



# ENERGY STRATEGY E-BULLETIN

**ISSUE 35: JUNE 2026**

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## WELCOME TO THE ENERGY STRATEGY E-BULLETIN – ISSUE 35

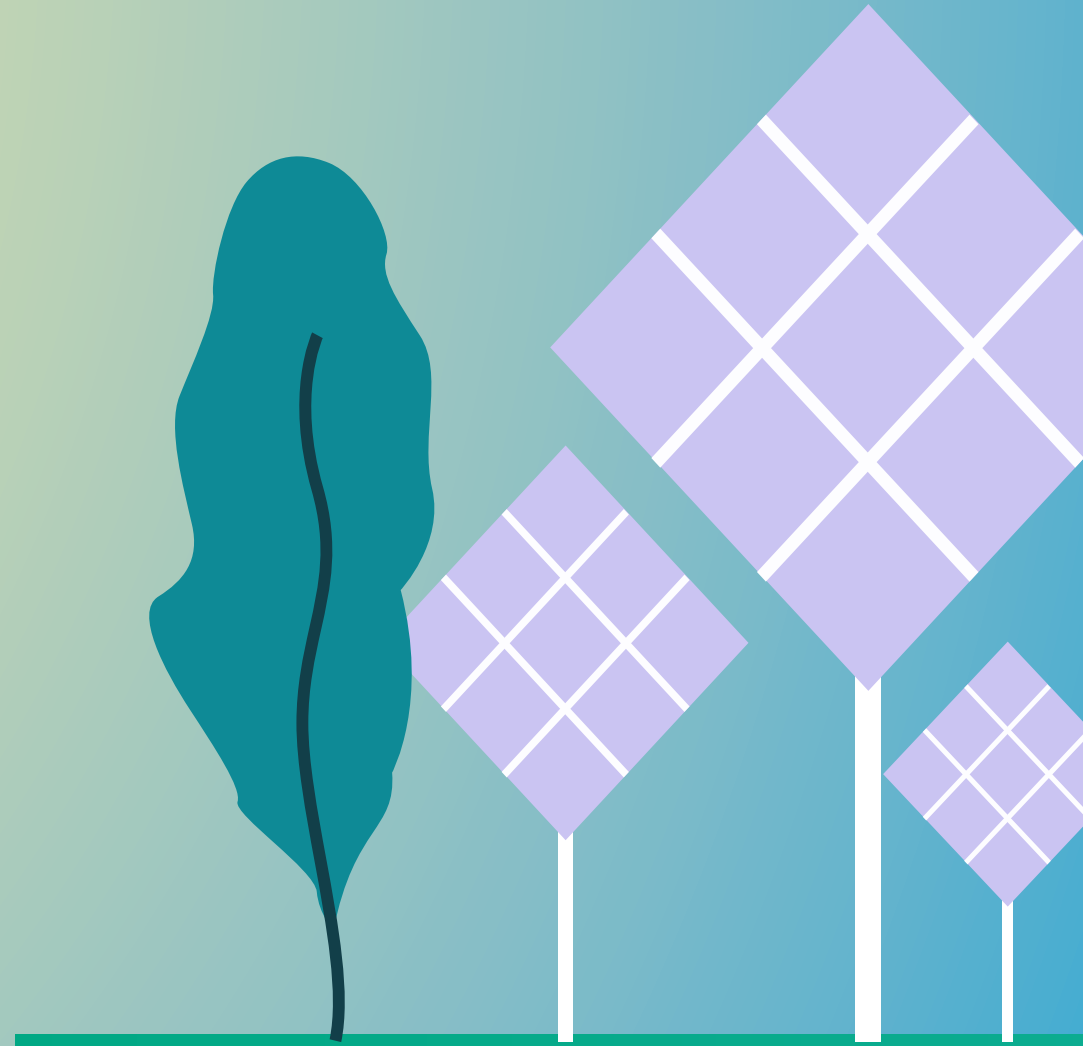
**In this issue, we bring you the latest updates supporting delivery of the Energy Strategy.**

We highlight the Energy Strategy Action Plan 2026 and the 2025 Action Plan Report, outlining the next steps towards a more affordable, secure and renewable energy system, alongside progress achieved over the past year.

You can also read about the Design Plan for the Roll-out of Smart Electricity Meters, which will give consumers better insight into their energy use and help them make informed decisions.

We're pleased to share the launch of a consultation on a new Geothermal Energy Regulatory Framework for Northern Ireland, inviting feedback on proposed arrangements.

Elsewhere, we cover Assembly support for the RHI Closure Bill and an extension to the deadline for the Mineral Licensing Review Call for Evidence, which will help shape future policy in this area.





## Minister for the Economy, Dr Caoimhe Archibald, has published the Energy Strategy Action Plan 2026, setting out the next steps to deliver a more affordable, secure, and renewable energy system for households and businesses.

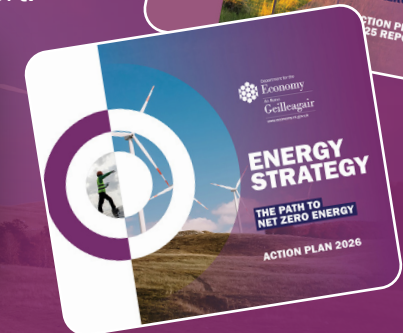
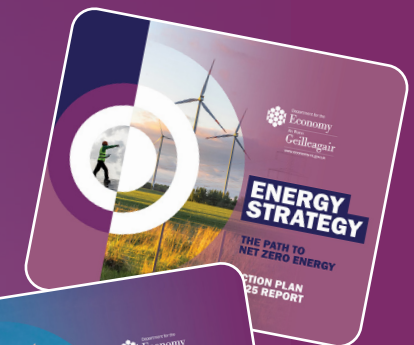
The 2026 Action Plan supports the Energy Strategy's vision of lower and more stable energy costs, reduced emissions and a growing low-carbon economy, while also contributing to the Minister's priorities for good jobs, higher productivity, regional balance, and decarbonisation.

This 2026 Action Plan builds on the foundations laid since the Strategy was launched and marks the transition to a more delivery-focused phase, informed by the Mid Term Review.

Alongside the 2026 Action Plan, the Minister also published the Action Plan 2025 report.

The 2026 Action Plan and 2025 Action Plan Report is available here:

[Energy Strategy Action Plan 2026 and Action Plan Report 2025 | Department for the Economy](#)





## HOUSEHOLDS COULD SAVE MONEY WITH NEW SMART METERS – ARCHIBALD

**On 29 April 2026, Economy Minister, Dr Caoimhe Archibald, published a new ‘Design Plan for the Roll-out of Smart Electricity Meters’.**

Smart electricity meters are the new generation of electricity meters, giving customers detailed information to make choices which save money, save energy and make effective use of new low-carbon and renewable technologies.

Publishing the plan, the Minister confirmed that smart meters will bring an end to estimated bills, giving people clear, real-time information about how much electricity they use and when they use it.

The Design Plan sets out how Northern Ireland will introduce smart electricity meters over the coming years.

It explains the principles for a successful roll-out, the roles and responsibilities of partners, how the system will protect consumers, and how procurement and installation will work.

Smart meters are a core part of delivering a modern, flexible electricity grid for the future and ensuring consumers have better control over their electricity usage.

Currently, in the Republic of Ireland, two million smart meters have been installed, while in Britain, 22 million smart meters are now in use. Evidence shows that the installation of these meters has driven innovation and smarter tariffs from electricity suppliers, significantly reducing electricity bills for many consumers.



### Key benefits of having an electricity smart meter

#### Better Information

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

#### Get the best tariff

Consumers can already choose from a range of tariffs offered by electricity suppliers. In future, smart tariff options will also be available. Consumers can stay on a traditional flat rate tariff if they prefer – choosing a new tariff is entirely optional.

#### Save money

Using the information from a smart electricity meter, consumers will be able to reduce their energy costs by shifting some electricity use to times when demand is lower and prices are cheaper.

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## HOUSEHOLDS COULD SAVE MONEY WITH NEW SMART METERS – ARCHIBALD

### Key information

- It is anticipated that the first smart meters will be installed in homes in early 2028, followed by a multi-year roll-out.
- Businesses, including small and medium sized firms, will also be covered by the roll-out.
- The investment will not be funded through new charges or upfront costs for households or businesses - metering is already paid for through the regulated price control process. Customers won't see added cost to their bills.
- Consumers do not have to do anything now. NIE Networks and electricity suppliers will be in touch at the right time, and consumers will be supported through the process at every step.
- Consumers keep their choices - fixed tariffs and prepayment options will continue to be available, and no one will be forced onto smart tariffs. Prepayment continues, with smart meters making it easier and more convenient. This is about better information, not taking options away.
- Supporting vulnerable consumers will be central to the roll-out. Existing safeguards will stay in place, and the Department will work with NIE Networks, the Consumer Council, and other relevant organisations to ensure appropriate protections are built into the roll-out, with clear information and support in place so that smart meters are accessible and beneficial for all consumers. There are no plans for remote disconnection for people who struggle to pay.
- As well as enabling smarter electricity usage, smart meters will enable NIE Networks, the electricity network operator, to future proof the grid and run the network more efficiently, which in turn reduces costs for consumers.

You can read the full press release here:  
[Households could save money with new Smart Meters – Archibald | Department for the Economy](#)

### Design Plan for Roll-out

Find out more about how smart electricity meters will be introduced across Northern Ireland.

[Design Plan for the Roll-out of Smart Electricity Meters | Department for the Economy](#)

### Smart Electricity Meters Factsheet

A dedicated Smart Electricity Meters Factsheet is available for consumers and stakeholders

[Smart Electricity Meters - Factsheet](#)





## CONSULTATION LAUNCHED ON GEOTHERMAL ENERGY REGULATORY FRAMEWORK IN NORTHERN IRELAND

**Economy Minister Dr Caoimhe Archibald has launched a public consultation on proposals to introduce a new regulatory framework for geothermal energy in Northern Ireland.**

Published on 15 May 2026, the consultation sets out plans for geothermal licensing, subsurface protections, and the management of geothermal heat.

The proposals mark a significant step in growing the geothermal market and unlocking the region's local geothermal potential.

Geothermal energy is the natural heat stored underground, which can be used to heat buildings and provide reliable, low-carbon energy. Northern Ireland is the first jurisdiction across the UK and Ireland to consult on detailed geothermal regulation.

Launching the consultation at the GeoEnergy Discovery Centre during the Balmoral Show, the Minister highlighted the Centre's role in supporting public engagement.

### **The Minister said:**

“Decarbonising heat is a major challenge, and geothermal energy offers a secure, locally available low-carbon option for homes, businesses and district heating, helping protect consumers from global energy price spikes.

“Further development is needed to ensure that geothermal energy can play a role in meeting our future heating needs, provide investor confidence and creating local, well-paid, skilled, ‘green’ jobs.”

The consultation sets out proposals to introduce new legislation to establish clear and proportionate rules for larger geothermal developments, while ensuring that smaller-scale domestic installations remain easily accessible.

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### The Minister added:

“These proposals are intended to support a growing geothermal sector that delivers clean, affordable heat while protecting the environment and respecting our urban and rural communities.

“Your view will help shape how geothermal energy is regulated here and how this local energy resource is used in the years ahead.”

The consultation will run for 12 weeks, closing on 7 August 2026, and can be accessed here:

[Proposals for Geothermal Regulation Consultation | Department for the Economy](#)

Responses can be made via Citizen Space at the following link:

[Consultation on Geothermal Regulation - NI Direct - Citizen Space](#)

For further information or queries, contact:

[Geothermal\\_Policy@economy-ni.gov.uk](mailto:Geothermal_Policy@economy-ni.gov.uk)



Economy Minister Dr Caoimhe Archibald launches consultation on new regulatory framework at GeoEnergy NI Discovery Centre during the Balmoral Show.



## MINISTER WELCOMES ASSEMBLY SUPPORT FOR RHI CLOSURE BILL

**On 12 May 2026, Economy Minister Dr Caoimhe Archibald welcomed the Assembly’s decision to support the RHI (Closure of Non-Domestic Scheme) Bill at Final Stage.**

The Bill provides the legal framework for closure, with detailed operational arrangements to follow in the closure regulations, subject to approval by the Assembly.

### **The Minister said:**

“Bringing the Scheme to an orderly close and putting in place arrangements that deliver a fair outcome for all - for both those who participated in the Scheme in good faith, and the taxpayer - is the right thing to do.

“I am grateful to all those involved in preparing and scrutinising this Bill. My Department will now move quickly to share the next steps with the Committee, to allow further scrutiny, and to conclude the formal processes as quickly as possible.”



## REVIEW OF MINERAL LICENSING - CALL FOR EVIDENCE

**DEADLINE EXTENDED:** The Call for Evidence that will help inform a future mineral licence policy has been extended to **28 June 2026**.

The Department for the Economy is seeking views and evidence to inform the development of a future minerals policy for Northern Ireland. This Call for Evidence is part of a review aimed at ensuring future policy supports sustainable economic development, contributes to the transition to low-carbon technologies and reflects best practice in environmental stewardship, social responsibility and good governance.

Evidence gathered will inform the development of mineral licensing policy options. Those policy options will be subject to full public consultation and other appropriate assessments.



**For more information please visit:**  
[Review of Mineral Licensing - Call for Evidence | Department for the Economy](#)



**Ways to respond:**  
**Online:**  
[Review of Mineral Licensing - Call for Evidence - NI Direct - Citizen Space](#)



**Email:**  
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