

Consultation on the draft second preliminary Strategic Direction Statement

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We are seeking views on the content of the second preliminary Strategic Direction Statement (SDS), and our proposed approach to convert this SDS from a preliminary document to a hybrid document once certain codes are designated later in 2026.

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Executive summary

The Strategic Direction Statement

We are consulting on our¹ draft second preliminary Strategic Direction Statement (SDS) for industry codes. This SDS will be preliminary until the designation of certain industry codes by the end of 2026.² The SDS continues to be ambitious in its scope, addressing all industry codes within the remit of code governance reform and looking up to five-years ahead, while maintaining a particular focus on priorities for the next one to two years.

The SDS contains a strategic assessment of government policy and developments related to the energy sector that will or may require changes to the industry codes. We are consulting on our assessment of these policies. To assist in the review of this SDS, we have summarised the most significant changes between this SDS and the previous SDS (published in August 2025). We also set out our intention and pathway for converting the second preliminary SDS to a ‘hybrid’³ document following the designation of the Balancing and Settlement Code (BSC) and the Retail Energy Code (REC) by the end of this year.

Next steps

We expect to hold an industry workshop during the consultation period to discuss the content of this draft SDS. Feedback from this workshop, alongside written responses to this consultation, will inform our final decision on the content of this SDS and our approach to converting it from a preliminary to a hybrid document. Subject to those decisions, we aim to publish the SDS in September 2026, followed by a letter confirming its conversion from a preliminary to a hybrid document after the designation of the BSC and the REC later this year.

¹ References to the “Authority”, “Ofgem”, “we” and “our” are used interchangeably in this document. The Authority refers to the Gas and Electricity Markets Authority (GEMA). The Office of Gas and Electricity Markets (Ofgem) supports GEMA in its day-to-day work.

² Designated documents refers to the industry codes that will be designated by the Secretary of State (per section 182 of the Energy Act 2023) prior to code manager appointment. The first code manager is expected to be appointed by end of 2026. This designation is distinct from the designation of ‘qualifying documents’ (per paragraph 1 of Schedule 12 to the Energy Act 2023) which is a transitional designation to allow use of Ofgem’s transitional powers on codes that have been designated as qualifying documents. We expect designation of industry codes to happen in parts, where we refer to “designation of industry codes” throughout this document, this refers to designation of any particular code or codes as the case may be.

³ A ‘hybrid’ SDS will address both designated and not-yet-designated codes, until all codes have been designated. At the point of first designation, we will enter a phase of hybrid governance, during which some codes will have transitioned to the new governance framework with an appointed code manager and legal obligations to deliver the SDS, and other codes will still be operating under the legacy framework with code administrators.

1. Introduction

This section outlines the purpose of this consultation, the key stages in the consultation process, how to respond and data / privacy considerations.

Energy code reform

- 1.1 Energy code reform is modernising Great Britain’s energy regulation by replacing complex, outdated governance with a simpler, more agile and forward-looking framework. Many of the rules that govern the operation of the energy system sit within industry codes. These codes set the rules for a wide range of commercial and technical activities from how parties connect to the electricity and gas networks, to how consumers switch suppliers, to who can access consumption data.
- 1.2 These rules need to keep pace with the transformation happening within our energy system. But taken together, they form a complex and fragmented landscape that can slow innovation, limit competition and hold back investment. Many of the policy and market improvements designed to deliver consumer benefits depend on changes to the codes, but progress can be delayed by friction and competing interests within the current governance arrangements.
- 1.3 Energy code reform is a joint programme between Ofgem and government to address these issues and turn energy codes into an effective engine for wider system change. It replaces the current industry governance process for updating the codes with a new framework, as enabled by the Energy Act 2023.
- 1.4 Code reform is a critical part of [Ofgem's Multiyear Strategy](#) published in 2024 and supports Ofgem’s [Market Strategy and Vision](#), as part of the low-cost transition. By empowering independent code managers, strengthening strategic direction and improving the change process, system change can be delivered quickly and with greater confidence. It is also designed to improve code-users’ experience by reducing the number of processes industry must navigate and cut down on friction, complexity and wasted effort. Consolidation and simplification of the codes will make it easier for market participants to understand the rules that apply to them, reduce compliance burden and remove barriers to entry and innovation.
- 1.5 Several key improvements are being made to the current framework, including Ofgem licensing new code managers who will be responsible for leading code modifications and decision-making and ensuring that the codes develop in line with Ofgem’s annual strategic direction statement. Industry expertise will remain at the heart of the framework, shaping and developing robust code change

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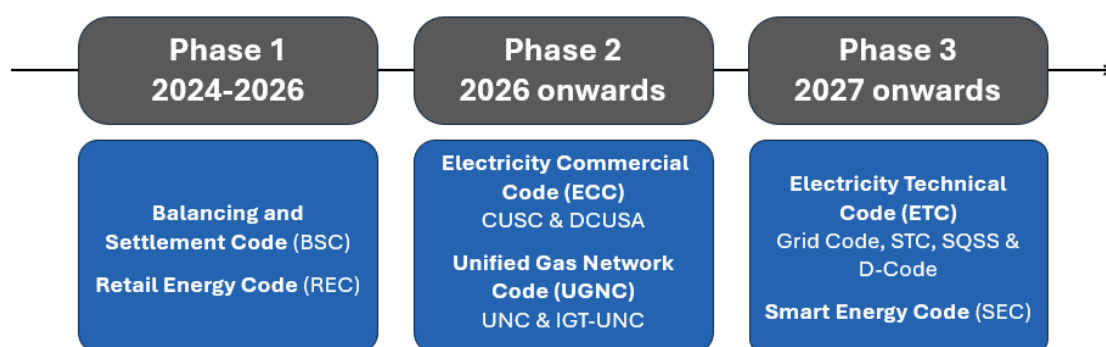
proposals and playing a vital role in the process through new stakeholder advisory forums.

1.6 To deliver the reform, Ofgem and government have been progressing several key activities including:

- Ofgem publishing annual strategic direction statements, setting out a clear and ambitious direction for how industry codes must evolve to deliver strategic priorities that support consumer outcomes and the transition to net zero. This document is our consultation on the second preliminary SDS.
- Ofgem selecting code managers for each code – Ofgem issued a minded-to-grant notice for phase 1 code managers in August 2025⁴ and recently published an [expression of interest for phase 2 code managers](#).
- Government, working with Ofgem, has been developing the new code manager licence and has recently published its [consultation response and decision on the standard licence conditions](#).
- Ofgem needs to turn the high-level design of the new governance framework into detailed licence and code modifications to bring the new framework into effect. We published the [second implementation decision and consultation on the proposed code text](#) on 6 March 2026 which will help to deliver this new governance framework. We published the [phase 1 consultation covering transitional measures and consequential changes](#) in early April 2026.

1.7 Given the scale of the reforms, we will be delivering the new governance framework in three phases. Phase 1, covering the Balancing and Settlement Code (BSC) and Retail Energy Code (REC), is planned to go live from November 2026.

Figure 1: Overview of Energy Code Reform implementation phases



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1.8 The [Energy Act 2023](#) (the ‘Act’) gave new powers and responsibilities to Ofgem, enabling us to implement significant reform to the governance of the industry

⁴ See notice for [Elexon here](#), and for [RECCo here](#).

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codes. These reforms include establishing a duty for Ofgem to publish an annual strategic direction statement (SDS) for designated documents.

- 1.9 The SDS contains a strategic assessment of government policy and developments related to the energy sector that will or may require changes to the industry codes. It brings this together in a single document for industry stakeholders to act on, to implement policy change and realise policy benefits. In future, code managers will be responsible for managing the code change process and ensuring codes develop in line with the SDS.
- 1.10 In our [January 2024 Implementation Consultation](#)⁵ we published our proposed approach to implement energy code reform. This included, among other things, our proposals for developing and delivering an SDS, including the proposed role of code managers and industry participants in this process. In our subsequent [August Implementation Decision](#)⁶, our policy decisions included a decision to proceed with publishing a first preliminary SDS ('SDS-1') in 2025.
- 1.11 We considered that publishing a preliminary SDS before codes had been designated and code managers appointed would help prepare prospective code managers for their role and facilitate the transition to the new governance framework. In producing SDS-1, we consulted on the content, structure and implementation of the SDS more generally to help inform the preparation of future SDS documents.
- 1.12 As above, we refer to the first preliminary SDS, published in August 2025, as 'SDS-1'. We refer to the second preliminary SDS and (where the context requires) any aspect of it that is converted to a formal SDS as per our proposals set out in paragraphs 2.5 – 2.9 as 'SDS-2'.

Purpose of this consultation

- 1.13 We are consulting on the proposed content of the second preliminary SDS, including our categorisation of policy areas and whether any key areas which may or will require code changes are missing from our assessment. To support stakeholder feedback, this consultation sets out the key changes made to SDS-2, from SDS-1. We are also seeking views on our proposed approach for converting the second preliminary SDS from a preliminary to hybrid document, once the expected designation of the BSC and the REC occurs by the end of 2026.⁷

⁵ [January 2024 Implementation Consultation](#)

⁶ [August Implementation Decision](#)

⁷ See footnote 2 for an explanation of the term 'designation'.

Context and related publications

1.14 The following documents provide further context related to our consultation:

- Phase 1 consultation on transitional measures and consequential changes ([ofgem.gov.uk](https://www.ofgem.gov.uk)) –April 2026
- Decision on second implementation consultation ([ofgem.gov.uk](https://www.ofgem.gov.uk)) – March 2026
- Establishing a harmonised prioritisation process in the industry codes: statutory consultation ([ofgem.gov.uk](https://www.ofgem.gov.uk)) – November 2025
- Notice of proposals to grant code manager licenses to [Elexon](https://www.flexon.com) and [RECCo](https://www.recco.com) – August 2025
- The preliminary Strategic Direction Statement ([ofgem.gov.uk](https://www.ofgem.gov.uk))– August 2025
- Decision on code manager selection ([ofgem.gov.uk](https://www.ofgem.gov.uk)) – May 2025
- Energy code reform: second implementation consultation ([ofgem.gov.uk](https://www.ofgem.gov.uk)) – April 2025
- Consultation on the preliminary Strategic Direction Statement and governance arrangements for industry codes ([ofgem.gov.uk](https://www.ofgem.gov.uk)) – January 2025
- The Code Manager Selection Regulations 2024 ([legislation.gov.uk](https://www.legislation.gov.uk))
- Energy Code Reform: Government response to consultation on code manager licensing and secondary legislation ([publishing.service.gov.uk](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk)) – October 2024
- Implementation of energy code reform: decision ([ofgem.gov.uk](https://www.ofgem.gov.uk)) – August 2024
- Energy Act 2023 ([legislation.gov.uk](https://www.legislation.gov.uk))
- Call for Input: Energy Code Governance Reform ([ofgem.gov.uk](https://www.ofgem.gov.uk)) – December 2022
- Government response to the consultation on Energy Code Reform ([publishing.service.gov.uk](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk)) – April 2022
- Design and Delivery of the Energy Code Reform: consultation ([publishing.service.gov.uk](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk)) – July 2021

1.15 We continue to work jointly with DESNZ on the regulatory framework for energy code reform. We published a [joint consultation with DESNZ in Spring 2025](#) on code manager licence conditions and updates to secondary legislation for code modification appeals to the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA). A [decision](#) was published on 23 March 2026.

1.16 On 19 December 2024, DESNZ announced a review of Ofgem - a comprehensive review of Ofgem’s role, remit, powers and duties. Whilst we are still waiting for the Review to be published, we expect it to set out significant and ambitious changes for Ofgem, which we are committed to implementing. Responding to and

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delivering the changes asked of Ofgem through the Review will take time, particularly where the government is required to introduce legislation. As a result, we expect the outcomes of the Ofgem Review to have a limited impact on this SDS, with future iterations more heavily influenced by its outcomes.

Consultation stages

Stage 1 Consultation open: 02 April 2026

Stage 2 Consultation closes (awaiting decision). Deadline for responses: 28 May 2026

Stage 3 Consultation outcome. Decision and publication of the second preliminary Strategic Direction Statement: September 2026

How to respond

We want to hear from anyone interested in this consultation. Please send your response to the person or team named on the front page of this document.

We have asked for your feedback in each of the questions throughout. Please respond to each one as fully as you can.

We will publish non-confidential responses on our website.

Your response, data, and confidentiality

You can ask us to keep your response, or parts of your response, confidential. We will respect this, subject to obligations to disclose information. For example, under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Environmental Information Regulations 2004, statutory directions, court orders, government regulations, or where you give us explicit permission to disclose. If you do want us to keep your response confidential, please clearly mark this on your response and explain why.

If you wish us to keep part of your response confidential, please clearly mark those parts of your response that you do wish to be kept confidential and those that you do not wish to be kept confidential. Please put the confidential material in a separate appendix to your response. If necessary, we will contact you to discuss which parts of the information in your response should be kept confidential and which can be published. We might ask for reasons why.

If the information you give in your response contains personal data under the General Data Protection Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2016/679) as retained in domestic law following the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union ("UK GDPR"), the Gas and Electricity Markets Authority will be the data controller for the purposes of GDPR. Ofgem uses the information in responses in performing its statutory functions and in accordance with section 105 of the Utilities Act 2000. Please refer to our Privacy Notice on consultations, see Appendix 3.

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If you wish to respond confidentially, we will keep your response confidential, but we will publish the number, but not the names, of confidential responses we receive. We will not link responses to respondents if we publish a summary of responses, and we will evaluate each response on its own merits without undermining your right to confidentiality.

How to track the progress of a consultation

1. Find the web page for the call for input you would like to receive updates on.
2. Click 'Get emails about this page', enter your email address and click 'Submit'.
3. You will receive an email to notify you when it has changed status.

A consultation has three stages: 'Open', 'Closed (awaiting decision)', and 'Closed (with decision)'.

2. Approach to the Strategic Direction Statement

This section outlines the key changes to the SDS from the first preliminary SDS. It also sets out our proposed approach to convert the second preliminary SDS to a hybrid document following designation of the BSC and the REC later this year.

This section should be read in conjunction with Subsidiary document 1: Draft second preliminary Strategic Direction Statement for industry codes, which includes the full draft of the SDS, and Subsidiary document 2: Draft second preliminary Strategic Direction Statement spreadsheet, which allows SDS content to be sorted by industry code.

Overview of content updates

2.1 To assist in the review of this SDS, we have summarised the most significant changes between this SDS and the previous SDS published in August 2025.

2.2 New policy areas included in SDS-2:

New policy area	SDS Section number	Multiyear Strategy Objective	Time Horizon Category
Consumer Confidence	2.1	Improve protection for all consumers, particularly those in vulnerable situations	Think & plan
Offshore Transmission Owner framework	6.2	Continue to operate and iterate the Offshore Transmission Owner framework	Think & plan
Demand connections	9.2	Enable faster electricity network connections	Act Now, Think & plan
Reactive Power Export	10.1	Pursue security of supply	Think & plan
Emergency Contacts	10.1	Pursue security of supply	Act Now
Reformed National Pricing (replacing REMA section)	12.1	Work with government to deliver reforms which set efficient locational incentives for investment and operation across the energy system	Act Now
Cost Allocation Recovery Review	12.2	Introduce low-regrets near-term reforms to support system efficiency	Think & plan

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New policy area	SDS Section number	Multiyear Strategy Objective	Time Horizon Category
Data Communications Company (DCC) Successor licence	13.2	Continue to drive the benefits of smart meters through regulatory oversight of roll-out and data flows	Act Now

2.3 Policy areas included in SDS-1, which have been removed for SDS-2.

Removed policy area	SDS Section number	Multiyear Strategy Objective	Previous Time Horizon Category
Sector-wide Financial Resilience	3	Enable competition and investability through financial resilience	Think & plan
Cyber Resilience	10.3	Strengthen cyber resilience	Listen & wait

2.4 Further detail on each section is provided in subsidiary document 1: Draft second preliminary Strategic Direction Statement. All sections have been updated to some degree from SDS-1, with the changes highlighted above representing the most significant amendments. We are seeking feedback on the accuracy and completeness of the content set out in this SDS.

Our approach to converting the second preliminary SDS from preliminary to a hybrid document

2.5 In this document, we define an SDS as ‘preliminary’⁸, ‘formal’⁹ or ‘hybrid’¹⁰ depending on whether or not the codes to which it relates have been designated by the Secretary of State.

2.6 We expect to publish a decision on this SDS in September 2026, with the Balancing and Settlement Code (BSC) and Retail Energy Code (REC) designated

⁸ A ‘preliminary’ SDS is one that addresses industry codes that have not yet been designated by the Secretary of State pursuant to section 182 of the Energy Act 2023.

⁹ A ‘formal’ SDS is one that addresses industry codes that have been designated by the Secretary of State pursuant to section 182 of the Energy Act 2023.

¹⁰ A ‘hybrid’ SDS will address both designated and not-yet-designated codes, until all codes have been designated. At the point of first designation, we will enter a phase of hybrid governance, during which some codes will have transitioned to the new governance framework with an appointed code manager and legal obligations to deliver the SDS, and other codes will still be operating under the legacy framework with code administrators.

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later this year. This means that at the point of publication, this SDS will be the second preliminary SDS as it will be published before the designation of those codes, but will have been formulated following procedures consistent with those set out in the Energy Act 2023.

- 2.7 We therefore propose that following the designation of the BSC and the REC, we publish a letter that sets out:
- the extent to which our conclusions contained in the SDS-2 remain unchanged for the BSC and the REC and where applicable, explains any updates that may be included;
 - that the SDS-2 is to be treated as formal in the context of section 190 of the Energy Act in so far as it applies to the BSC and the REC;
 - that the SDS-2 is the document that the code manager (and other affected energy licensees and code parties) should refer to when fulfilling any obligations that relate to the SDS (in so far as they relate to the BSC and the REC). This includes the code manager licence obligation to prepare and publish a plan that details how it will facilitate delivery of the requirements of the SDS, and an annual budget relating to their activities.
- 2.8 Following publication of the proposed letter, the SDS-2 would become a hybrid document. This means that, in respect of the BSC and the REC, the document would be the ‘formal’ SDS (as per section 190 of the Energy Act 2023) in the context of the fulfilment of any licence or code obligations. In respect of all other industry codes that have not yet been designated, it will remain the ‘preliminary’ SDS. We note that our proposed approach to the conversion of the SDS has been discussed with government.
- 2.9 The process for preparing this SDS, as described in section 1 of subsidiary document 1, is consistent with the process set out in section 190 of the Energy Act 2023 (see ‘Legislative Framework’ section of Subsidiary document 1 for further detail). As such, we do not intend to re-run the consultation relative to the SDS-2 in respect of the BSC and the REC after such codes have been designated. Parties should therefore make any relevant representations at this stage and not expect a further consultation following designation of those codes. This approach is intended to allow:
- proposed code managers for the BSC and the REC to have sufficient sight of the SDS to inform their delivery plans and budgets for Financial Year 2027/28 (avoiding the potential uncertainty that re-running the consultation process in late 2026 would bring), and
 - enough time for industry to provide feedback on these code manager outputs before they are finalised for the relevant financial year.
- 2.10 We intend to take a similar approach to future versions of the SDS. In some years, the timing of relevant code designations may mean it is not practical to re-consult

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on a draft SDS within the same year, given the annual delivery plan and budget cycle. In these cases, an additional consultation would increase stakeholder burden while being unlikely to materially affect the scope of the SDS. We will keep this process under review and will provide updates on our proposed approach in each annual SDS consultation.

2.11 We welcome feedback from stakeholders on this approach.

Questions

- Q1. On the basis that the SDS should contain a strategic assessment of government policies and developments relating to the energy sector, that will or may require the making of code modifications, do you think there is anything missing from the SDS that you would expect to require code modifications in the next 1-5 years? If so, please specify.
- Q2. Do you agree with the classification of each policy area within the three time horizons (Act now, Think and plan, Listen and wait)? If not, please specify what changes you suggest and why.
- Q3. Do you find the SDS easy to understand and do you think that the level of detail included is sufficient to allow you to begin raising and implementing code modifications, where appropriate?
- Q4. Do you support our proposed approach to convert the SDS from a preliminary document to a hybrid document, following designation of the BSC and the REC?
- Q5. Do you have any other feedback?

Conclusions and next steps

2.12 We expect to hold a workshop for industry during the consultation period, discussing the content of this draft SDS. We will consider feedback from this workshop, alongside responses to this consultation. This will inform our decisions on the final content of this SDS, and our approach to converting it from a preliminary to a hybrid document. Subject to the outcome of those decisions, we aim to publish the SDS in September 2026, and a letter converting the SDS from a preliminary to a hybrid document by the end of 2026.

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Send us your feedback

We believe that consultation is at the heart of good policy development. We are keen to receive your comments about this consultation. We would also like to get your answers to these questions:

- Do you have any comments about the quality of this document?
- Do you have any comments about its tone and content?
- Was it easy to read and understand? Or could it have been better written?
- Are its conclusions balanced?
- Did it make reasoned recommendations?
- Do you have any further comments?

Please send your feedback to stakeholders@ofgem.gov.uk.

Appendix 1. Subsidiary documents

A1.1 The following subsidiary documents have been published on Ofgem's website alongside this consultation:

- Subsidiary Document 1 – Draft second preliminary Strategic Direction Statement for industry codes
- Subsidiary Document 2 – Draft second preliminary Strategic Direction Statement spreadsheet

Appendix 2. Glossary

Acronyms	Definition
BSC	Balancing and Settlement Code
CACoP	Code Administration Code of Practice
CSDBs	Central System Delivery Bodies
CMA	Competition and Markets Authority
CUSC	Connection and Use of System Code
DCUSA	Distribution Connection and Use of System Agreement
DESNZ	Department for Energy Security and Net Zero
FSO	Future System Operator. Named in the Energy Act 2023 as Independent System Operator and Planner (ISOP). In 2024 it was announced that the FSO would be named National Energy System Operator (NESO)
GEMA	Gas and Electricity Markets Authority
IGT UNC	Independent Gas Transporters Uniform Network Code
MHHS	Market-wide Half-hourly Settlement
NESO	National Energy System Operator (the working name was previously Future System Operator (FSO))
REC	Retail Energy Code
REMA	Review of Electricity Markets Arrangements
SCR	Significant Code Review, a way for Ofgem to influence the existing end-to-end code change process to modify industry codes
SDS	Strategic Direction Statement means a statement prepared and published by GEMA that sets out a strategic direction for energy industry codes and contains a strategic assessment of government policies and developments relating to the energy sector, that the GEMA considers will or may require the making of modifications to energy industry codes. In this document, references to ‘SDS’ shall be taken to mean one or more of the following (as the context requires and having regard to the applicable SDS in force at the relevant point in time), (i) any preliminary Strategic Direction Statement (being a Strategic Direction

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Statement that addresses industry codes that have not yet been designated by the Secretary of State pursuant to section 182 of the Energy Act 2023); and (ii) a formal Strategic Direction Statement (being a Strategic Direction Statement that addresses industry codes that have been designated by the Secretary of State pursuant to section 182 of the Energy Act 2023; and (iii) a hybrid Strategic Direction Statement being a Strategic Direction Statement that addresses both designated and non-designated industry codes.

SPS	Strategy and Policy Statement, a document designated by the Secretary of State under the Energy Act 2013 (after parliamentary approval), which sets out the strategic priorities and policy outcomes for the government's energy policy
SQSS	Security and Quality of Supply Standard
STC	System Operator- Transmission Owner Code
UNC	Uniform Network Code

Appendix 3. Privacy policy

Personal data

The following explains your rights and gives you the information you are entitled to under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Note that this section only refers to your personal data (your name address and anything that could be used to identify you personally) not the content of your response to the consultation.

1. The identity of the controller and contact details of our Data Protection Officer

The Gas and Electricity Markets Authority is the controller, (for ease of reference, “Ofgem”). The Data Protection Officer can be contacted at dpo@ofgem.gov.uk

2. Why we are collecting your personal data

Your personal data is being collected as an essential part of the consultation process, so that we can contact you regarding your response and for statistical purposes. We may also use it to contact you about related matters.

3. Our legal basis for processing your personal data

As a public authority, the GDPR makes provision for Ofgem to process personal data as necessary for the effective performance of a task carried out in the public interest. For example, a consultation.

4. With whom we will be sharing your personal data

We may share data with the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero and the National Energy System Operator (NESO).

5. For how long we will keep your personal data, or criteria used to determine the retention period.

Your personal data will be held for up to 12 months after the project is closed, including subsequent projects or legal proceedings regarding a decision related to this consultation.

6. Your rights

The data we are collecting is your personal data, and you have considerable say over what happens to it. You have the right to:

- know how we use your personal data
- access your personal data
- have personal data corrected if it is inaccurate or incomplete
- ask us to delete personal data when we no longer need it
- ask us to restrict how we process your data
- get your data from us and re-use it across other services

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- object to certain ways we use your data
- be safeguarded against risks where decisions based on your data are taken entirely automatically
- tell us if we can share your information with 3rd parties
- tell us your preferred frequency, content and format of our communications with you
- to lodge a complaint with the independent Information Commissioner (ICO) if you think we are not handling your data fairly or in accordance with the law. You can contact the ICO at <https://ico.org.uk/>, or telephone 0303 123 1113.

7. Your personal data will not be sent overseas

8. Your personal data will not be used for any automated decision making.

9. Your personal data will be stored in a secure government IT system.

10. More information For more information on how Ofgem processes your data, click on the link to our “[ofgem privacy promise](#)”.