

Gas Distribution Consumer Information Code

Version 1.0

As approved by the Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation

Coming into Effect: 1st March 2013

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 Condition 2.9A of their licences reproduced at Annex A of this Code.²

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 and access to information about their performance against any applicable mandatory or voluntary standards, in relation to the provision of such services.³

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 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 The basis upon which each Distribution System Operators’ performance is measured is its service standards, as provided for in conditions 2.8 and 2.9 of the Phoenix Natural Gas Ltd and firmus energy licences respectively. Following consultation, the Authority is currently finalising its decision paper outlining Guaranteed Services Standards in gas which will apply to the Distribution System Operators.

1. how consumers may check gas availability
2. how consumers may contact their Distribution Operator to discuss connecting to the natural gas network
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 information about the Distribution System Operators’ service standards⁴

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.

⁴ See footnote 3 above

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

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 Consultation of the Code

The Licensee shall, before submitting the Consumer Information Code to the Authority for its approval, consult with, and consider any representations made by, the General Consumer Council.

2.9A.7 Review of the Code

The Licensee shall, whenever requested to do so by the Authority review the Consumer Information Code and the manner in which it has been operated, with a view to determining whether any revisions should be made to it.

In carrying out any such review the Licensee shall consult with, and consider any representations made by, the General Consumer Council.

2.9A.8 Direction to Modify the Code

The Authority, following consultation with the Licensee, other distribution system operators, the General Consumer Council and any other person who in the opinion of the Authority is likely to be interested or affected, may direct the Licensee to make such modifications to the Consumer Information Code as the Authority considers are necessary or expedient to meet the relevant objectives.

2.9A.9 Revision of the Code

Where the Licensee revises the Consumer Information Code following a review undertaken in accordance with paragraph 2.9A.7 or following a direction from the Authority given under paragraph 2.9A.8 it shall submit the revised Code to, and have it approved by, the Authority.

2.9A.10 Publication of the Code

The Licensee shall:

(a) as soon as practicable following the Authority's approval of the Consumer Information Code (including following a revision):

- (i) send a copy of it to the Authority and the General Consumer Council; and
- (ii) publish it on, and make it readily accessible from, its website; and

(b) give or send free of charge a copy of the Consumer Information Code to any person who requests it.

2.9A.11 Compliance with the Code

Subject to paragraph 2.9A.13, the Licensee shall comply with the Consumer Information Code as approved by the Authority.

2.9A.12 Monitoring the Code

The Licensee shall provide the Authority with all assistance reasonably necessary to enable the Authority to monitor the implementation and operation of the Consumer Information Code and this assistance shall include permitting the Authority access to relevant documentation held by the Licensee.

2.9A.13 Derogation

The Authority may (following consultation with the Licensee and other distribution system operators) issue directions relieving the Licensee of any of its obligations under this Condition to such extent as may be specified in those directions and subject to such terms and conditions as the Authority thinks fit.