EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM TO

The Energy Bill Relief Scheme and Energy Bills Discount Scheme (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026

S.R. 2026 No. 23

1. Introduction

1.1. This Explanatory Memorandum has been prepared by the Department for the Economy to accompany the Statutory Rule (details above) which is laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly.

1.2. The Statutory Rule is made under Energy Prices Act 2022 and is subject to the draft affirmative procedure in accordance with section 11(6) and paragraph 4(5)(a) of Schedule 5 to the Energy Prices Act 2022 ("the Energy Prices Act"). resolution procedure.

2. Purpose

2.1. The purpose of this instrument is to amend the Energy Bill Relief Scheme (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2022 and the Energy Bills Discount Scheme (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2023 to formally close both schemes in Northern Ireland, in line with the equivalent amendment made in Great Britain.

3. Background

3.1. The Energy Bill Relief Scheme and Energy Bills Discount Scheme were introduced as temporary measures to support non-domestic energy consumers with high energy costs. The schemes were time-limited and the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) has already made equivalent amendments to close the schemes in Great Britain. This instrument ensures that the same closure provisions apply in Northern Ireland

4. Consultation

4.1. No separate consultation was undertaken in Northern Ireland. However, DESNZ consulted with suppliers operating in Northern Ireland as part of its GB-wide consultation process. Once it was confirmed that a separate NI instrument was required, the Department for the Economy proceeded with this amendment to ensure consistency

5. Equality Impact

5.1. The Department has considered the potential equality impacts of this instrument and concluded that there are no differential impacts on any of the groups protected by Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

6. Regulatory Impact

6.1. A Regulatory Impact Assessment has been prepared for this instrument and as a result the impact is considered to be de minimis. The closure of the schemes does not impose new regulatory burdens on suppliers or

consumers.Additonally the closure of the schemes result in no, or negligible, costs or savings.

7. Financial Implications

7.1. There are no significant financial implications arising from this instrument. The schemes were always intended to be temporary and the closure provisions reflect the end of the support period.

8. Section 24 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

8.1. The Department for the Economy is satisfied that these Regulations are compatible with Section 24 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. In particular, the Department is content that the provisions of this instrument: Do not discrimate against any person or class on the grounds of religious belief or political opinion, are within the legisltaive competence of the Northern Ireland Assembly.

9. EU Implications

9.1. This instrument does not have any implications for the United Kingdom's obligations under the Northern Ireland Protocol or the Windsor Framework.

10. Parity or Replicatory Measure

10.1. These Regulations are a replicatory measure, introduced to ensure Northern Ireland maintains regulatory parity with GB folling the eactment of The Enegy Bills Relief Scheme and Energy Bill Discount Scheme (Amendment) Regulations 2025 (SI 2025 No.204).

11. Additional Information

11.1. ["Not applicable"]