

Non-Domestic Northern Ireland Renewable Heat Incentive (NIRHI) Frequently Asked Questions

Please consult the DETI NIRHI Guidance Volumes One and Two for full information on Ofgem’s administration of the NIRHI.

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1. What is the scheme about?

The Non-Domestic Northern Ireland Renewable Heat Incentive (NIRHI) is a financial incentive scheme designed to increase the uptake of renewable heat technologies and reduce the UK's carbon emissions. It provides a subsidy per kWhth of eligible renewable heat generated from accredited installations and a subsidy payable to producers of biomethane injection. For information about the Domestic RHI, please see the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) website.

2. What are the eligibility criteria?

The scheme is open to non-domestic renewable heat installations and plants producing biomethane for injection in the national gas grid. The following renewable heat technologies are supported:

- Solid biomass and solid biomass contained in municipal waste up to but not including 1MWth
- Solid biomass CHP (any capacity)
- Ground and water source heat pumps (any capacity)
- Geothermal, including CHP (any capacity)
- Solar thermal (at capacities of less than 200 kWth)
- Biogas combustion (except from landfill gas but including CHP; at capacities of less than 200kWth)
- Biomethane injection

There are other criteria which must be met and are contained in DETI's Northern Ireland Renewable Heat Guidance volumes which can be found on the [DETI website](#). These include:

- Demonstrating that the heat is being used for an eligible purpose
- Having appropriate metering arrangements
- Proof that grants have not been received for certain purposes

3. How can I apply?

You can apply for the NIRHI by going to <https://rhi.ofgem.gov.uk/Public/>. You will need to create an account on the RHI system before you can make an application for accreditation to the NIRHI. If you do not have access to the internet please contact us on **0845 200 2122** and we will provide you with a paper application.

Please note that we recommend applicants apply via the online system as this will allow us to process your application efficiently.

4. How do I claim NIRHI for my business?

In order to claim the NIRHI, you will need to submit an application for accreditation and become a participant in the scheme. You must be the owner or authorised signatory of the installation in order to apply for the scheme. For further information on who can apply for the scheme, please see Question 6. You will need to demonstrate to us that the installation meets the NIRHI eligibility criteria and that:

- The installation is of an eligible renewable heat technology type and size
- The installation was completed and first commissioned on or after 1st Sept 2010 and

- That the heat is used for ‘eligible purposes’: heating space or water, for carrying out a process where the heat is used in a building, or for cleaning or drying on a commercial basis outside of a building.

A full eligibility checklist and more detailed information on the eligibility criteria appear in Chapter Three and Four of Volume One of the Guidance. Different rules apply to producers of Biomethane. Please see Chapter Eight, Volume One for more information.

5. Can I claim the NIRHI as a domestic customer?

The domestic scheme has been open to applicants since 9 December 2014. Find out more by going to the [NIRHI-Domestic-scheme](#) website.

6. Who is able to apply for the scheme?

The person making the application for accreditation to the NIRHI must be the owner, or where more than one person is the owner, one of the owners (‘representative owner’¹), of an installation. An ‘owner’ in the context of the NIRHI is the person/organisation with exclusive rights and liabilities in respect of an NIRHI installation. The owner, or ‘representative owner’, is the person who will receive NIRHI payments for an accredited installation.

The only exception to the above is in the circumstance of a ‘hire purchase agreement, a conditional sale agreement or any agreement of a similar nature’. In these cases, the Act² defines the ‘owner’ for NIRHI purposes to be the person in possession of the plant under that agreement.

Please see Chapter Four, Volume One of the Guidance for more information on the meaning of ‘owner’ for the purposes of the NIRHI.

7. What information do I need to supply to Ofgem?

There is a ‘Summary of Supporting Information for Applicants’ document for NIRHI applicants on the [Ofgem NIRHI homepage](#). This shows what documents you will need to submit to support your application.

8. Can I pre-register?

If your installation has not yet been commissioned you can make a preliminary application, **unless** the installation is:

- Solid biomass and solid biomass contained in municipal waste below 200kWth
- Ground and water source heat pumps
- Solar thermal

Preliminary accreditation allows an organisation to submit plans and evidence demonstrating that,

¹ Where there is more than one owner of an accredited RHI installation, the owner with the authority to act on behalf of all owners is referred to as the representative owner.

² <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2011/6/contents>

once built, an installation would meet the eligibility criteria of the NIRHI scheme. It can be considered as a form of 'in principle' agreement and may include conditions. It gives reassurance that once the proposed installation is built and the owner applies, we would grant full accreditation so long as the installation is built in line with the submitted plans and all other conditions are met and there has been no relevant changes to the Regulations since the installation received preliminary accreditation. However it does not make the applicant a participant in the scheme, or will any payments be made or tariffs allocated on the basis of preliminary accreditation.

Full details on preliminary accreditation can be found in Chapter Two, Volume One of the Guidance.

9. How long will the scheme last for?

Once you have received accreditation under the NIRHI you are entitled to support for 20 years, providing you continue to comply with the conditions of your accreditation and your ongoing obligations.

10. How do I submit an application and ongoing periodic data?

You should submit all information relating to your installation, including the application and ongoing periodic data, via the RHI Register. This will help to ensure data integrity, a proper audit trail, and minimise the time taken to process your application. The bank account information form³ is an exception to this as it must be printed, completed and posted to us. There are circumstances when you should provide data or documents via email or post. Please refer to Chapter Two, Volume One of the Guidance for further details on how to apply, and Chapter Three, Volume Two for information on submitting periodic data.

RHI Register link: <https://rhi.ofgem.gov.uk/Public/>

11. If I send in a copy of my specifications for my installation, can you tell me if I will be eligible?

In order to give you a definitive answer on the eligibility of your installation we will need to receive and assess your full application for accreditation. Guidance on eligibility for the scheme can be found in Volume One of the NIRHI Guidance.

12. Should I apply as domestic or non-domestic?

Domestic premises are defined in the Regulations as 'single, self-contained premises used wholly or mainly as a private residential dwelling where the fabric of the building has not been significantly adapted for non-residential use.'

We will consider the eligibility of premises by taking into account the way in which they are treated for ratings purposes. For example, we will consider premises to be single domestic based on whether that premises is treated as a separate and self-contained premises for domestic rates purposes. Please refer to Chapter Four of Volume One of the Guidance for further information on domestic/non-domestic premises.

³ The bank account information form is a template available only on the RHI Register.

If we consider premises to be single domestic, and they are the only premises served by an installation, then your plant may be excluded under the NIRHI Regulations. We would however give an informed decision on this point after we have considered all the background information provided with an application.

If you have a district heating system for multiple domestic premises, you would be able to apply under for the NIRHI as long as there is more than one council tax bill for the properties which are served by the heating system.

13. Do I need a Microgeneration Certification Scheme accredited technology and installer?

You will require MCS certification (or equivalent) if your installation is 45kWth or less and uses any of the following technologies:

- Ground Source Heat Pumps
- Water Source Heat Pumps
- Solid Biomass
- Solar Thermal

Please see Chapter Four, Volume One of the Guidance for further information on Microgeneration requirements, including what we consider to be 'equivalent' for the purposes of the scheme.

For further information on MCS, please visit their website, www.microgenerationcertification.org.

14. What are the eligibility criteria for my technology (and fuels)?

You are strongly advised to read the eligibility criteria for your chosen technology in Chapter Five, Volume One of the NIRHI Guidance. This details the supported technologies and fuels for the scheme, along with the eligibility criteria for each type.

15. Is my installation district heating?

An eligible installation supplying heat to an apartment building, or a network of pipes supplying heat from an eligible installation to a number of local households or businesses comes under the definition of district heating for the NIRHI.

Further information on District and Community heating can be found in Chapter Four, Volume One.

16. What about rental properties/holiday lets?

We will consider the eligibility of premises by taking into account the way in which they are treated for ratings purposes - please see Chapter Four, Volume One of the Guidance. Land and Property Services provide further information on how they treat specialist properties on NIDirect. A single premise on a heating system would need to be subject to business rates for all or part of the premises. Please see the [NI Business Information website](#) for more information on valuation schemes for specialist properties.

17. Why can't I receive the NIRHI if I have a public grant?

The NIRHI has been developed with the principle of no double public funding in order to ensure value for money, and to remain within the European Commission's rules on State Aid.

You will not be eligible for the NIRHI if you have received a 'grant from public funds' for the costs of purchasing or installing your renewable heat installation. Please see Chapter Four, Volume One of the Guidance for how we will treat grants under the scheme.

18. Can I receive the NIRHI if I pay back my public grant?

If you have been paid a grant towards the costs of purchasing and/or installing your renewable heat installation after the date the Regulations came into force (1 November 2012), you are **not** allowed to repay your grant and claim the NIRHI. If you have received a grant for an installation that was installed and first commissioned between 1 September 2010 and the date the Regulations came into force (1 November 2012), you may be able to claim the NIRHI, providing you can prove to Ofgem that you have paid back the grant. For more information on grants and public funding, including on the matter of Carbon Trust loans, please see the NIRHI Grant Repayment Guidance Note available on the [NI page of the Ofgem website](#).

Please see Chapter Four, Volume One of the Guidance for further information on eligibility and grants.

19. How much of the grant do I need to repay?

Ofgem only requires the costs of the eligible installation to be repaid in order for us to be able to accredit an installation that is in receipt of a grant. This may mean that some applicants may only be asked to repay a portion of their grant. Please note that a grant provider may not accept part repayment. We advise you to contact your grant provider at the earliest possible opportunity to establish what their requirements are in this regard.

20. What parts of my installation need to be 'new'?

Your plant must be 'new' in order to be eligible for the NIRHI. We will interpret 'new' to mean plants that are brand new or have not been previously used. This requirement includes any equipment, apparatus or appliance which is necessary for, and integral to, the generation of heat using eligible sources of energy and technologies.

For further information on what equipment, apparatus or appliance we will consider to be part of the 'eligible installation' and is therefore required to be 'new', please see Chapter Four, Volume One of the Guidance.

21. I have a Solar Photovoltaic Thermal installation and want to claim the NIRHI, can I claim for my electricity too?

PVT systems are eligible for NIRHI support but only for their heat output, provided; the heat output of the system is separately rated in kWth, there is separate thermal metering and the solar thermal aspect of the technology is either a liquid flat plate or evacuated tube type system.

22. Why are air source heat pumps ineligible for the NIRHI?

Air source heat pumps are not eligible for the NIRHI at this time. This decision was taken by DETI who are responsible for setting the policy underpinning the NIRHI.

23. What metering do I need if my installation is supplying more than one building?

We will consider you to be a 'complex' installation if you are supplying heat to more than one building. In this instance you will need to comply with the meter placement requirements for complex installations. These requirements are explained in Chapter Seven, Volume One of the Guidance.

In exceptional circumstances where it would be unduly burdensome, Ofgem may consider the use of a heat loss calculation to calculate heat lost in distribution between buildings. Applicants wishing to follow this methodology will need to complete a heat loss calculation and outline to Ofgem why the need to install additional meters would be unduly burdensome for one of the following reasons:

- physical constraints, reasons of safety or environmental conditions;
- a class 2 heat meter or steam measuring equipment would provide less accurate results than a heat loss calculation;
- the cost of installing additional meters would be disproportionate in relation to the total cost of the installation; or
- the administrative cost to Ofgem to process information from a class 2 heat meter would be disproportionate in relation to the amount of heat that may be measured.

Ofgem will consider heat loss calculations and proposals for alternatives to metering individual buildings on a case-by-case basis. You may be asked to provide verification of these calculations by an independent and/or professionally qualified person. If the calculations are accepted, Ofgem will be able to accredit you on this basis.

24. How do I prove that my heat meter meets the Class 2 accuracy requirement?

Ofgem require all heat meters to comply with the Class 2 accuracy requirement within EN 1434. Evidence in applications should explicitly illustrate that the heat meter adheres to the Class 2 accuracy standard. Often heat meter model brochures will not provide sufficient evidence, as they do not specify the accuracy standard.

Therefore Ofgem recommends that applications should also be supported by a photograph of the heat meter. The resolution of the image should be sufficient so that the accuracy class can be seen on the meter label. The image should be uploaded to the further supporting evidence section of the application.

25. Do I need a calibration certificate for a new meter?

If your meter is new (under one year old), the most recent calibration is likely to have been at the

time of manufacture. In this instance, you may (if requested) provide evidence of purchase or manufacture instead of a calibration certificate.

26. Do I need to submit an Independent Report on Metering with my application?

You are required to submit an Independent Report on Metering (IMR) as part for your application if your installation has a capacity of 1MWth or above, **or** is classed as **complex** for NIRHI metering purposes. Please note that we will generally **not** require an installation that has a capacity of 45kWth and below to submit an IMR in the first instance, however we may require this if in our view, the installation and associated heating system warrants it.

For further information on the IMR, and who can provide it, please see Chapter Seven, Volume One of the Guidance.

27. Do you have a list of persons who can provide the Independent Report on Metering?

Ofgem does not provide a list of persons who can complete the Independent Metering Report. As a starting point, you may wish to consult with your installer, meter provider or system designer as one of these may be able to assist. Bodies which may be able to provide lists of individuals who they assert to be competent, independent and adequately insured include the Building & Engineering Services Association (B&ES) [020 7313 4933] and GASTEC at CRE [01242 677877]. Other lists may also be available.

The competency criteria for the 'competent person' who can write this report can be found in Chapter Seven, Volume One of the Guidance.

29. How long will it take for Ofgem to accredit my installation after I have submitted my application for the NIRHI?

We will aim to accredit your installation within six weeks of a completed application being submitted to us. If we have queries on information provided to us, NIRHI accreditation may be delayed whilst we await satisfactory information from the applicant. Submitting a good quality application enables us to process it more efficiently, so please ensure you provide all the information and documentation requested as part of the application.

30. What can I expect to get paid?

Your payment will depend on the type of technology you install, the size of your installation (for small and medium biomass installations) and the amount of heat you generate. Please see Chapter Five, Volume Two of the Guidance for specific examples on how we will calculate the payment owed.

31. How will I get paid?

Ofgem will pay your quarterly payment directly into your bank account. We will pay you by BACS transfer. We will only pay monies into a bank account which accepts pound sterling deposits in the

United Kingdom.

32. Will my NIRHI payment be backdated?

The date your payment commences is the date of accreditation of an eligible installation, or if you are a producer of biomethane, the date of registration. Ofgem will therefore make payments from the date of your accreditation. The date of accreditation under the NIRHI regulations is the latter of either (a) the first day on or after the date of receipt of application for accreditation on which both the application was properly made and the plant met the eligibility criteria; and (b) the day on which the plant was first commissioned.

For example, if a full and complete application for an eligible and commissioned installation which met all the eligibility criteria has been submitted to Ofgem, then irrespective of the time taken by Ofgem to process this application, payments will be backdated to the date of submission. However if an installation has not been commissioned or did not provide a complete application, payment would not automatically be backdated to the date of submission but would start from when Ofgem were satisfied that the plant was commissioned and met all the eligibility criteria. Please note you must keep all meter readings while going through the accreditation process.

33. How long will it take for me to get paid after I have submitted my periodic data?

Ofgem will aim to pay your quarterly payment within six weeks of receipt of valid periodic data. Where there are delays due to insufficient or inaccurate information provided to us, payments may be delayed. For further guidance, please refer to Chapter Five, Volume Two of the Guidance.

When payment is made by Ofgem, a remittance advice will be issued to the participant's email address (or fax where no email provided), prior to a participant's bank account being credited.

34. What are the tax implications of participating in the NIRHI? (See the following question for information on Enhanced Capital Allowances)

Applicants are advised to seek their own advice on tax issues related to participating in the NIRHI by contacting the Northern Ireland Corporate Tax Office (NIRCTO) or HMRC directly:

<http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/nircto/index.htm> www.hmrc.gov.uk

35. Am I eligible for an Enhanced Capital Allowance (ECA) if I receive tariff payments through the NIRHI?

You are not eligible for an ECA in conjunction with RHI payments.

For further details, please follow this link: <http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/tiin/tiin684.pdf>

Or contact NIRCTO or HMRC directly: <http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/nircto/index.htm> www.hmrc.gov.uk

36. Further questions?

Any questions not covered here can be raised through our Enquiries Line on 0845 200 2122 and at RHI.Enquiry@Ofgem.gov.uk.