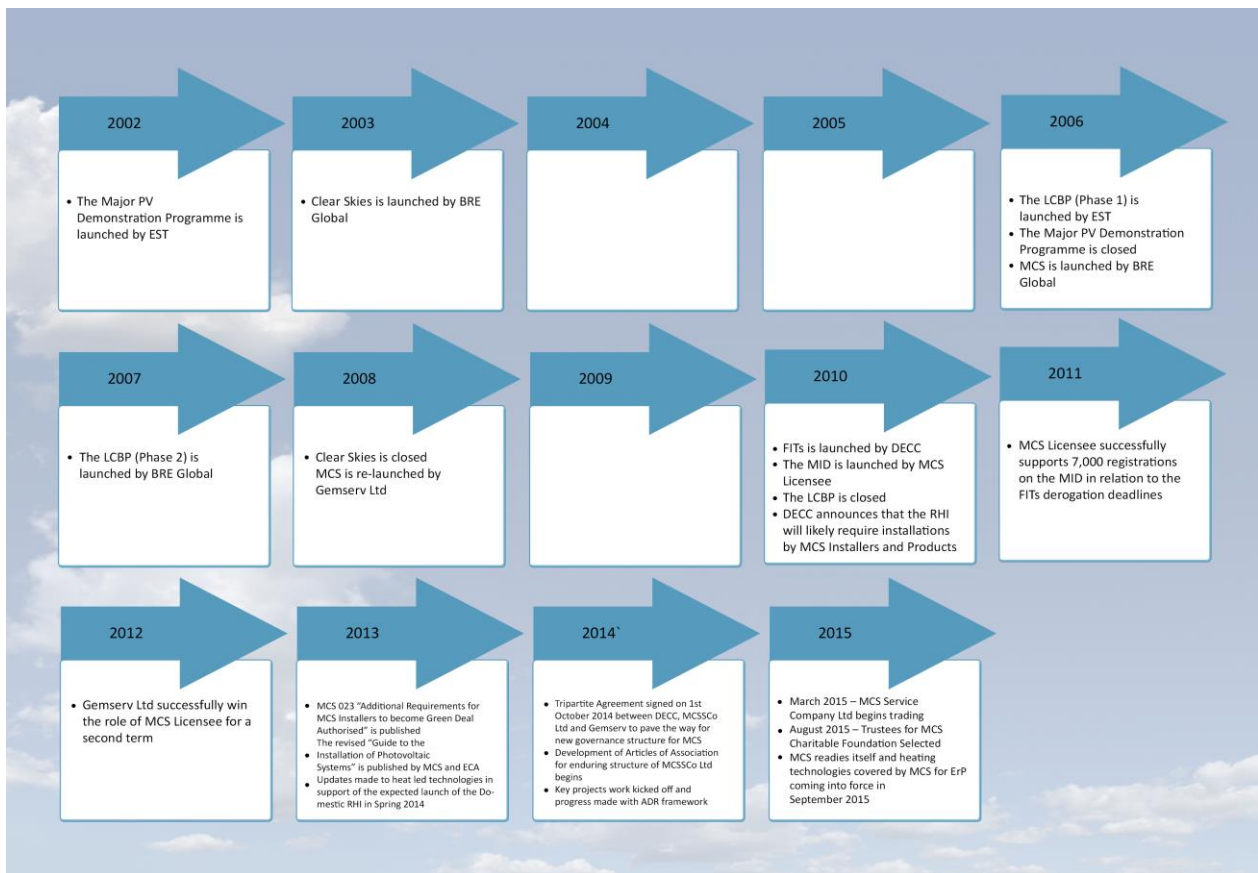


History of the Microgeneration Certification Scheme



In 2003, the UK Government introduced an initiative called “**Clear Skies**” to support the growth of small scale onsite renewable technologies. The Clear Skies programme offered information and grants to not-for-profit organisations in the hope of generating interest in installing microgeneration technologies, such as solar thermal, wind, small-scale hydro, biomass and ground source heat pumps (another scheme “**Major Photovoltaics (PV) Demonstration Programme**” ran, from 2002, alongside the Clear Skies initiative for those interested in installing solar photovoltaic panels to generate micro-electricity). In conjunction with the grants, the initiative also registered professional installers of microgeneration technologies and manufacturers of renewable energy products with the aim of ensuring that the general public could trust the skills of installers, and the quality of renewable energy products. Clear Skies was managed by [BRE Global](#), and the [Energy Saving Trust](#) ran the Major PV Demonstration Programme.

In support of the Government’s strong commitment to achieving significant reductions in carbon and building a supply chain for these technologies, the **Low Carbon Buildings Programme (LCBP)** was introduced from April 2006 and followed on from the Clear Skies and Major PV Demonstration programmes. The LCB Programme was a major initiative with £137 million made available for a suite of grant programmes, of which £111 million was available for the Core LCB Programme*.

The LCB Programme was able to offer grants towards the cost of installing domestic microgeneration technologies and larger scale distributed generation installations for public buildings and businesses, subject

to energy conservation standards being met. One of the main criteria for grants offered under this programme was that installations had to use products and installers initially on the Clear Skies register and subsequently certified under the new **Microgeneration Certification Scheme**.

The Low Carbon Buildings programme was split into two phases - Phase One, managed by the [Energy Saving Trust](#), was divided into two streams. Phase Two, launched in 2007 and managed by [BRE Global](#), provided grants for public sector, charitable and third sector organisations.

| Core Low Carbon Buildings Programme | |
|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| LCBP-1 | Phase 1 householder stream, launched in May 2006, administered by EST. |
| LCBP-1c | Phase 1 communities stream, launched in May 2006, administered by EST. |
| LCBP-1(2a) | Phase 1 Stream 2a with medium-scale projects, launched in October 2006, administered by EST. |
| LCBP-1(2b) | Phase 1 Stream 2b with large-scale projects, launched in November 2006, administered by EST. £3 million was made available from this stream and offered to three Regional Authorities (Yorkshire First, One North-East and East of England Authority) and the Welsh Assembly (WAG) to demonstrate the potential of microgeneration technologies to fuel poor communities (fuel poverty initiatives). The funds were distributed in early 2009. |
| LCBP-1e | Phase 1 householder extension, launched in July 2009, administered by EST. |
| LCBP-2 | Phase 2 non-domestic stream, launched in 2007, administered by BRE. |
| LCBP-2e | Phase 2 non-domestic extension, launched in July 2009, administered by BRE. |

Additionally there were other funding programmes and other sub-funding streams running that were funded with monies allocated to the Low Carbon Buildings Programme.

| Other Funding and Other Sub-Funding Streams | |
|----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| £1.5 million | Clear Skies and Major PV Demonstration Programme Extension |

| | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| £0.75 million | Support for the provision of testing equipment for Wind turbines |
| £0.175 million | Solar Thermal Hot Water field Trials |
| £0.12 million | Heat Pump evaluation programme |
| £0.2 million | Support and development of the Microgeneration Certification Scheme, including discounts for suppliers seeking accreditation |

**The Low Carbon Buildings Programme was closed for all new grant applications in May 2010, with all payments intended to be largely completed by 31st March 2011, which in part was achieved.*

In September 2006, [BRE Global](#) was awarded a contract to develop a scheme called the “Microgeneration Certification Scheme” (MCS), which underpinned the Low Carbon Buildings Programme, CERT (Carbon Emission Reduction Target), and wider government measures. This new scheme evaluated installers (from the beginning) and products (from February 2008) under robust criteria for each of the microgeneration technologies (unlike the Clear Skies initiative), allowing consumers greater protection and ensuring the grants were spent in an effective manner. BRE Global, accredited under UKAS, was the sole certification body.

After a successful tender in September 2008, when BRE Global’s contract came to an end, the then Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR) appointed [Gemserv Ltd](#) as the new Microgeneration Certification Scheme Licensee.

The scheme re-launched in October 2008, and was redeveloped as a quality assurance scheme to progress the microgeneration industry, raise awareness and to address the perceived market place opinion on microgeneration technologies. The scheme was now also open to other certification bodies who wished to join to be able to assess and certify installers and products under the robust MCS standards. By 2009 the MCS Licensee had signed a further 8 certification bodies, which increased competition in the market place for installers and product manufacturers.

The Microgeneration Certification Scheme had now replaced the Clear Skies microgeneration installer and product manufacturer register. To ensure fairness and any grant applications in progress, a transition period of up to one year was made available for installers and product manufacturers to move from the Clear Skies register to gaining the MCS Certification. This was available to installers and product manufacturers of Biomass, Heat Pumps, Solar PV, Solar BIPV, Solar Thermal, Wind Turbines and Hydro technologies.

Consumers who wished to access any available grants were now being referred to this new register, with this as the requirement for grants being mandatory from 3rd April 2009 for installers and for MCS products as of 1st January 2010.

The Government’s Renewable Energy Strategy, published in June 2009, made it mandatory for consumers wishing to be eligible to receive the new electricity –based financial incentive, the “Feed-in Tariffs (FITs)” to have their installation of microgeneration technologies carried out by a certified MCS installer with an approved MCS product (applicable to installations <50kW only) or an equivalent scheme.

As MCS standards developed, other certification processes were also acknowledged. This meant that any Solar Thermal equipment listed on the [Solar Keymark](#) website also became eligible for grants and financial incentives.

In February 2010, all LCBP streams were closed to new applications for electrical technology, to preserve funds to support the Renewable Heat Incentive, proposed to be introduced in April 2011. In May 2010, the Government announced that the future financial incentive for heat-based microgeneration technologies, the “Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI)”, will most likely require installation to be installed by MCS installers with an MCS product, similar to that of the FITs or an equivalent certification scheme.

To aid with consumers applying for financial incentives, the MCS Licensee created an [MCS Installation Database](#) (MID) which went live to installers in April 2010. Installers now register all their installations on the MID, which in turn generates an MCS Certificate for consumers to keep as part of the records for the installation, and to use as evidence when applying for financial incentives.

By January 2011, all of the MCS Micro Hydro Standards were published for [installers](#), [products](#) and “[As new](#)” services.

Following work by the MCS Licensee with key MCS stakeholders, including the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), the [Permitted Development Rights](#) were extended in September 2011 to include micro Wind Turbines and Air Source Heat Pumps at the domestic level.

During 2011 various MCS standards, including [MIS 3005](#) (MCS Heat Pump installation standard) and [MCS 001](#) (MCS Installer requirements), were updated ensuring that standards were current and reflect any changes from the renewable technology industry and learning from previous grant programmes.

In October and November 2011, the MCS Licensee delivered a series of MCS Heat Pump workshops around the UK updating MCS Installers and Product Manufacturers on the changes to MIS 3005.

With the FITs derogation deadline in December 2011, the MCS successfully supported 70,000 registrations on the MCS Installation Database, ensuring that consumers were able to make their applications to their FIT Licensee in time.

During March 2012, the MCS Licensee created and launched a newsletter which aimed to provide information on policy changes, ongoing developments and improvements within the scheme. The newsletter is distributed to all approved MCS Installers and is available for download directly from the MCS website.

To enhance the robustness of the scheme a further MCS standard ([MCS 012 – Roofing](#)) was published in March 2012, with an implementation for all relevant installers by September 2013.

Working with industry and relevant stakeholders, the MCS launched a competence criteria consultation in July 2012 on behalf of MCS. Over the course of the summer, the feedback from the Installer community and stakeholders was reviewed. In conjunction with this feedback, MCS has improved and enhanced the competency framework which builds upon the concept of an Experienced Workers Route, enabling installers with years of experience in the industry to gain approval of their competence without necessarily having to attend specific courses and gain a range of qualifications. MCS will host a series of installer workshops in 2013 to communicate the improvements and changes made following the consultation.

After the role of MCS Administrator being put out to tender, Gemserv Ltd were successfully awarded the role for a second term in October 2012.

In January 2013, MCS launched a new standard ([MCS 023](#): “Additional Requirements for MCS Installers to become Green Deal Authorised”) which outlines the requirements for any MCS installer companies that also wish to install microgeneration measures under the [Green Deal](#).

In February 2013, following extensive work by the Solar PV Technical Working Group, MCS, along with ECA ([Electrical Contractors Association](#)), launched a fully updated version of the “[Guide to the Installation of Photovoltaic Systems](#)”. This revised PV Guide has improved guidance for installation companies, with a number of new sections having been updated bringing the previous DTi Guide up to speed with newer technologies and the fast paced changes in the PV sector.

In July 2013 MCS had its 500,000th registration made on the MCS Installation Database and during the remainder of 2013, MCS worked on readying itself for the launch of the Domestic Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) in the spring of 2014 and focussed on updates to its standards for heat pumps, biomass and solar thermal systems. Work was completed closely with both government and industry to tie into legislation being drafted and laid to Parliament in December 2013. The MCS standards were successfully updated and published in December 2013, cementing the Scheme’s link as one of the key eligibility criteria for consumers to access the Domestic RHI. A notification was also issued to the EU Commission to ensure Member States were able to comment on the proposed updates to the MCS Standards. No comments were received, indicating support from the Member States for the updates to the MCS Standards.

In addition to readying itself for the Domestic RHI, MCS also went through a Judicial Review (JR) with DECC during 2013, and successfully defended itself against a challenge raised by a solar collector manufacturer based in Portugal. The challenge was based on a new product type being supplied into the UK that wasn’t covered under the MCS scheme requirements, and therefore it could not be registered under MCS and obtain future access to the Domestic RHI. MCS in parallel to the JR, began development of specific scheme requirements for the new product type known as Solar Assisted Heat Pumps.

The Domestic RHI was successfully launched on 9th April 2014 by DECC. In 2014, MCS also made the recently updated standards mandatory, including a new domestic RHI metering guidance document, to ensure heat metering is completed accordingly by installers where required in order for customers to access the RHI.

Throughout 2014, MCS has also focussed on the establishment of the MCS Service Company Ltd (MCSSCo Ltd) so it could begin trading in early 2015, to this end a Tripartite Agreement was signed on 1st October 2014 between DECC, Gemserv (as the current MCS Administrator), and the MCSSCo Ltd.

As part of the Tripartite Agreement, provision was made for MCS to complete four key projects, alongside an agreement for novation to take place once the enduring structure for the MCSSCo Ltd had been set up. The four key projects were noted as:

- 1) Implementation of a warranty backed insurance scheme
- 2) Introduction of Alternative Dispute Resolution Measures
- 3) Strengthening Certification Body requirements
- 4) Quality Control Projects (Auditing and Verification)

In January 2015, the MCS Steering Group unanimously agreed that MCS should set up a Charity with the MCSSCo Ltd being wholly owned by that Charity. This would enable the scheme to make use of its reserves that had been built up and held on trust for DECC for the betterment of the Scheme. The Scheme has always been operated and run on the basis of being not for profit, and it was felt that a charity would ensure this is carried forward into the future once novation has taken place. As such, the focus for 2015 has been on working on the 4 key projects and the establishment of the MCS Charitable Foundation, in addition to taking the MCSSCo Ltd into its enduring arrangement.

Key milestones for 2015 include:

- 1) March 2015 – MCS Service Company Ltd begins trading
- 2) August 2015 – Trustees for MCS Charitable Foundation Selected

In addition to the work on the Tripartite Agreement, MCS has also led from the front in terms of readying the heating industry for the Energy Related Products Directive (ErP) which comes into force in September 2015. As such, MCS has already revised its standards to refer to new calculations installers will need to complete for Heat Pumps, as well as the additional test data that will need to be declared by manufacturers in order for their products to continue to be sold across the EU. Further details of the ErP will be published on the MCS website in due course.