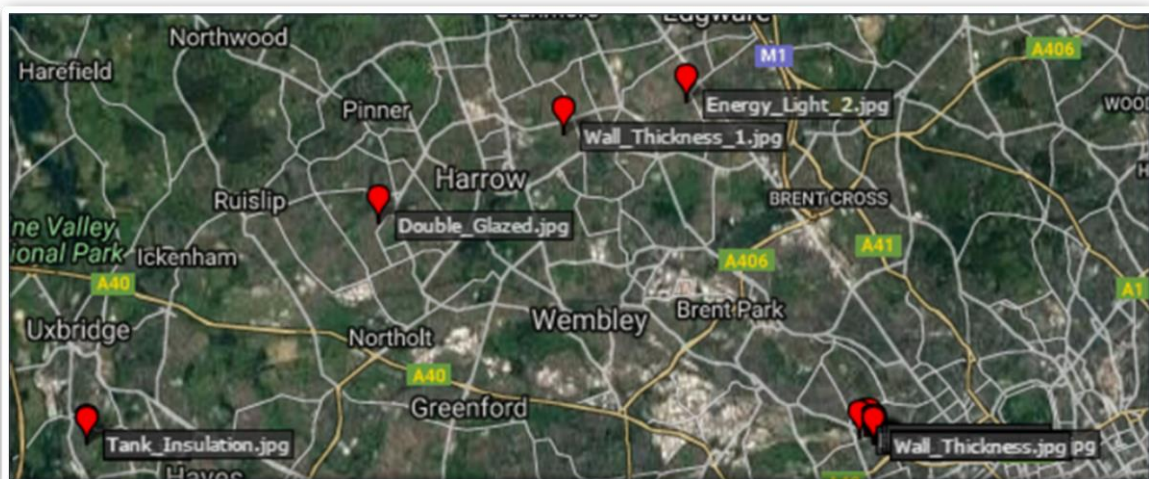
What are Stock Images?

Quidos defines stock images to be generic or previously-taken images submitted in place of evidence which should have been collected on-site. These images are generally not taken at the property being assessed. It is a requirement that all original images are provided for audit, including a date-stamp within the image, and that all metadata taken by the camera be retained.

Is it really such a big issue?

Yes! By manipulating your evidence, this will lead to concerns about the validity of the certificate as a whole, as well as whether the assessor had actually visited the property. If the certificate was used for the purposes of funding, such as RHI and FiT, this could even be classed as fraudulent activity.

In one instance, we noted that an assessor had used a photograph from their own house in order to back up their auditing evidence – clearly this is not acceptable situation, particularly if you found out that one of your competitors was doing something similar.



Above is an example from a recent stock image investigation showing the range of locations where the assessor had collected evidence from for their audit submission

But I only uploaded to pass the audit...

The use of stock images is not condoned under any circumstances. We are all human, and are likely to miss evidence occasionally, but that does not give assessors permission to fabricate evidence, either from the Web, or previous assessments. It is far easier to admit the error and accept the auditing failure than risk losing your livelihood.

What happens if a stock image is found?

If a stock image is found, or a suspicion of use is raised, Quidos will immediately suspend the assessor. We will request feedback as to the circumstances where suspected stock images had been used and an explanation.

In addition, we will also interrogate photographs previously submitted for audit over the past two years to assess whether this is an isolated incident, or whether there is a persistent history of use. We use software to work out the date which the camera records when an image is taken, as well as review any GPS information to confirm whether the image was taken at the property.

Finally, we would also look to undertake a telephone interview to discuss the issues further.

What happens next?

If it becomes clear that the suspected use of stock images was not intended to mislead, the assessor will be informed and given a number of actions to complete, as a pathway back from suspension, including a statement to prevent the use of stock images in the future, and a period of heightened QA.

If the suspected use of stock images was intended to mislead, under Section 8.6 of our Code of Conduct, we have no alternative but to **permanently** revoke the assessor's accreditation and strike-off their name from the Register of Assessors. Unfortunately, this action means that an assessor will be unable to work as an energy assessor with Quidos, or any other accreditation scheme.

Taking away an energy assessor's livelihood is not a course of action we take lightly, which is why we undertake a thorough investigation to determine the facts and make our decision from there.

We should also add that any action taken against an assessor's accreditation is independent of their contractual membership agreement with Quidos. Assessors would still need to close their membership and pay off any outstanding balances.

Need more information?

Should you have any further queries, please contact the QA team on qa@quidos.co.uk, or use the Technical Support Log.