



Low Carbon Homes Scheme

The Low Carbon Homes Scheme is a rate relief scheme which came into effect on 1st April 2010. It aims to encourage the building of low and zero carbon homes in Northern Ireland.

This scheme closes on 1st April 2011, however some applications will still be accepted until 31st March 2012, see criteria below for more details.

What is the Low Carbon Homes Scheme?

A scheme that provides full rate relief to:

1. The first occupier of a new low carbon home for up to two years; **and**
2. The first occupier of a new zero carbon home for up to five years.

What is a low or zero carbon home?

Whether low or zero carbon, the home will be highly insulated all round (ground and exposed floors, roof(s) and exposed walls). The home will also be very airtight to reduce heat losses due to draughts. The basic concept is to 'build tight, ventilate right.'

Low carbon homes are likely to have highly efficient condensing boilers (up to 97% efficient) to provide space heating and also solar water heating and/or mechanical ventilation with heat recovery.

Zero carbon homes are likely to have wood or wood pellet burning stoves for space heating or alternatively, air or ground source heat pumps, or even a mix. This will be coupled with solar panels for domestic hot water and Photo Voltaic panels (PV) or wind generators to produce electricity (electricity being the most carbon intensive energy source of all with a generation efficiency of around 27%).

These are just some examples of what you could expect to see in a low or zero carbon home.

What are the conditions of the Low Carbon Homes Scheme?

A low carbon home must meet the following conditions:

1. The Dwelling carbon dioxide Emissions Rate (DER) of the house over the course of a year must be no more than 56% of the Target carbon dioxide Emissions Rate (TER), as calculated in accordance with the approved methodology.

2. The space heating requirement of the dwelling-house over the course of the year must be no more than 23 kilowatt-hours per square metre (kWh/m²/year), as calculated in accordance with the approved methodology.

It should be noted that having an 'A rated' New Build Energy Performance Certificate (New Build EPC) with an Environmental Index (EI) of 92 or above, will not necessarily equate with a property being Low Carbon for the purpose of this scheme. A number of factors, not simply the EI rating have to be taken into account in determining whether your property is Low Carbon. The calculation can only be completed by an On-Construction Domestic Energy Assessor (OCDEA) who is registered with an approved accreditation scheme to carry out the full Standard Assessment Procedure and produce New Build Energy Performance Certificates.

A zero carbon home must meet the following conditions:

1. The heat loss parameter of the dwelling-house must be no more than 0.8 Watts per square metre Kelvin (W/m²K), as calculated in accordance with the approved methodology.
2. The Dwelling carbon dioxide Emissions Rate (DER) of the house over the course of a year must be no more than zero kilograms per square metre (kg/m²/year), as calculated in accordance with the approved methodology.
3. The net CO₂ emissions from the dwelling-house over the course of a year must be no more than zero kilograms per square metre (kg/m²/year), as calculated in accordance with the approved methodology.

For a property to be deemed to be Zero Carbon it will have to have an 'A rated' New Build EPC, with an EI rating of 100.

Who can apply?

You can apply for this relief if you own your home and are the first occupier of the property. Applications for the scheme only on request. Call the LPS helpline, dial 101 or 02891 513 101. You can also email applicationbased.raterelief@dfpni.gov.uk to request a form.

What do I need to do to build to these standards?

Anyone wishing to build a low or zero carbon home may wish to seek the advice of a building professional (architect/surveyor/energy consultant) who is also a qualified On-Construction Domestic Energy Assessor (OCDEA). That person will also advise as to the most cost effective route to achieving low or zero carbon standards.

How much will I receive?

Full rate relief for up to five years is available if your home meets the zero carbon standards. If your home meets the low carbon standards, you could get two years full rate relief.

How will I find out if my home is low or zero carbon?

If your home meets these standards an accredited OCDEA will provide you with a zero/low carbon certificate at the same time as your New Build EPC is issued.

How do I apply?

This is an application based scheme. Supporting documentation will be required for your application including a Zero Carbon Certificate or Low Carbon Certificate, a New Build EPC and the full Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP report). The On-Construction Domestic Energy Assessor will be able to supply you with all this documentation.

You may also be required to provide the date on which an application for planning permission was submitted and the associated application number.

Your On-Construction Domestic Energy Assessor will use the full SAP report to generate your EPC and your Low or Zero Carbon Home Certificate. It is important that you ensure that your assessor is registered with an approved accreditation scheme and can produce the full SAP report and the New Build EPC. We expect that one individual On-Construction Domestic Energy Assessor would produce all the documentation.

Please note that under the Energy Performance of Buildings (Certificates and Inspections) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2008 all properties completed after 30th September 2008 are required to have a New Build Energy Performance Certificate. This must be completed using the recognised full Standard Assessment Procedure and carried out by an On-Construction Domestic Energy Assessor.

You can contact Land & Property Services for an application form.

What conditions apply?

1. An application for planning permission must have been made before 1st April 2011. Any planning or other “statutory approval” delays or market difficulties will not extend the deadline.
2. The new home must be completed between 1st April 2010 and 31st March 2012. For the purpose of this scheme the completion date will be assumed to be the date of rateable occupation, i.e. the date from which the property is occupied and the occupants are billed for rates.
3. A completed low carbon homes application (along with the necessary supporting documentation) must be submitted to Land & Property Services before 1st April 2012.

Please note that if, at the time of application to the Low Carbon Homes Scheme, the property has not been valued for rates you must request that LPS Valuation value the property by completing and returning a CR3 form. These will be issued with the application form or are available to download at www.nidirect.gov.uk/rates

When will the scheme end?

The closure of the scheme will commence on 1st April 2011, however, provision has been made to **allow Land & Property Services to accept applications up until 31st March 2012**, subject to the conditions set out above. Anyone who has received low or zero carbon homes relief will continue to benefit for the duration of the award.

Who do I contact?

- **Dial** 101 (All calls cost 10p);
- **Dial** 028 9151 3101 if outside NI or unable to access 101; or
- **Textphone** 18001101
- **Visit** www.nidirect.gov.uk/low-carbon-homes.htm for more information.