

# Get Smart About Energy

## Try our Home Energy Saving Kits



**Comhairle Contae  
Dhún na nGall**  
Donegal County Council  
Council of the Year 2025

# Contents

	Page
Introduction	2
How to Borrow a Home Energy Saving Kit	4
Thermal Imaging Camera	6
Digital Hygrometer	8
Fridge/Freezer Thermometer	10
Energy Meter	12
Infrared Thermometer	13
Radiator Bleed Key	14
North West Energy Agency (NWEA)	15



# Introduction

Donegal County Council is proud to offer free Energy Saving Kits available to borrow from your local library. It is part of a national initiative to help households better understand, check, and reduce energy waste in the home. Similar kits are available in over 200 public libraries throughout Ireland. These are designed to empower people to act on climate change and control their energy costs.

Our commitment to climate action means we want to support everyone — homeowners and renters alike. By making small but effective changes that can add up to meaningful savings for both pocket and planet. Far too many homes lose heat through draughts, inefficient appliances, and poor ventilation. These losses increase bills and carbon emissions. Checking your home's energy efficiency helps you spot problems early, make simple fixes, and avoid paying more than you should.

When you borrow one of our Energy Saving Kits, you get access to the very tools you need to do that. You can take the kit home for a full week — free of charge — and use it to test your home's weak points. The kit includes a thermal imaging camera making it much easier for you to see invisible heat leaks and pinpoint draughts. You can then identify where extra insulation or sealing is needed.

## What are the benefits?

You discover where your home is losing heat, so you know where to insulate or draught-proof.

You can measure humidity levels, helping avoid damp or inefficient heating.

You can test appliance energy use to see which devices are costing you most.

You can bleed radiators to improve heating efficiency.

Over time, these small fixes can lead to lower energy bills, reduced carbon emissions, and a more comfortable home for you and your family.

We believe everyone should have access to these tools and knowledge. Through this library-based lending scheme, we hope to raise energy awareness and support our shared goal of a greener, more sustainable Donegal — one home at a time.



# How to Borrow a Home Energy Saving Kit

Donegal County Council's Home Energy Saving Kits are available to borrow free of charge from your local library. Each kit contains a range of tools to help you identify energy loss in your home, from thermal imaging cameras to fridge thermometers and radiator bleed keys.

## **Borrowing Details:**

Loan period: 1 week

Queue / waiting list: Due to high demand, there may be a queue.

Please give your name and contact details to library staff when booking.

Number of kits available: 8 kits across Donegal

## **Libraries currently offering the kits:**

Central Library, Letterkenny – 074 9124950

Milford Community Library – 074 9153927

Leabharlann Phobail na Rosann – 074 9522500

Leabharlann Phobail Ghaoth Dobhair – 074 9560862

Buncrana Community Library – 074 9361941

Carndonagh Community Library – 074 9373701

Twin Towns Community Library – 074 9175384

Bundoran Community Library – 071 9829665

## **Important rules and information:**

The borrower is responsible for ensuring all equipment is returned with the kit.

If you don't live near these libraries, the kit can be delivered to your nearest library for collection. Just let staff know when booking your place in the queue.

High demand: Not returning the kit on time delays others from using this free resource. Please respect the borrowing period to allow everyone the opportunity to benefit.

By following these simple rules, you can enjoy the full benefits of the kit, help reduce your energy bills, and support other households in your community to do the same.

## **Become a Library Member**

All you need to borrow an Energy Saving Kit is a library membership card – and it's completely free!

There are two easy ways to join:

Visit your local library – bring a form of ID and a recent bill with your address. Complete a short application form, and you'll receive your library card straight away.

Join online – apply through the library website, then bring your ID and proof of address on your next visit to have your card issued.

It's simple, quick, and free to join – and your library card opens up a whole world of books, digital resources, and community tools like the Energy Saving Kit to help you live smarter and save more.

# Thermal Imaging Camera



A thermal imaging camera is one of the most effective tools for identifying heat loss and draughts in your home. It works by detecting temperature differences on surfaces and showing them as colour patterns. Warmer areas appear in shades of red or yellow, while cooler spots show up as blue or purple.

These images make it easy to see where warm air is escaping or cold air is entering. This helps you spot issues that are otherwise invisible to the eye. By using the camera, you can quickly identify areas that need better insulation, sealing, or ventilation. Simple improvements that can lower your heating bills and make your home more comfortable. For best results, stand 2 metres away from the area you are checking.

# How to Use the Camera

Choose the right time. The best results come when there's a noticeable difference between indoor and outdoor temperatures (ideally 10°C or more). A cool evening or early morning is ideal.

Make sure your home interior is warm before you start.

Start indoors – Slowly scan along walls, windows, doors, ceilings, and floors. Look for cooler (blue or purple) patches that or show draughts or poor insulation.

Check problem areas – Pay close attention to:

Window and door frames

Attic hatches and skirting boards

Around sockets, vents, and chimneys

Inspect radiators – Use the camera to check

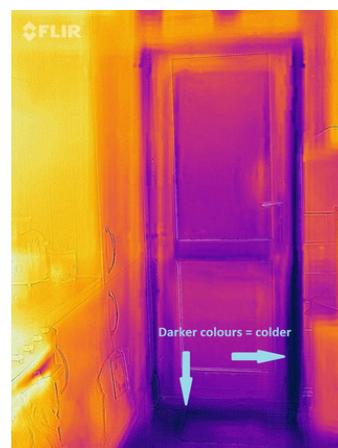
convector radiators for cold spots. Cool areas at the top can mean trapped air — a sign your radiators need bleeding for better efficiency.

Go outside – If it's dark enough and safe to do so, scan exterior walls. Look for warm areas where heat may be escaping through poor insulation or gaps around windows and doors.

## Why It Matters

Using a thermal imaging camera helps you see energy loss instantly, so you can take targeted action instead of guessing.

Whether it's sealing a small gap or improving insulation, these small fixes can lead to lower heating costs, less wasted energy, and a warmer, greener home.



# Digital Hygrometer



A digital hygrometer is a small device that measures the humidity (moisture level) and temperature in the air. It helps you understand how damp or dry your home is — an important factor in comfort, health, and energy efficiency.

When humidity levels are too high, rooms can feel cold and clammy, even when the heating is on. When levels are too low, the air can feel dry and uncomfortable. The ideal indoor humidity is generally between 40% and 60%.

# How to Use the Hygrometer

Place it in key rooms – Try the living room, bedrooms, or anywhere that often feels too hot, cold, or damp.

Monitor readings regularly – If humidity is high (over 60%), you may be losing heat through condensation or poor ventilation.

Take simple actions –

Use extractor fans or open windows briefly to remove excess moisture.

Dry clothes outdoors when possible to prevent added indoor humidity.

If humidity is very low (below 40%), consider adding plants or a small humidifier.

Balance heat and airflow – A good humidity balance helps your home feel warmer at lower temperatures, meaning you can reduce heating use without losing comfort.

## **Why It Matters**

By using a digital hygrometer, you can identify when your home's humidity is affecting both comfort and efficiency. Properly balanced air reduces condensation, mould, and wasted heating — helping you save energy, protect your home, and create a healthier living environment.

# Fridge/Freezer Thermometer



A fridge/freezer thermometer is a small, easy-to-use device that measures the temperature inside your refrigerator or freezer. It helps you ensure that your appliances are operating at the ideal temperatures for both food safety and energy efficiency.

Fridge: should be around 3–5°C

Freezer: should be around -18°C

Always keeping your appliances at the correct temperature. This ensures that food stays fresh and safe while avoiding unnecessary energy use.

# How to Use the Fridge/Freezer Thermometer

Place the thermometer in the main compartment of your fridge or freezer — not in the door, as temperatures fluctuate there.

Check the reading after a few hours to ensure the appliance is at the recommended temperature.

Adjust the settings if needed. Many fridges and freezers are set colder than necessary, which wastes energy.

Repeat regularly, especially after adding lots of food, or during seasonal changes in room temperature.

Avoid overfilling the appliance — good airflow improves efficiency.

## Why It Matters

Running your fridge or freezer too cold wastes electricity and increases your energy bills. Conversely, letting it get too warm can spoil food. By monitoring with a fridge/freezer thermometer, you can:

Reduce energy waste

Save money on bills

Keep your food fresh and safe

Lower your household carbon footprint

A small tool like this makes a big difference in running a more energy-efficient home.



# Energy Meter



An energy meter is a device that plugs into appliances to measure how much electricity they use. It allows you to see which devices are the most energy-hungry in your home.

## **How to use it:**

Plug the meter into the wall socket, then plug your appliance into the meter.

Switch on the appliance and read the power consumption.

Note readings for appliances on standby and in use to understand real energy usage.

Use this information to decide where to reduce energy waste — e.g., unplugging or replacing high-use appliances.

## **Why it matters:**

By knowing which appliances consume the most electricity, you can save energy, reduce bills, and lower your carbon footprint — all with simple, informed actions.

# Infrared Thermometer

An infrared thermometer measures surface temperatures without contact. It allows you to quickly check how hot or cold areas of your home are, including walls, windows, doors, and appliances.



## How to use it:

Point the thermometer at the surface you want to measure.

Press the trigger to get a reading instantly.

Check around windows, doors, walls, and ceilings for cold spots or heat loss.

Compare readings to identify areas that may need draught-proofing or insulation.

## Why it matters:

This tool helps you pinpoint heat loss efficiently, allowing targeted fixes. Identifying problem areas reduces energy waste, improves comfort, and can significantly cut heating costs.

# Radiator Bleed Key



A radiator bleed key is a small tool used to release trapped air from radiators. Over time, air can build up in your central heating system, preventing radiators from heating efficiently.

## **How to use it:**

Turn off your heating and allow radiators to cool.

Insert the key into the valve at the top of the radiator.

Slowly turn the key to release any trapped air (you may hear a hissing sound).

Close the valve once water begins to escape.

Check your boiler pressure after bleeding and top up if necessary.

## **Why it matters:**

Bleeding your radiators ensures even heat distribution, improves heating efficiency, and can lower your energy bills by preventing wasted energy.



**The 'North West Energy Agency' (NWEA)** was created by Donegal County Council to support homeowners, businesses and communities to put in place building energy efficiency improvements throughout Donegal. The Council, through this relatively new 'Energy Agency' has attracted funding for a new project called the 'Donegal Retrofit Mission' which will allow the 'NWEA' to scale up delivery of works over the next three to five year period.

**The NWEA service in summary:**

The NWEA aims to develop Area Based Retrofitting services, in peripheral areas like the North West which is currently underserved by other one-stop-shops. In summary, the NWEA will help with the following, with a focus on both domestic and non-domestic properties.

- Retrofit of buildings (domestic and non-domestic)
- Renewable heating systems (domestic and non-domestic)
- Solar PV (domestic and non-domestic)

## **How will the NWEA help home and businesses with energy efficiency improvements?**

The NWEA will provide independent information to homeowners / business owners on how to make their homes and buildings more energy efficient, for instance - the type of works that may be required, funding options including SEAI grants and low-interest loans and how these Energy efficiency improvements could be delivered.

## **What's ahead on this NWEA journey for 2025 - 2028?**

Clearly, the NWEA has ambitious plans to scale-up rollout of supporting measures over the coming years for retrofit of buildings and adding renewable heating and solar options.

The NWEA will be keen to work with homeowners, business owners and owners of community buildings over the coming years who are ready to embark on their building energy efficiency improvement works.





Click on the image to see the before and after for one happy homeowner who recently completed her home energy upgrade in conjunction with the North West Energy Agency (NWEA).



**Please scan the QR Code or click on the image to complete and submit your Expression of Interest form**



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