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MP169 ‘Managing SEC obligations and the consumers right to refuse a Smart Meter’

April 2025 Working Group – meeting summary

Attendees

SEC Party Category	Working Group Members	Representing
Large Suppliers	Emma Johnson (EJ)	British Gas
	Julie Brown (JB)	British Gas
	Rochelle Harrison (RH)	British Gas
	Alex Hurcombe (AH)	EDF
	Francesca Scott (FS)	EDF
	Sharon Armitage (SA)	EON Next
	Ralph Baxter (RB)	Octopus Energy
	Joey Manners (JM)	Octopus Energy
	Emslie Law (EL)	OVO
	Mahfuzar Rahman (MRa)	Scottish Power
Small Suppliers	Daniel Davies (DD)	ESG Global
Other SEC Parties	David Jones (DJAH)	Alt HAN
	Patricia Massey (PM)	BEAMA
	Swetta Coopamah (SC)	BEAMA
	Beth Tatton (BT)	Calisen
	Rob Heath (RHth)	Calisen
	Martin Bell (MB)	EUA
	Michael Snowden (MS)	Secure
Network Parties	Charlotte Gilbert (CGil)	BUUK
	James Shippey (JL)	Northern Power Grid
	Jacqui Neck (JN)	National Grid Electricity Distribution

Other Participants	
DCC	
David Walsh (DW)	Bradley Baker (BB)
Robin Seaby (RS)	
Energy Ombudsman	
David Bowker (DB)	David Jones (DJEO)

Other Participants		
DESNZ		
Danny Holt (DH)		
SECAS		
Ben Giblin (BG) <i>Working Group Chair & Lead Analyst</i>	Sophia Master (SM) <i>Meeting Secretary</i>	Simon Grimwood (SG)
Elizabeth Woods (EW)	Georgie Severin (GSe)	Alison Beard (AB)
Caroline Freimuller (CF)	Lydia Bentley (LB)	Talia Lattimore (TL)
Citizens Advice		
Colin Griffiths (CG)		
SECCO		
Robin Healey (RHeal)		
Energy Ombudsman		
David Bowker (DB)	David Jones (DJEO)	

Overview

The Smart Energy Code Administrator and Secretariat (SECAS) provided an overview of the issue, the responses to the Request for Information (RFI), the Proposed and Alternative Solution and the proposed implementation approach.

Issue

- Suppliers are receiving requests from consumers and remedies from the Energy Ombudsman for Smart Meters to be installed in 'dumb mode'.
- There is no way for Suppliers to adhere to this request without deliberately breaking their SEC and Licence conditions.

Proposed Solution

- Introduction of a restricted attribute to the data held for each Device in the Smart Metering Inventory (SMI). When a Supplier instructs the DCC to change the status to 'true' this will limit the Service Requests (SR) which can be collected from the Device.
- The Proposed Solution allows the restricted attribute to be applied and removed at any point.

Alternative Solution

- Introduction of a restricted attribute to the Data held for each Device in the SMI. When a Supplier instructs the DCC to change the status to 'true' this will limit the Service Requests which can be collected from the Device.

- The Alternative Solution would allow the restricted attribute to be applied only when the customer has a remedy from the Energy Ombudsman that the Device should have the restricted attribute set to true.

Working Group Discussion

SECAS (BG) provided an overview of the responses to the RFI, the addition of the Alternative Solution and the implementation approach.

Operational Aspects

A Working Group member (MB) commented that the restricted attribute will not be assigned to each Device, but rather the restricted attribute will be added to the Data held for each Device in the SMI.

SECAS (BG) highlighted that the SRs allowed to a Smart Meter which has the restricted attribute applied will be determined by a configurable list that is managed by the Operations Group (OPSG). They added that the list of SRs which could be sent to a Device is similar to a Device which has a status of 'Suspended'. A Working Group member (JB) noted that the list of allowed SRs should be assessed as Devices which are 'Suspended' cannot be decommissioned. They added that Parties have different requirements and use SRs for different reasons which should be considered when the configurable list is finalised.

Smart Meters in 'Dumb Mode'

The Consumer Representative (CG) noted that when the Smart Metering rollout began in 2011, policy makers acknowledged that traditional meters would no longer be produced, however Smart Meters would not be mandatory. They added their belief that the ability to have a Smart Meter in 'dumb mode' had been agreed from this point, however there was no industry-wide solution to implement this, which MP169 would introduce. The Proposer of MP169 (EL) noted that there is currently no way Smart Meters can be installed in 'dumb mode'. They noted that in 2011 there was the ability for consumers to opt out of having Smart Metering Equipment Technical Specifications (SMETS1) Devices, however this functionality has not been made available for SMETS2 Devices. They noted that if there was any possible way to install a Smart Meter in 'dumb mode' they would be doing this already and there would be no need for the modification.

The Consumer Representative (CG) noted that DESNZ and Ofgem have recently confirmed that Smart Meters are not mandatory. They added that Suppliers are informing Consumers that they can have meters in 'dumb mode' and the media and consumer advocates, such as Martin Lewis, are informing consumers they can have smart functionality turned off. They added that the public is reassured by the fact there is an opt-out for consumers. The Proposer (EL) noted that Suppliers can stop collecting Data where they require Unambiguous Consent, however they have legal requirements to collect certain Data for billing and settlement purposes.

The 'right to refuse' a Smart Meter

A Working Group member (AH) noted that although Suppliers allow consumers to have a choice to express a preference over the metering equipment they have at their property, the Energy Act states

that ultimately the Supplier has the final decision about the metering equipment which is installed. They noted concern about the title of the modification suggesting the consumer has a right to refuse.

Business Case

A Working Group member (EJ) noted that this modification was raised for a small number of consumers who wanted their Smart Meters to operate in 'dumb mode'. They added that the Proposed Solution would allow the restricted attribute to be applied at any point, which could allow a significant number of consumers to have the restricted attribute applied. They added that if large numbers of consumers did so, this could have major impacts on industry projects such as Market Wide Half Hourly Settlement (MHHS).

Views on Alternative Solution

The Energy Ombudsman (DB) noted concern at the Alternative Solution, commenting that the Proposed Solution only should be progressed. They added that approval of the Alternative Solution could set a precedent whereby future modifications are raised that are dependent on the decision of the Energy Ombudsman for the solution to be applied. They also noted that it could be unclear for consumers as the Ombudsman does not always rule in their favour, meaning consumers with an Ombudsman remedy may not be able to have the restricted attribute allowed on their Smart Meter.

The Consumer Representative (CG) also commented that the Alternative Solution should not be adopted. They added that the addition of the Alternative Solution could lead to further delays in implementing this modification.

Implementation Approach

SECAS (BG) noted the costs of £731,502 highlighted in the Impact Assessment of May 2024. They provided estimated timescales if the modification were to be included in the current Data Service Provider (DSP) and asked the Working Group for views on whether the modification should be implemented in the current DSP, new DSP or both. The DCC (DW) noted another Impact Assessment against the current DSP would be required for MP169 as the document provided to SECAS in May 2024 is no longer valid. They noted that if MP169 is assessed against the new DSP, the SSI and SSMI aspects of the solution will be included in Future Services Management (FSM).

The Proposer (EL) questioned whether modifications can be implemented in the current DSP. The DCC (DW) confirmed this is possible, however if Parties sought for the modification also to be included in the new DSP there would be additional costs. They added that for other modifications where similar discussions have taken place regarding implementation, Parties have said they would not want to provide a view on how the modification should proceed without seeing full costings. A Working Group member (RB) noted that they would need to see another up-to-date DCC Assessment of this modification as well as figures relating to the number of consumers who would like a meter in 'dumb mode' before deciding on implementation.

SECAS (BG) summarised the view of the Working Group that the modification should not be progressed further without another Impact Assessment against the current DSP (pending Change Board approval of the costs). They added that a Preliminary Impact Assessment against the new DSP will also be requested when possible.

Next Steps

The following actions were recorded from the meeting:

- SECAS (BG) to examine the 'allowed' list to ensure Parties can fulfil their obligations.
- SECAS (BG) to present MP169 to the Change Board to determine whether the costs for another Impact Assessment against the existing DSP should be approved.
- SECAS (BG) to request a Preliminary Assessment against the new DSP to determine the costs of the modification.