BIM Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q. What are BIM objects?
BIM objects are virtual representations of construction products that make up a Building Information Model (BIM). These virtual objects are assembled to create a virtual model of a complete building in the same way real products are assembled to construct real buildings. Each object is a 3D emulation with properties, i.e. non-graphical designations such as manufacturer name, product name, technical information, etc. The properties comprise the type of information typically found in schedules.

Q. What are the current problems with BIM objects?
A key issue restricting the interoperability of BIM objects between projects is the inconsistencies in properties, property naming and object designation between different BIM workflow environments, as enabled by different software. Prior to the BIM Properties Generator, there was no standard for naming objects and their properties. This caused countless problems and duplication when models were shared. For example, the same window file and its properties can be named many ways:

- Aluminium sliding window
- Win-Al-Sl
- alum_wind_sliding_1500x900

This makes searching for similar objects inefficient amongst a multi-disciplinary team, especially with different stakeholders using different software, at different construction lifecycle stages.

Q. How does the BIM Properties Generator work?
NATSPEC has developed this tool to combat meta-data inconsistencies and offer the construction industry a shared resource that assists standardisation of objects and their properties. This helps teams using different software to exchange objects more easily. The BIM Properties Generator is based on Industry Foundation Classes (IFC), an established open standard.

Q. What does the BIM Properties Generator mean for a manufacturer?
Previously, manufacturers would provide product data sheets, drawings and CAD files so designers could include their products in project documentation. As the use of BIM becomes widespread, manufacturers can now provide BIM content as well. However, many have found their BIM objects are not always accepted by designers because they are incompatible with internal software systems.

To ensure a BIM object can be used by all specifiers – unlocking product demand across the entire specifier market while minimising creation costs – manufacturers should insist that anyone making their BIM objects should use the NATSPEC BIM Properties Generator.