

From: The DALO

Ms Emer Boyle
Communities Committee Clerk
Room 410
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont
Belfast
BT4 3XX

Dear Emer,

**HOME HEATING OIL (TEMPORARY FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE) REGULATIONS
(NORTHERN IRELAND) 2026**

The Committee for Communities approved the making of The Home Heating Oil (Temporary Financial Assistance) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026 ('the Regulations') at their meeting on 2 July 2026.

As part of the development of the Home Heating Oil Support Scheme, the Department engaged with the Department for the Economy (DfE) to explore changes to DfE legislation to facilitate information sharing by certain gas companies for the purposes of verification of claims under the Scheme. DfE officials did not consider it possible to progress the required legislative change, in the compressed timeframe, but were supportive of DfC including appropriate provision in the Regulations.

Therefore, an additional provision has been included to disapply certain information sharing restrictions under the Energy (Northern Ireland) Order 2003 for the purposes

of the Regulations. This will support the sharing of information with DfC for purposes of claims verification.

The Regulations don't amend the energy legislation, they simply modify the effect of it for the limited purposes of the Scheme, and this will fall away when the Regulations expire next year. DfC considers this a limited and proportionate approach given the value of the information in supporting the verification of claims and therefore protecting public funds. Officials have engaged with the relevant gas licensees, the Utility Regulator and the Information Commissioner's Office as well as DfE officials and there were no objections to this approach.

The Regulations were made on 23 July 2026 and the Scheme will open for applications late August.

I would be grateful if you could bring the information contained in this letter to the attention of the Committee for Communities at the earliest opportunity.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Laura Coffey', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Laura Coffey

Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer
Private Office