

Low Carbon Buildings Programme

April 2009



1. What is the Low Carbon Buildings Programme?

The Low Carbon Buildings Programme (LCBP) is a scheme that seeks to encourage low carbon buildings by providing grants to householders, public bodies and charitable organisations for the installation of microgeneration technologies. Funding is available throughout the UK (excepting the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man).

The Better Regulation Executive (BRE) are responsible for administering the programme on behalf of the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR). The aims of the programme are stated by BERR as follows:

1. To support a more holistic approach to reducing carbon emissions from buildings by demonstrating combinations of both energy efficiency measures and microgeneration products in a single development.
2. To see demonstrated on a wider scale emerging microgeneration technologies (with a focus on building integrated technologies).
3. To measure trends in costs of microgeneration technologies. It is expected that these costs should reduce over the lifetime of the programme against a 2005 baseline.
4. To raise awareness by linking demonstration projects to a wider programme of activities including developing skills and communicating the potential of microgeneration to change the attitudes and behaviour of consumers. Larger scale projects will seek to engage the construction industry in project replication by demonstrating the business case for developing low carbon buildings.

2. LCBP Phase 1: Householders

Individual property owners, including private householders, can apply for a grant of up to £2,500 under LCBP Phase 1 and may do so up until June 2010, or whenever funding runs out, whichever is the sooner. Grants for the business, public and community streams within Phase 1 have now been allocated and are closed to new applications.

Grants will be provided towards the cost of installing the following technologies:

- Solar photovoltaics
- Wind turbines
- Small hydro
- Solar thermal hot water
- Ground source heat pumps
- Air source heat pumps
- Bio-energy
- Renewable CHP
- MicroCHP (Combined heat and power)
- Fuel cells

Please note: The content of this article is for information purposes only and further advice should be sought from a professional advisor before any action is taken.

In order to receive a grant towards the installation of any of these technologies the applicant must use a certified installer and a certified product. Applicants who only have a leasehold interest in the property for which the grant is applied for must have permission of the property's freeholder to install the technology. If the house is owned by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) the person living in the house cannot apply for a grant- it must be the NIHE, as owner of the building, who makes the application. The system must have a permanent building and therefore mobile homes, caravans, house boats etc. are not eligible. The applicant must have applied for planning permission for the installation or received confirmation from the Planning Service that it is not required.

Applications are accepted on a rolling first-come-first-served basis. BERR advises that Phase 1 grant claims should be processed within 25 working days of receipt of full claim documents. Grant validity periods vary by technology and also depend upon whether the installation is on an existing building or a building under construction.

Before being eligible to apply the applicant must undertake a number of energy efficiency measures to ensure they are minimising their energy requirements. They are required to have:

- Insulated the whole of the loft of the property to meet current building regulations e.g. 270mm of mineral wool loft insulation or suitable alternative;
- Installed cavity wall insulation (if the property has cavity walls);
- Fitted low energy light bulbs in all appropriate light fittings; and
- Installed basic controls for the heating system to include a room thermostat and a programmer or timer.

BERR recommend that applicants complete a home energy check to assess which measures are most suitable for their home.

It is possible to apply for funding for up to three different technologies on one building, with a maximum of three different buildings funded. There is a maximum of £2,500 of funding available per installation address.

Double funding for projects will not be allowed therefore if an applicant has received funding from, for example, Northern Ireland's Renewable Energy Fund for the same project or installation, they will not be eligible to apply for LCBP Phase 1.

3. LCBP Phase 2

Public sector organisations (including schools, hospitals, housing associations and local authorities) and charitable bodies can apply for a grant under LCBP Phase 2 and may do so up until June 2009. The amount of funding available is generally up to 50% of the total cost of the project, excluding VAT, with a maximum of £1million per site.

Grants awarded under the programme cannot be made to any organisation or public body which falls within the concept of an 'undertaking', defined by Article 87(1) EC Treaty as any entity engaged in an economic activity, regardless of the legal status of the entity or the way it is funded. An activity can be regarded as 'economic' even if it is not profitable, or if it lacks an economic purpose provided that it is carrying on some commercial activity.

The technologies in respect of which the grants are available under Phase 2 are:

- Solar photovoltaics
- Micro-wind turbines
- Solar thermal
- Ground source heat pumps
- Biomass
- Wood fuelled boilers
- Automated wood pellet room heaters/stoves

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The main criteria for receiving a grant relate to the type of organisation, use of framework suppliers and meeting the £/tonne Co2 benchmark figures. Grants are available for installations of up to a maximum of 50kW electricity and 45kW heat per property. The installations must be chosen from the pre-specified products list available from the LCBP2 website at www.lowcarbonbuildingsphase2.org.uk.

Applicants can apply for a maximum of three technologies for each proposed building but there may be more than one building per site. Multiple applications from one organisation for different sites will be accepted however, as stated above, the maximum funding available per site is £1million. BERR have advised that Phase 2 applications should be processed within 5-7 working days, or up to 20 days if the amount applied for is over £100,000.

Applicants are not entitled to apply for or receive a grant under LCBP Phase 2 if they have already received funding from the national or devolved governments, however it is acceptable that they receive funding from other public sources including BIG Lottery and local government.

Application forms and further guidance on both LCBP Phase 1 and LCBP Phase 2 are provided by BERR at www.lowcarbonbuildings.org.uk. For guidance on energy efficiency measures and other energy efficiency grants available throughout the UK visit the Energy Saving Trust's website at www.energysavingtrust.org.uk or contact their advice centre on 0800 512 012.

Cleaver Fulton Rankin's Planning and Environmental team can advise on the consents required for renewable energy technologies. For further information contact Karen Blair or Maria O'Loan.

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