

ENERGY STRATEGY E-BULLETIN

ISSUE 24: NOVEMBER 2023

IN THIS EDITION

- Call for Evidence on using biofuels for Heating in Homes and Commercial Buildings
- Geothermal Discovery Centre
- Consumer Energy charter
- Winter Energy campaign 2023/24

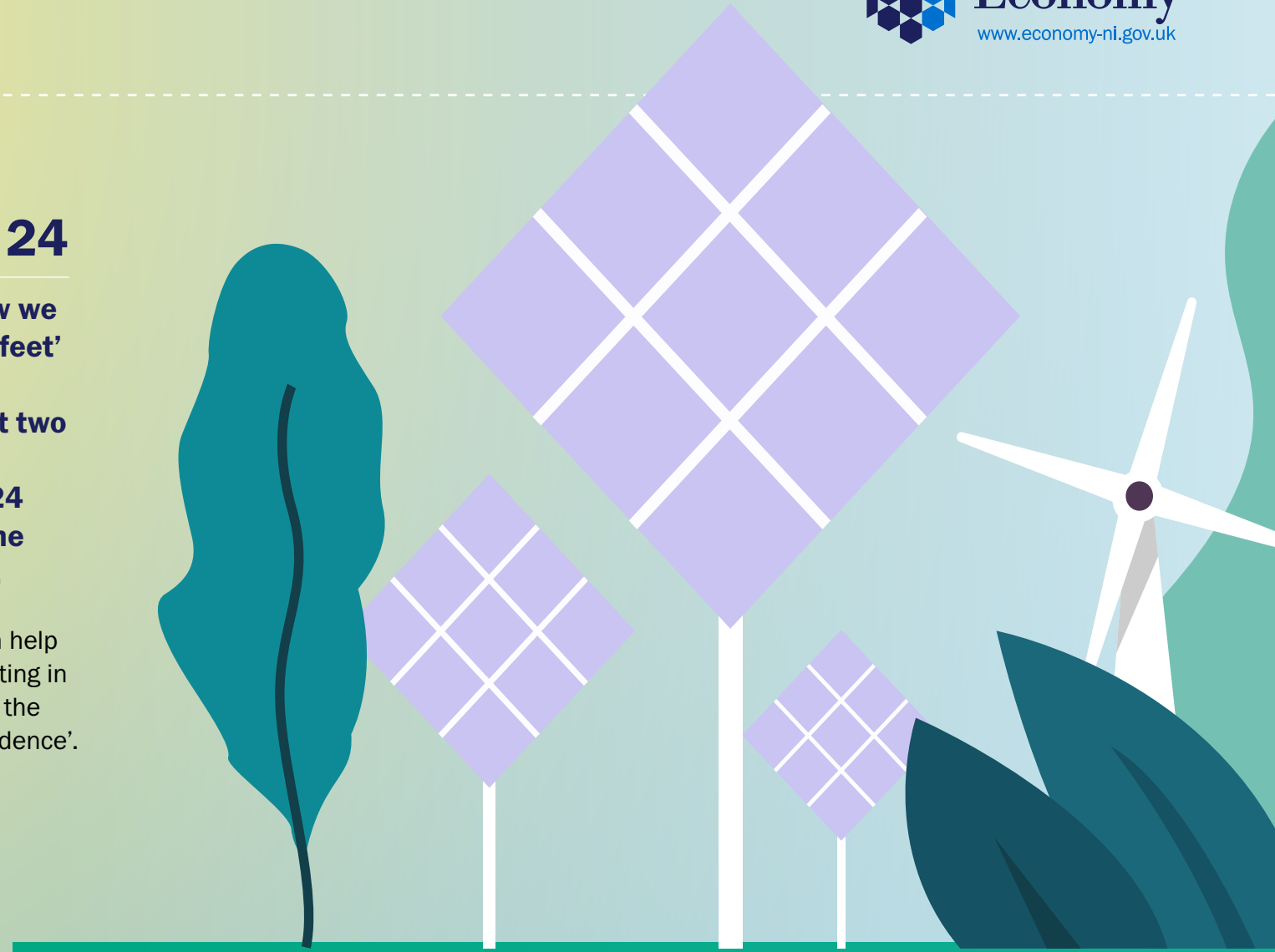


ENERGY STRATEGY E-BULLETIN

WELCOME TO THE ENERGY STRATEGY E-BULLETIN – ISSUE 24

This edition has information on how we can ‘unearth the heat beneath our feet’ with the exciting new Geothermal Discovery Centre. We also highlight two initiatives designed to support consumers this winter: the 2023/24 Energy charter and the launch of the 2023/24 Winter energy campaign.

You can have your say on how biofuels can help us transition away from fossil fuels for heating in homes and commercial buildings, through the Department for the Economy’s ‘Call for Evidence’.



USING BIOFUELS TO TRANSITION AWAY FROM FOSSIL FUELS FOR HEATING IN HOMES AND COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS CALL FOR EVIDENCE

This call for evidence (CfE) aims to explore sustainable alternatives to fossil fuels, such as heating oil and liquified petroleum gas (LPG) and replacing them with biofuels. Biofuels, such as hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO) and bioLPG, are typically regarded as much cleaner than their fossil fuel equivalents and the role they play during our energy transition could be the vital accelerator we need to help Northern Ireland achieve net zero by 2050. The outworking of this CfE will not impact fuel use policy for industrial processes or policy relating to the use of synthetic fuels.

This CfE is your chance to have your say and help shape our understanding of biofuels and their role in transitioning away from fossil fuels. Your insights will play a valuable role in informing our policies and decisions in this important area. The outworking of this will ultimately feed into a comprehensive approach to the decarbonisation of heating in homes and buildings in Northern Ireland, outlining pathways that are stable, predictable and constructive in reducing our emissions, lowering energy demand and helping to alleviate fuel poverty.

The CfE is due to be published soon, so keep an eye out on X (formerly Twitter) [Profile / X \(twitter.com\)](#) to have your say on this important issue.



NEW GEOENERGY DISCOVERY CENTRE

The Department for the Economy’s GeoEnergy NI has launched a new GeoEnergy Discovery Centre to help inform the public and stakeholders about the potential for geothermal energy in Northern Ireland as a renewable and sustainable energy source.

The visitor centre is a key part of the GeoEnergy NI project, which is designed to ‘unearth the heat beneath our feet’ and support the decarbonisation of the energy sector in pursuit of Northern Ireland’s net zero carbon targets by 2050.

The project is examining both shallow and deep geothermal potential at the Stormont Estate, Belfast and College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise, Greenmount Campus in Antrim.

The Centre, initially based on the Stormont Estate, with the ability to travel around the country, will host a number of interactive activities designed to demystify the subsurface and spread awareness of the huge potential for geothermal energy in Northern Ireland, including a Virtual Reality Programme.

To find out more about the project, please visit www.GeoEnergyNI.org



CONSUMER ENERGY CHARTER LAUNCHED

Extra support measures are being put in place for households this Winter, as Northern Ireland's Consumer Energy Charter is launched for its second year. This is a collaborative project which has been led by the Utility Regulator, in partnership with gas and electricity supply companies, the Consumer Council for Northern Ireland, the Department for Communities and the Department for the Economy.

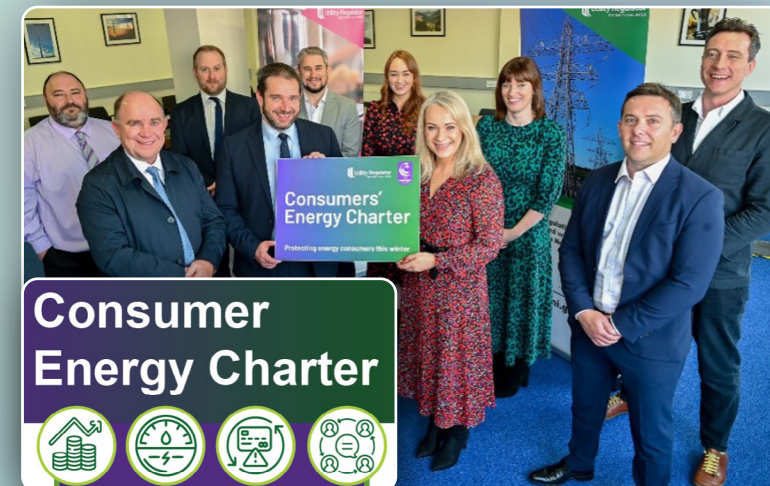
In signing up to the Consumer Energy Charter, the electricity and gas suppliers have committed to:

- Contributing to an external hardship fund for households struggling with their bills.
- Guaranteeing that none of their domestic customers will be moved onto a pre-payment meter during December 2023 or January 2024, unless the customer requests it.

- Completing an updated review of ability to pay for all customers on the maximum debt repayment amount of 40% and offering to move them to a 20% repayment rate.
- Ensuring that debt repayment amounts are not set above 20% for customers who are new to debt repayment plans unless the customer requests it.
- Ensuring customers on care registers will not be moved onto a pre-payment meter unless the consumer requests it and have proactively been made aware of the advantages and disadvantages of this choice.
- Checking in with consumers who have been moved on to a pre-payment meter to recover debt one month after installation.
- Continuing to assess ability to pay for all credit customers in debt, and if this identifies any issues, look to reducing repayment rates and/or extending debt repayment timeframes.
- Making sure that customers on their care registers are aware of the tariff most suitable for their needs.

- During their interactions with consumers in payment difficulties, provide practical advice to consumers on energy efficiency measures that could help customers reduce their energy bills.

The commitments from the Consumer Energy Charter will be in place from 1 November 2023 to 31 March 2024. For more information on the Charter, Charter and a full list of the commitments, please visit [Consumer Energy Charter 2023 | Utility Regulator \(uregni.gov.uk\)](https://www.uregni.gov.uk/consumer-energy-charter-2023).



WINTER ENERGY CAMPAIGN 2023/24

Northern Ireland Consumer Council are leading on a Winter Energy Campaign to raise consumer awareness of how simple energy efficiency measures can help households be better prepared for the winter.

Working in partnership with the Department for the Economy and the Utility Regulator, the campaign will focus on a number of areas, including:

- energy saving measures in homes
- potential savings to be made relating to billing and tariffs
- how to interact with energy suppliers
- how the Northern Ireland energy system operates
- how upcoming price changes might impact households

A similar Winter Energy Campaign was delivered in 2022/23, amid spiraling energy costs. This year's campaign will again feature a series of Energy Consumer Toolkits for electricity, natural gas, and heating oil consumers.

The Consumer Council website will host electronic versions of the Toolkits as well as

interactive energy price comparison tools and a wide range of information videos and advice, designed to support all energy consumers, but particularly vulnerable and private rental tenants.

For more information in the Winter Energy Campaign visit [Save energy and money | Consumer Council](#)

