

Gas Distribution Consumer Information Code

Version 2.0

As approved by the Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation

June 2017

Consumer Information Code

1. Aim

This Consumer Information Code (the “Code”) has been prepared by the natural gas Distribution System Operators¹ in Northern Ireland in compliance with Conditions 2.9A and 2.9B of their licences reproduced at Annex A of this Code.² For the avoidance of doubt this Code will not change, alter, or amend, any definition or obligation contained within each licence and, in the event of any inconsistency between the licence and this Code; the licence will take precedence.

This Code ensures that each Distribution System Operator provides consumers with access to information about their business and the services that consumers can receive or expect to receive from them, including the individual and the overall standards of performance consumers can expect from them and the compensation consumers could receive if they fail to deliver the individual standards.

In particular, this Code ensures provision of the following information to consumers:

- a) the processes and procedures which consumers need to follow in order to obtain a connection between their premises and the Distribution System Operator’s network;
- b) the standard terms and conditions governing such connections;
- c) the handling of consumer complaints; and
- d) the provision of contact details or other special services in the event of an emergency.

2. Specific Requirements

The internal processes and procedures of each Distribution Operator will be different however each Distribution Operator must have in place a written procedure (the “**consumer information pack**”) which provides general information to domestic and business consumers about the business and the services they can expect to receive. Any information provided by the Distribution System Operator to consumers about its business, including in particular about connections between consumers’ premises and its network is complete, accurate, transparent and capable of being easily understood by consumers. The Code includes such content and is presented in such a format as is consistent with and comparable to the Code of each Distribution System Operator.

The consumer information pack must as a minimum include information about:

1. how consumers may check gas availability
2. how consumers may contact their Distribution Operator to discuss connecting to the natural gas network

¹ Phoenix Natural Gas Ltd and firmus energy

² Licences means the licences for the conveyance of gas in Northern Ireland by Distribution System Operators

3. how consumers arrange a connection to the natural gas network and where they can access the natural gas connection policy (“the **Natural Gas Connection Policy**”) of the Distribution Operator and the standard terms and conditions (“the **Terms and Conditions**”) for connection
4. how consumers may choose a supplier, if applicable
5. how consumers may find an installer to complete the work in their home or business premises
6. where consumers may access the Distribution Operator’s complaints handling procedure
7. the contact details or other special services in the event of an emergency on the gas network
8. where consumers may access the Distribution System Operators’ Notice of Rights³, information on their overall Standards of Service, and their Accuracy Scheme⁴

3. Monitoring and enforcing of the Code

Compliance with this Code will be reviewed when required and requested by the Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation (the “Authority”). The Authority may request from each Distribution System Operator, having giving reasonable notice (but not less than 14 days), the completed template.

Each Distribution System Operator must maintain a record of the complaints it receives by consumers in respect of this Code in the template issued to it by the Authority for a period of two years.

Each Distribution System Operator shall provide the Authority with all assistance reasonably necessary to enable the Authority to monitor the implementation and operation of the Code.

4. Reviewing and modification of the Code

This Code and the manner in which it has been operated shall be reviewed by the Distribution System Operators whenever requested to do so by the Authority, with a view to determining whether any revisions should be made to it.

The review will include representation from the Consumer Council for Northern Ireland, and may require a meeting of the Distribution Operators’ Forum.

³ This document explains the individual standards of performance you can expect from each Distribution System Operator and outlines the compensation you could receive if they fail to deliver these standards. Each Distribution System Operator’s Notice of Rights has been written in accordance with the Gas (Individual Standards of Performance) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014.

⁴ This document sets out each Distribution System Operator’s liability for an accuracy claim where the original quotation provided by them is inaccurate.

A Distribution System Operator may propose an amendment to this Code by preparing an “**Application for Change**” which will include the proposed change and the proposed text amendments to this Code together with the proposed date of implementation.

The Application for Change should be sent to the Authority, all Distribution System Operators and the Consumer Council for Northern Ireland with a request for a meeting of the Distribution Operators’ Forum.

If the Authority approves the change to this Code, it will reissue the Code to all Distribution System Operators.

5. Publication

Each Distribution System Operator shall publish this code and the information required under section 2 of this Code for their network as soon as practicable on, and make it readily accessible from, its website; and give or send free of charge a copy to any person who requests it.

Annex A: Condition 2.9A: Consumer Information Code

2.9A.1 Requirement to Prepare etc. a Code

The Licensee shall, no later than three months after this Condition takes effect or such later date as the Authority directs prepare, submit to, and have approved by the Authority a code of practice to be known as the Consumer Information Code.

2.9A.2 The Code

The Consumer Information Code shall:

- a) be designed to facilitate achievement of the relevant objectives set out in paragraph 2.9A.3; and
- b) make provision relating to the relevant matters set out in paragraph 2.9A.4.

2.9A.3 The Relevant Objectives

The relevant objectives are that:

- a) consumers are on a regular basis provided with and have regular access to information about:
 - i. the Licensee's business and the services that consumers can receive or expect to receive from the Licensee; and
 - ii. the Licensee's performance, including performance against any applicable mandatory or voluntary standards, in relation to the provision of such services; and
- b) any information provided by the Licensee (whether in writing, by electronic display or orally) to consumers about the Licensee's business, including in particular about connections between consumers' premises and the Licensee's Network is complete, accurate, transparent and capable of being easily understood by consumers.

2.9A.4 The Relevant Matters

The relevant matters are the provision of information to consumers in relation to:

- a) the processes and procedures which consumers need to follow in order to obtain a connection between their premises and the Licensee's network;
- b) the standard terms and conditions governing such connections;
- c) the handling of consumer complaints; and
- d) the provision of contact details or other special services in the event of an emergency.

2.9A.5 Standard Form

The Licensee shall in conjunction and co-operation with every other distribution system operator ensure that the Consumer Information Code includes such content and is presented in such a format as is consistent with and comparable to the consumer information code of each such other distribution system operator.

2.9A.6 [not used]

2.9A.7 [not used]

2.9A.8 [not used]

2.9A.9 [not used]

2.9A.10 [not used]

2.9A.11 [not used]

2.9A.12 [not used]

2.9A.13 [not used]

2.9A.14 This Condition is subject to Condition 2.9B: Preparation, Revision Of and Compliance with Codes of Practice.

Condition 2.9B: Preparation, Revision Of and Compliance with Codes of Practice

2.9B1 This Condition applies to any Code of Practice (**Code**) which the Licensee is, pursuant to Conditions 2.7A, 2.8A and 2.9A of this Licence, required to prepare, submit to and have approved by the Authority.

2.9B2 The Licensee shall, before submitting any Code to the Authority for its approval, consult the General Consumer Council and shall consider any representations made by it about the Code or the manner in which it is likely to be operated.

2.9B3 The Licensee shall:

- a) whenever requested to do so by the Authority; and
- b) where the request relates to the Distribution Marketing Code, in conjunction with all other distribution system operators,

review the relevant Code to which the request relates and the manner in which it has been operated, with a view to determining whether any modification should be made to that Code or to the manner of its operation.

2.9B4 In carrying out any review under paragraph 2.9B.3 the Licensee shall consult the General Consumer Council and shall consider any representations made by it about the Code or the manner in which it is likely to be or has been operated.

2.9B5 The Authority, following consultation with the Licensee, the General Consumer Council, any other person who in the opinion of the Authority is likely to be interested or affected, may

- a) direct the Licensee to make such modifications to any Code as the Authority considers are necessary or expedient to meet the relevant objectives of that Code;
- b) from time to time make such modifications to Conditions 2.7A, 2.8A and 2.9A, as the Authority considers are necessary or expedient.

2.9B6 Where the Authority modifies a Condition in accordance with paragraph 2.9B.5(b):

- a) it shall:
 - i. send a copy of the modification to the Licensee and the Department;
 - ii. publish a copy of the modification in such manner as it considers appropriate for the purpose of bringing it to the attention of persons likely to be affected by the making of the modification; and
- b) (b) the Licensee shall revise the Code to which the modification relates in such manner and to such extent as is required to ensure that the Code reflects and complies with the modified Condition.

2.9B7 Where the Licensee revises a Code:

- a) in accordance with paragraph 2.9B.6(b) above;
- b) following a review undertaken in accordance with paragraphs 2.9B.3 and 2.9B.4; or
- c) following a direction from the Authority under paragraph 2.9B.5(a),

it shall submit the revised Code to, and have it approved by, the Authority.

2.9B8 The Licensee shall as:

- a) soon as practicable following the Authority's approval of a Code (including following a revision):
 - i. send a copy of the Code to the Authority and the General Consumer Council; and
 - ii. draw the attention of its consumers to the Code and of how they may inspect or obtain a copy of it;
- b) publish on and make readily accessible from its website a copy of the Code;

- c) give or send free of charge a copy of the Code (as from time to time revised) to any person who requests it; and
- d) make available to members of the public, in such form and in such manner as the Authority considers appropriate, information published by the Authority pursuant to Article 7 of the Energy Order.

2.9B9 Subject to paragraph 2.9B.11, the Licensee shall comply with each Code to which this Condition applies and which has been approved by the Authority.

2.9B10 The Licensee shall provide the Authority with all assistance reasonably necessary to enable the Authority to monitor the implementation and operation of any Code and this assistance shall include providing statistical data at such times and in such a format as the Authority reasonably requires and permitting the Authority access to relevant documentation held by the Licensee.

2.9B11 The Authority may (following consultation with the Licensee, and in the case of the Distribution Marketing Code, other distribution system operators) issue directions relieving the Licensee of any of its obligations under Conditions 2.7A, 2.8A and 2.9A and this Condition to such extent as may be specified in those directions and subject to such terms and conditions as the Authority thinks fit.