

Important Information for Micro-Generators



About the Utility Regulator

The Utility Regulator (UR) is the independent non-ministerial government department responsible for regulating Northern Ireland's electricity, gas, water and sewerage industries, to promote the short and long-term interests of consumers.

We are not a policy-making department of government, but we make sure that the energy and water utility industries in Northern Ireland are regulated and developed within ministerial policy as set out in our statutory duties.

We are governed by a Board of Directors and are accountable to the Northern Ireland Assembly through financial and annual reporting obligations.

We are based at Queens House in the centre of Belfast. The Chief Executive leads a management team of directors representing each of the key functional areas in the organisation: Corporate Affairs; Electricity; Gas; Retail and Social; and Water.

Our Mission

Value and sustainability in energy and water.

Our Vision

We will make a difference for consumers by listening, innovating and leading.

Our Values

Be a best practice regulator: transparent, consistent, proportional, accountable, and targeted.

Be a united team.

Be collaborative and co-operative.

Be professional.

Listen and explain.

Make a difference.

Act with integrity.

Information Notice for Micro Generators (below 50kW)

Accrediting your generating station and getting paid for your Renewables Obligation Certificate (ROC) and Export Electricity

We have seen a large increase in the number of solar PV and other very small renewable generation stations (in the <50kW category) in homes and businesses throughout Northern Ireland. Queries received by the UR indicate that some of these generators are unsure about gaining accreditation under the Northern Ireland Renewables Obligation (NIRO), what they need to do to claim Renewable Obligation Certificates (ROCs) and how they receive payment for output electricity exported to the grid.

What is the Northern Ireland Renewables Obligation (NIRO)?

The Northern Ireland Renewables Obligation (NIRO) scheme offers support to domestic scale renewable generation stations in Northern Ireland. Also open to wind, hydro and fuelled technologies, the majority of these “micro” generating stations (<50kW) consist of a number of solar PV panels on a domestic or small commercial property.

Ofgem administers the NIRO on behalf of government and the UR and has a statutory obligation to grant accreditation to operators of eligible generating stations, and issue ROCs for eligible generation to operators of accredited stations.

Under the NIRO scheme you can receive ROCs for the electricity you generate, for a 20 year support period. These ROCs can then be sold to electricity suppliers. Micro-NIRO stations commonly elect to claim ROCs annually.

How do I apply?

You can either, go online and submit an accreditation application to Ofgem, or you can appoint an agent to apply on your behalf. Neither the UR nor Ofgem have any responsibilities for delays or loss caused by third parties or agents acting on behalf of generators. If you appoint a third party to submit your accreditation application on your behalf, they may charge an administration fee. ROC agents are not regulated by the Utility Regulator or Ofgem. You should, therefore read any agreement you have with an agent carefully.

If you choose to apply to Ofgem directly you must set up an account and submit the NIRO application via the [Renewables and CHP Register](#). There is a simple guide on how to submit a micro-NIRO application [here](#). There is guidance on how to create an account and use the Renewables and CHP

Register [here](#).

When am I eligible to receive ROCs from Ofgem?

A station is eligible to receive support from its accreditation date. The legislation requires this to be the later of the application date and the date the station commissioned (shown on your [MCS](#) Certificate, which your installer will give you). As an example, if your station commissions on 1 July and the NIRO application is submitted on 1 August in the same year, 1 August is the accreditation date and the date you can claim ROCs from for a 20-year period.

The accreditation date is set in this way whether you submit an application directly, or an agent submits the application on your behalf. Neither UR nor Ofgem have any responsibilities for delays caused by third parties or agents acting on behalf of generators. If you appoint a third party to submit your accreditation application on your behalf, they may also charge you an administration fee.

You must take a meter reading on the day you submit the application to Ofgem, then again on 31 March each year. It is also helpful if you take a meter reading on the first of every month.

How do I get paid for my ROCs and for my spill electricity?

Under NIRO, micro stations commonly claim ROCs annually through the submission of meter reads in April/May. In line with a legislative timetable, if these reads are accurate and reliable ROCs are then issued to generators in June via the Renewables and CHP Register.

To be paid for your ROCs and spill (export) electricity, you must enter into a contract with either a licensed electricity supplier or another party who may offer to purchase either or both of your ROCs and electricity.

Some electricity suppliers have chosen not to offer contracts for the purchase of either the ROC or the export electricity. However Power NI is required to offer terms and conditions to generators in this category and their terms and conditions have been approved by the UR. For information on the regulated standard terms and conditions offered by Power NI for the purchase of ROC certificates and associated electricity see this link: <https://powerni.co.uk/products-services/renewables/sell-electricity/>. Terms and conditions offered by other suppliers are not subject to approval by the UR.

Note:

Before entering into a contract for the sale of your ROCs and/or your output electricity you should read the terms and conditions very carefully. You may also wish to compare the offers made by different companies before deciding.

An agent can be appointed to act on behalf of a generator, and administer the NIRO accreditation and claim ROCs on the generator's behalf. There are several organisations that provide this service in NI.