



Department for the  
**Economy**  
www.economy-ni.gov.uk

An Roinn  
**Geilleagair**



**FACT SHEET**

# SMART ELECTRICITY METERS

APRIL 2026



# WHAT IS A SMART ELECTRICITY METER?

A smart electricity meter is a digital version of your current electricity meter. All meters are provided by NIE Networks. The new generation of smart electricity meters, which will be available for all homes and businesses in the future, will record your electricity usage and send this information automatically to NIE Networks.

## This means:

- ✓ No more manual meter readings.
- ✓ More accurate billing.
- ✓ Faster detection and response to faults or interruptions on the electricity network.
- ✓ Better information for you about how much electricity you use and when.



## How will I benefit from having a smart electricity meter?

### Better information

Your smart electricity meter will give you clear, real time insight into your electricity usage. This means you can make informed decisions about how and when to use electricity to save money and save energy.

### Get the best tariff

You can already choose from a range of tariffs offered by electricity suppliers. The Consumer Council provides a free comparison tool to help you find the best deal:

## ELECTRICITY PRICE COMPARISON TOOL

In future, smart tariff options will be available. You can stay on a traditional flat rate tariff if you prefer — choosing a new tariff is entirely optional.

### Save money

Using the information from your smart electricity meter, you will be able to reduce your energy costs by shifting some electricity use to times when demand is lower and prices are cheaper. Examples include:

- Running your washing machine or dishwasher at off peak times.
- Charging an electric vehicle when electricity is cheaper.

## Will everyone have a smart electricity meter?

Yes. Over time, as existing meters reach the end of their operational life, smart electricity meters will become the standard metering technology, with consumer protections and choice remaining in place.

## Will vulnerable consumers be looked after?

Yes. Consumer protection remains a core priority and the roll-out will be sensitive to the needs of different groups of consumers such as those with particular access or other vulnerabilities. Key points include:

- There is no plan to introduce remote disconnection features for consumers who struggle with bills.
- Existing consumer protections will remain in place.
- You do not need to be tech savvy to use a smart meter as readings are automatic.
- Support will be available in person, by phone, and through easy-to-read guides.
- The Consumer Council will chair an expert group on consumer protection and engagement throughout the roll out to ensure vulnerable groups are supported.



## I think I already have a smart electricity meter in my home?

As of early 2026, no smart electricity meters have been installed in homes in Northern Ireland yet.

## Will I still be able to use prepayment?

Yes. Prepayment will continue to be available. With a smart electricity meter:

- You can top up online — no need to enter codes manually.
- You'll still have access to clear usage information.

## Will I have to pay to have a smart electricity meter installed?

No additional charges will appear on your bill. All consumers already pay for metering services as part of their electricity supply. There will be no separate fee for a smart electricity meter installation.

## When will my smart electricity meter be installed?

Initial installations are expected to begin in early 2028.

The full roll out will then take place over several years. More detailed timelines will be shared once plans are finalised.

## Will a smart electricity meter affect my health?

Smart electricity meters are built to stringent industry standards and have been thoroughly tested to ensure they do not pose health risks.

## Will smart electricity meters help the environment?

Yes. Smart electricity meters support greener, more efficient energy use by:

- Helping you understand when it's best to use electricity to reduce costs and emissions.
- Enabling better grid management, reducing waste.
- Supporting increased use of renewable energy sources.

Small changes by consumers collectively help reduce reliance on fossil fuel generation.

## How will my data be used?

Your meter data will be used only for:

- Accurate billing by your supplier and NIE Networks.
- Anonymous system wide analysis by SONI (the System Operator for Northern Ireland) to improve grid operation.

You may choose to share your data with third parties (e.g., tariff comparison services), but only if you want to.

## What do I need to do now?




Nothing at this stage. You will be contacted when it's time for your meter to be replaced or upgraded.

**If you have concerns or specific needs in the meantime, you can contact:**




### CONSUMER COUNCIL (CCNI)

-  [www.consumercouncil.org.uk](http://www.consumercouncil.org.uk)
-  0800 121 6022
-  [info@consumercouncil.org.uk](mailto:info@consumercouncil.org.uk)

### NIE NETWORKS

-  [www.nienetworks.co.uk/help-advice/contact-us](http://www.nienetworks.co.uk/help-advice/contact-us)
-  03457 643 643
-  [customercontact@nienetworks.co.uk](mailto:customercontact@nienetworks.co.uk)

### NI ENERGY ADVICE LINE

-  [www.nihe.gov.uk/housing-help/ni-energy-advice/ni-energy-advice-get-in-touch](http://www.nihe.gov.uk/housing-help/ni-energy-advice/ni-energy-advice-get-in-touch)
-  0800 111 4455
-  [nienergyadvice@nihe.gov.uk](mailto:nienergyadvice@nihe.gov.uk)

