EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM TO

THE PLUGS AND SOCKETS ETC. (SAFETY) REGULATIONS 1994 AND ELECTRICITY SAFETY, QUALITY AND CONTINUITY REGULATIONS 2002 (AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS 2026

2026 No. 848

1. Introduction

1.1 This Explanatory Memorandum has been prepared by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero and is laid before Parliament by Command of His Majesty.

2. Declaration

2.1 The Rt Hon. Ed Miliband MP, Secretary of State at the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero confirms that this Explanatory Memorandum meets the required standard.

2.2 Melanie MacRae, Deputy Director for the Clean Power 2030 Unit, at the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero confirms that this Explanatory Memorandum meets the required standard.

3. Contact

3.1 Tony Brooks at the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero can be contacted by email at the following address with any queries regarding the instrument: CleanPower2030@energysecurity.gov.uk. Alternatively, the department can be contacted by telephone: 020 7215 1000.

Part One: Explanation, and context, of the Instrument

4. Overview of the Instrument

What does the legislation do?

4.1 This instrument amends the Electricity Safety, Quality and Continuity Regulations 2002 (the ESQCR) and the Plugs and Sockets etc. (Safety) Regulations 1994 (the PSSR) to permit the supply, sale and use of specified plug-in microgeneration products, namely plug-in solar panels (hereafter "plug-in microgenerators"). These products generate electricity from sunlight and connect directly to a standard UK household plug socket, unlike rooftop solar panels which are hard wired into the main electricity supply by an installation engineer.

4.2 The instrument amends both the ESQCR and the PSSR to include provision for plug-in microgenerators to be used safely without professional installation, subject to compliance with appropriate product specifications.

Where does the legislation extend to, and apply?

4.3 The extent of this instrument (that is, the jurisdiction(s) which the instrument forms part of the law of) is England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

4.4 The territorial application of this instrument (that is, where the instrument produces a practical effect) is England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

5. Policy Context

What is being done and why?

5.1 The ESQCR and PSSR are being amended to permit the supply, sale and use of plug-in microgenerators, to realise the government's ambition to allow consumers to purchase and install plug-in solar devices. Following these changes the policy will apply to: plug-in microgenerators connected to a microinverter with a power output of no higher than 800W AC ; the plug supplied with the microgenerator shall conform to British Standard (BS) 1363-1, and is plugged directly into a fixed BS 1363-2 socket; the panels, which are limited to a maximum of 2000W DC (the microinverter supplied with the panel converts the DC current it produces to AC current used by the mains), and; devices which are installed in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions, including requirements relating to electrical, building and fire safety.

What was the previous policy, how is this different?

5.2 Previously it was not permitted to supply a plug-in microgenerator to the market, nor was it permitted for a consumer to use or operate such a product. These restrictions related to two separate Regulations.

5.3 Firstly, under regulation 22(1) of the ESQCR, installations needed to comply with "British Standard requirements", which refers to BS 7671. This standard was built around fixed electrical installation and did not readily accommodate consumer plug-in products. Secondly, the PSSR required that plugs placed on the market conformed to BS 1363 (regulation 8). While PSSR did not explicitly prohibit plug-in power generation, BS 1363 does not permit plugs and sockets to be used for the connection of power generating equipment. In practice, this meant that plug-in microgenerators could not demonstrate compliance with the PSSR.

5.4 Therefore, to permit the supply, sale and use of plug-in microgenerators by consumers, the existing ESQCR and PSSR regulations require amendment as set out in this instrument.

6. Legislative and Legal Context

How has the law changed?

6.1 The PSSR are safety regulations made under the Consumer Protection Act 1987 and impose requirements regarding certain devices and appliances. The devices to which the PSSR apply include plugs intended for use at a voltage of not less than 200 volts. Regulation 5 prohibits any person from supplying, offering for supply, agreeing to supply, exposing for supply or possession for supply any plug that does not comply with requirements imposed by regulation 8.

6.2 The requirements imposed by regulation 8 include that a standard plug shall be a type approved by a notified body, and that such an approval is not to be granted unless the body is satisfied that plugs of that type conform to BS 1363. BS 1363 includes the provision that plugs shall not be used for the connection of electrical power generators to socket-outlets. Accordingly, plugs intended to be used with plug-in microgenerators do not conform to the standard.

6.3 Regulation 2 of this instrument amends regulation 8 of the PSSR, such that a plug intended to be fitted to or supplied with a plug-in microgenerator may be approved, where plugs of that type conform to a Plug-in Solar Device Interim Product Specification published by the Secretary of State, and conform to BS 1363 except for

the prohibition on the use of a plug to connect electrical power generators to socket-outlets.

6.4 Section 29 of the Electricity Act 1989 allows the Secretary of State to make such regulations as he sees fit for the purpose of, inter alia, protecting the public from the dangers arising from the generation of electricity. Regulation 22 of the ESQCR prohibits a person from installing or operating a source of energy which may be connected in parallel with a distributor's network unless certain conditions are met. Where the source of energy is part of a low voltage consumer's installation, the person must comply with British Standard Requirements. Regulation 3 of this instrument amends these requirements so that where the source of energy is a plug-in microgenerator, the person must comply with the Plug-in Solar Device Interim Product Specification published by the Secretary of State.

Why was this approach taken to change the law?

6.5 Amending existing regulations provides a safe and proportionate approach allowing market introduction of this new technology while maintaining safety standards. The Plug-in Solar Device Interim Product Specification provides a level of technical detail comparable to that typically found in a product standard, serving as an interim measure pending the development of standards. Full revision of the underlying British Standards is planned in due course and would be expected to be in place within around 2-3 years. When complete the full revision will replace this interim approach.

7. Consultation

Summary of consultation outcome and methodology

7.1 A consultation was conducted for the amendments made to the PSSR, in compliance with the duty in section 11(5) of the Consumer Protection Act 1987. No consultation has been carried out for the amendments to the ESQCR, as there is no legal obligation to do so. Regarding the PSSR the consultation sought views on the associated Plug-in Solar Device Interim Product Specification. Additionally, electrical safety tests results on plug-in solar were published at the same time, conducted in an independent United Kingdom Accreditation Service accredited laboratory.

7.2 The consultation was open to all citizens, businesses and interested parties in the UK. The consultation followed extensive stakeholder engagement including but not limited to regulators, the British Standards Institution, the Institution of Engineering and Technology, London Fire Brigade, the National Fire Chiefs Council, the Association of British Insurers, the Scottish Government, the Welsh Government and the Northern Ireland Executive.

7.3 An expedited two-week public consultation was held between 16-30 June 2026. This was necessary to make plug-in solar panels available in shops within months, as part of the government's drive for clean homegrown power to get the UK off its dependency on international fossil fuel markets and ensure consumers feel the benefit of the change to clean power. To safely bring plug-in solar to the UK market within this timeframe, we launched an expedited consultation on required regulatory changes alongside a programme of deep engagement and targeted workshops with expert stakeholders, to test proposals and to gather detailed technical input from manufacturers, retailers, insurers and standards bodies. The targeted workshops and extensive bilateral engagement were designed in such a way as to allow consultees to respond adequately to the consultation in a timely manner.

7.4 A summary of consultation responses is published alongside this instrument. The consultation response was broadly that the public and industry approve of the amendments as set out in this legislation. Of the 466 responses received, many respondents felt that placing solar panels on sale in the UK provides a potential route for consumers to reduce their cost of living, at a time of elevated energy bills owing to the crisis in the Middle East. Many respondents referred to the example of other European countries such as Germany and Spain, where plug-in solar has proved popular and safe.

7.5 We have worked closely with devolved governments on the take-up of plug-in microgeneration in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

7.6 Northern Ireland operates under a distinct electricity regulatory framework, including the Electricity Safety, Quality and Continuity Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012. The UK government has worked with the Northern Ireland Department for the Economy to consider the implications of these measures for Northern Ireland and to ensure continued coordination throughout policy development.

8. Applicable Guidance

8.1 Guidance has not been produced for this instrument. The amendments provide a legal framework for the use and supply of plug-in microgenerators, and rely on compliance with the Plug-in Solar Device Interim Product Specification and manufacturers' instructions.

Part Two: Impact and the Better Regulation Framework

9. Impact Assessment

9.1 A final stage Impact Assessment is submitted with this memorandum and published alongside the Explanatory Memorandum on the legislation.gov.uk website.

Impact on businesses, charities and voluntary bodies

9.2 There is a modest impact on business, charities and voluntary bodies, limited to the costs of purchasing (and, where necessary, installing) a plug-in microgenerator. Business, charities and voluntary bodies would incur a cost if they choose to purchase and install a plug-in microgenerator, however expected bill savings post-installation would outweigh the initial cost.

9.3 The impact on the public sector is limited to enforcing regulatory compliance to the minor amendments to PSSR and ESQCR introduced by this legislation. This is expected to be small, since these amendments increase the scope of permitted activities with respect to plug-in microgeneration, rather than decreasing them.

9.4 There is no, or no significant, impact on public sector finances because the legislation is expected to be revenue neutral for HM Treasury.

10. Monitoring and review

What is the approach to monitoring and reviewing this legislation?

10.1 The government does not intend to monitor this instrument because of already existing review plans, namely the development of industry-led product standards for plug-in microgeneration products in due course.

10.2 A statutory review clause is not included in this instrument and in line with the requirements of the Small Business, Enterprise and Employment Act 2015, the Rt Hon. Ed Miliband MP has made the following statement:

"This instrument does not make provision for review as it would not be appropriate in the circumstances to make such provision. A wider review, including the development of industry-led product standards for plug-in solar microgenerators is being planned and is expected to take at least 2-3 years."

Part Three: Statements and Matters of Particular Interest to Parliament

11. Matters of special interest to Parliament

11.1 None.

12. European Convention on Human Rights

12.1 As the instrument is subject to negative procedure and does not amend primary legislation no statement is required.

13. The Relevant European Union Acts

13.1 This instrument is not made under the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018, the European Union (Future Relationship) Act 2002 or the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Act 2023 ("relevant European Union Acts").