

Taking steps to help consumers

Throughout the ongoing cost of living crisis, we have been working closely with government and key stakeholders to bring forward much needed support for consumers. We welcome the confirmation of financial intervention announced by the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS).

The two schemes announced include a direct £400 payment to domestic consumers and a cap on the unit rate for gas and electricity.

ENERGY BILL RELIEF SCHEME

Cutting energy bills for UK businesses, charities and public-sector organisations

Support for domestic consumers

Consumers don't need to take any action to receive a £400 support payment. For credit customers, including those on direct debit, £400 will automatically be paid into the account holders electricity account. For pre-payment meter customers, three vends will be required to add the £400 to meters. Top up £5 and you will receive £170, top up £5 and you will receive £170 and finally top up £5 and you will receive £60.

The second scheme, known as the energy price guarantee scheme, will reduce the unit rate for electricity and for gas by a set pence per kilowatt hour. Again, customers do not need to take any action to avail of this scheme. Suppliers will apply these rates directly to accounts.

Support for businesses

The government will also provide a discount on wholesale gas and electricity prices for all businesses, the voluntary sector like charities and the public sector such as schools and hospitals, whose current gas and electricity prices have been significantly inflated in light of global energy prices. This support will be equivalent to the scheme put in place for households.

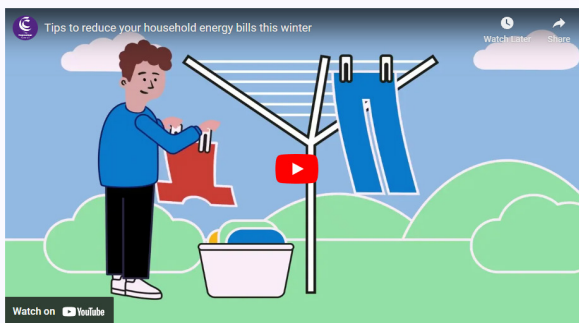
It will apply to fixed contracts agreed on or after 1 April 2022, as well as to deemed, variable and flexible tariffs and contracts. It will apply to energy usage from 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023, running for an initial 6 month period for all non-domestic energy users. The savings will be first seen in October bills, which are typically received in November.

Looking at all avenues of potential consumer support, we hosted a roundtable with the Consumer Council, Department for Communities, Department for the Economy and local energy suppliers to discuss further ways of helping consumers this winter. All those attending endorsed the need for collective action to support consumers in light of unprecedented energy price increases. We are planning a follow up roundtable shortly to agree practical actions to support consumers.

Energy information resources

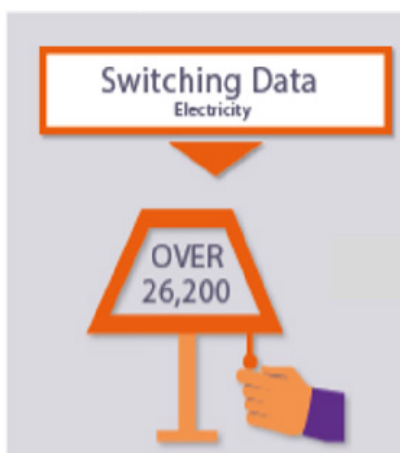
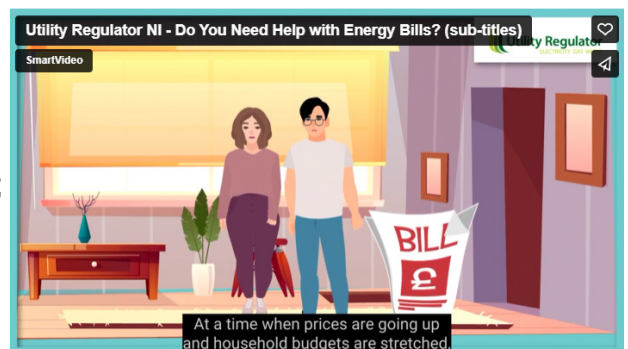
The Department for the Economy launched a series of consumer information videos that provide energy advice and support to help households this winter.

The consumer information videos are part of an energy information campaign involving the Department for the Economy, the Consumer Council and the Utility Regulator. They outline practical actions householders can take to help alleviate the impact of energy price rises.



We are working with energy suppliers to ensure they support their customers during these challenging times. Consumers should contact their supplier if they are worried about their energy bills. Suppliers are required by their licence to:

- work to develop manageable repayment plans based on the individuals ability to pay
- provide additional protection to consumers who are of pensionable age, disabled or chronically ill; and
- provide energy efficiency advice which may reduce usage and therefore overall bills.



Consumers are also encouraged to look closely at their energy bills and shop around. Switching is free and easy and a tariff that better suits your needs may be available.

Our latest quarterly energy market monitoring report showed that electricity switching activity increased from the previous quarter. A 3.1% switching rate increase was observed in the domestic sector and 1.1% increase in the non-domestic sector.

Energy prices

Energy prices remain high with little sign of international wholesale price drivers falling in the near future.

Many suppliers tariff increases took effect from 1 October 2022 with rises now seen in consumer bills. This includes increases in the regulated tariffs of both Firmus Energy in the ten towns and SSE Airtricity Gas in Greater Belfast and the West.

Prices in Northern Ireland continue to compare favourably with the GB price cap and in comparison with prices in Ireland. We keep all our regulated tariffs under constant review and publish further detailed market pricing information on our website.

International wholesale gas prices remain very high in comparison to historic levels. With ongoing issues in relation to the Nord Stream pipelines and the restriction of oil and gas flows to Europe, prices remain under sustained pressure.

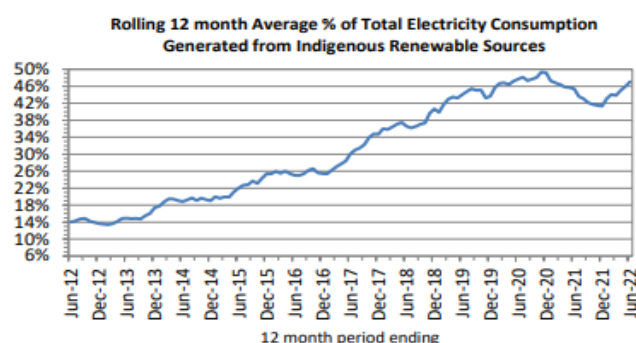
Region	Average combined electricity and gas bill per year (£) - from October 2022
Ten Towns (regulated tariffs)	£3,150
Greater Belfast and West (regulated tariffs)	£2,393
Great Britain (Price Cap)	£3,549
Ireland (Estimate of incumbent gas and electricity suppliers. Exchange rate of 0.86 used)	£3,124

Note: Figures above based on the annual bill of a customer consuming 12,000 kWh of gas and 2,900 kWh of electricity paying by direct debit.



Latest electricity consumption and renewable generation figures published by DfE

Recent figures published by the Department for the Economy show for the 12 month period July 2021 to June 2022, 47.1% of total electricity consumption in Northern Ireland was generated from renewable sources located in Northern Ireland. This represents an increase of 1.7 percentage points on the previous 12 month period (July 2020 to June 2021)



In terms of the volume of electricity consumption between July 2021 and June 2022, some 7,600 gigawatt hours (GWh) of total electricity was consumed in Northern Ireland. Over the same period, some 3,576 GWh was generated from renewable sources located in Northern Ireland

Of all renewable electricity generated within Northern Ireland over the 12 month period, 84.3% was generated from wind. This compares to 83.6% for the previous 12 month period (July 2020 to June 2021).

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STAFF PROFILE

Tanya Hedley Director of Networks

As the Director of Networks at the Utility Regulator I lead the team that regulates electricity, water and gas networks in Northern Ireland. I was previously a member of the all-island Single Electricity Market (SEM) Oversight Committee. I am also the Chair of Sentinus and a member of the Sentinus Board for over 5 years, supporting the promotion and delivery of STEM subjects in Northern Ireland



Prior to joining the Utility Regulator, I worked in the private sector. For over 19 years I worked for NIE Networks including roles of Transmission Projects Manager and Environmental Manager.

With a degree in Electrical and Electronic Engineering, I am also a Chartered Engineer, a Fellow of the Institute of Engineering and Technology, a Member of the Institute of Directors and an Associated Member of the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment. In my spare time I am a part-time Senior Lecturer for South Eastern Regional College where I support a woman's mentoring programme. I am also a Board Member of CASE (Centre for Advances Sustainable Energy) based at Queens University Belfast.

Outside of work I row (Skiffie Coastal Rowing World Medallist - honest), play golf occasionally, have been known to swim in the sea and love a bit of yoga! I also have the original Game of Thrones books and am not happy about the ending!

Consultations/news update

Across the summer we published the following key consultations, decisions and papers. Please click on the links below for further details:

- [SONI Evaluative Performance Framework: SONI's Annual Forward Plan 2022/23 - Call for Evidence and date for stakeholder workshop](#)
- [Information note on Electricity Guaranteed Standards of Service and Overall Standards of Performance](#)
- [Regulated Entitlement Information Note](#)
- [Latest Quarterly Retail Energy Market Monitoring report on NI's retail energy market published.](#)
- [Final determination and proposed licence modifications for the firmus energy \(Supply\) Ltd 2023-2026 price control](#)
- [Utility Regulator comments on Firmus Energy's regulated gas tariff increase](#)
- [Decision on SONI governance licence modifications published](#)
- [Utility Regulator comments on SSE Airtricity Gas Supply's regulated tariff increase](#)