



Low Carbon Homes Scheme

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

This fact sheet answers any questions that you may have about the scheme.

What is the Low Carbon Homes Scheme?

This is a new scheme that will provide 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 fuels 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.

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.

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](#).

Do any conditions apply?

Yes. The new home must be completed on or after 1 April 2010. 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 you first occupy the property and are billed for rates.

When will the scheme end?

The scheme will end on 31 March 2013 for low carbon homes and 31 March 2016 for zero carbon homes.

Who do I contact?

Phone 101 or go to www.nidirect.gov.uk/low-carbon-homes.htm for more information or an [application form](#).