

Practice query

Practice notes

Question PQ/11/85

Measurement of Working Space

In view of the wording of Standard Method Clause D6(g), i.e. – "From the external face of any work which requires workmen to operate from the outside at any depth below the starting level of excavation". Do you consider that working space is measurable in the following case – A foundation trench 900 millimetres wide and 2 metres deep from ground level to the top of the concrete foundation. Off the foundation is built a 335 millimetres wide brick wall. If your answer is no, would you be kind enough to give reasons.

Answer:

This question has been answered in the past by stating that it is perfectly feasible to build the wall within the width of the trench, in this case 900 mm. The method is for the bricklayer to straddle the wall as he builds it, first of all standing on the concrete foundations, then part backfilling to each side of the brickwork and standing on this to lay further courses. Should the contractor decide himself that it is preferable to build the wall from one side, thus necessitating additional excavation, he should allow in his rate for the non-measurable element of this.

However, there is an alternative school of thought which now considers that the traditional method as above is good in theory but not in practice. Supporters of this opinion feel that working space should be measured as D6 (g) (i) i.e. 0.60 m from the external face of the brickwork.

The whole problem rests with the definition of "... which requires workmen to operate from the outside..." laid down in the SMM and the question whether the *building* of a wall (which does not exist until it is built) involves workmen in thus operating. Reference to Clause D.12.1(b) in SMM6 Practice Manual appears to confirm the intention that "to operate from the outside" means to do something *to* the wall – such as applying a water-proof coating and/or a protective facing.

This apart, official guidance appears to exist by inference rather than specific and, this being so, differing opinions must be reconciled on the grounds of what is fair, reasonable – and practical. An appropriate stipulation in the general description of the work or trade preamble clauses in the bills of quantities would clarify the question.

Upon receipt of the above reply the member wrote:

The "advice" given here is typical in that it utterly fails to assist in convincing either party of anything – a "hunt with the hounds and run with the hare" policy in which I see no merit whatsoever. You have been at pains to quote two schools of thought on this matter – a fact of which I am only too well aware because there is a dispute. One of those points of view is right and the other wrong and that is what I have asked you to say. If you do not know what the SMM means what is the use of such a document?

Finally, I would take issue with your penultimate paragraph, in so far that had the wall been concrete, there would have been no question, but that working place should be measured to allow for the erection of formwork – A concrete wall does not exist either, until it is built.

How would other members deal with this question? – Editor.

JOINT CONTRACTS TRIBUNAL

Mr. Norman Royce, FRIBA, P/PIArb, well known as architect and arbitrator by many members of the industry and its related professions, has succeeded Mr. P. H. B. Bennett, FRIBA, as Chairman of the Joint Contracts Tribunal. Mr. Royce carries the good wishes of all as he takes over the tiller (or joy-stick) of the JCT at the present stage of its deliberations.

According to information issued by the NFBTE, the publication of the new edition of the standard form, the new nominated sub-contract form and the design/build form is expected early in 1979.

BSI: STANDARD DIMENSIONS FOR SOFTWOOD

BSI has issued a revision of BS 4471 *Dimensions for softwood* Part 1 *Sizes of sawn and planed timber*, to take account of changes both in trade practice and related standards that have taken place since publication of the first edition in 1969. This revised part specifies a range of sawn softwood sizes, and includes a schedule of reductions to accurate finished sizes for various categories of softwood. Details relating to the already-processed sizes of certain Canadian softwoods are provided in an appendix.

PSA PUBLICATIONS

Estimating Handbook for Building Maintenance

An Estimating Handbook for Building Maintenance has been prepared by the Directorate of Quantity Surveying Services, PSA, to assist in the preparation of estimates for maintenance work within PSA. The handbook comprises sheets of diagrams depicting typical maintenance operations. Each specified task usually shows a set of four or five examples arranged in increasing stages of quantity and cost. To assist in more complicated cases, abridged details of the price build-up for each illustrated example are shown on the facing page and, where necessary, this can be supplemented by measurement and reference to the Schedule of Rates for Building Works (1973) upon which the handbook is based. Percentage adjustment figures which bring these 1973 prices up to current levels are included in the Technical Memorandum QS "Quarterly Building Price and Cost Information".

Quantity Surveying Development Bibliography

A new bibliography on quantity surveying development has been published by the Library Service of the PSA. It concentrates mainly on items published during the last 6 years; it covers British practice and excludes all foreign language material. The material included has been drawn from the holdings of the Agency's library and the main collections on this subject. It contains the following sections: legal procedures, forms of contract, tendering procedures, claims, bankruptcy, insurance, measurement, bills of quantities, specifications, estimating, prices, the QS profession, education and training, management, data co-ordination, computers, statistics.

Copies of the above-mentioned publications are available from the PSA Library Sales Office, C109, Block C, Whitgift Centre, Croydon CR9 3LY.