SEC
Smart Energy Code

MP208 'Northbound Prioritisation of N56 Alerts'

October 2022 Working Group – meeting summary

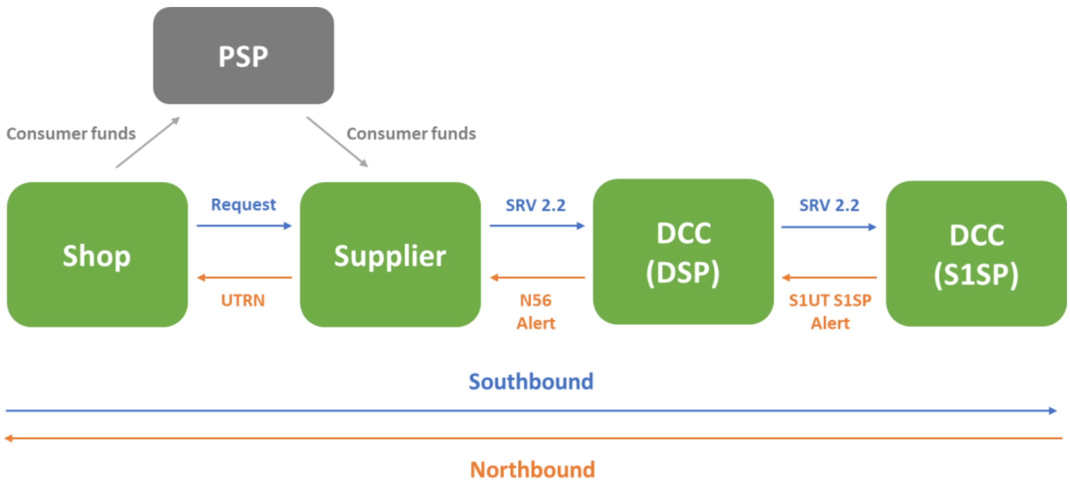
Attendees

Attendee	Organisation
Ali Beard (AB)	SECAS
Joey Manners (JM)	SECAS
Bradley Baker (BB)	SECAS
Elizabeth Woods (EW)	SECAS
Mike Fenn (MF)	SECAS
Rachel Black (RBl)	SECAS
David Walsh (DW)	DCC
Chris Thompson (CT)	DCC
Robin Seaby (RS)	DCC
Samuel Manson (SM)	DCC
Patricia Massey (PM)	BEAMA
Eleanor Taylor (ET)	BEIS
Julie Brown (JB)	British Gas
Alex Hurcombe (AH)	EDF
Daniel Davies (DD)	ESG
Martin Bell (MB)	EUA
Gemma Slaney (GS)	National Grid Electricity Distribution
Kelly Kinsman (KK)	National Grid Electricity Distribution
Ralph Baxter (RBa)	Octopus Energy
Jamie Flaherty (JF)	Ofgem
Audrey Smith-Keary (ASK)	OVO Energy
Mafs Rahman (MR)	Scottish Power
Lorna Clarke (LC)	SMDA
Shuba Khatun (SK)	SSE Networks
Andy Knowles (AK)	Utilita
George MacGregor (GM)	Utilita

Overview

Issue

When a consumer attempts to purchase a Prepayment Meter top up from a shop, the process follows the below pathway:



When Service Reference Variant (SRV) 2.2 'Top Up Device' is generated, the PSP, which is not a Smart Energy Code (SEC) Party, 'holds' the consumer funds in preparation to transfer to the Supplier's bank account. The N56 Alert contains the UTRN. Receipt of the UTRN by the shop till is the endpoint of the process and allows the PSP to transfer the consumer funds to the Supplier's bank account. If the entire process is not completed within 30 seconds, the transaction times out. The top up will not be successful and the funds used by the consumer in the attempt will be released back to the consumer by the PSP. However, this release may take several days to clear.

Impact

- Payment Service Provider (PSP) holds consumer funds until transaction or refund processed.
- 'Transaction failed' notification likely to result in further attempts.
- Potentially vulnerable customers without funds for 3-10 days.

Business Requirements

1. To ensure the N56 Alert is not delayed in the Northbound pathway from Smart Metering Equipment Technical Specification (SMETS)1 Service Provider (S1SP) to Supplier.

Proposed Solution

- To introduce a method of prioritisation so that N56 Alerts are processed ahead of other, less urgent, System messages.

SEC Appendix E 'DCC User Interface Services Schedule' gives the Target Response Time (TRT) for SRV 2.2 'Top Up Device' as 16 seconds. If this TRT is met, the overall process should be completed within the 30 seconds necessary to succeed. This requirement seeks to ensure the time taken for the Northbound part of the process pathway allows the TRT to be met.

The DCC has an open internal Change Request (CR), CR4630, investigating the cause of delays in the process pathway. The Proposer has provided evidence which suggests that delays are occurring around the peak time for scheduled reads.

Working Group Discussion

A Working Group member (RB) noted that this is a very important issue due to its impact on vulnerable customers and queried whether the Modification Process is the recommended DCC approach to address the issue. RB further noted that there have been discussions in relation to MP162 'SEC changes required to deliver MHHS' on potential channelling of scheduled Service Requests into an alternative lane, and queried if this would provide a solution to the MP208 issue or if a separate solution is required. SECAS (MF) reported that the Proposer (EL) discussed the issue with the DCC and it recommended that this be raised as a SEC modification.

A Working Group member (DD) queried whether there is an overlap with SECMP0028 'Prioritising Over The Air Messages'. SECAS (MF) advised that SECMP0028 is tackling a more general issue and has faced challenges to its business case, whereas the specific issue identified in MP208 has a clear and urgent business case and so the two shouldn't be conflated. However, if MP208 is successful it may provide a 'proof of concept' for SECMP0028. SECAS (AB) advised any overlap between SECMP0028, MP162 and MP208 will be investigated to ensure there is no duplication of work.

A Working Group member (RB) noted that other modifications relating to prioritisation have faced challenges around the fact that prioritising one message effectively de-prioritises others, and that this should be considered when putting forward the business case for MP208.

A Working Group member (MR) queried whether this could be an issue with high volumes of scheduled reads causing message queueing in the Supplier's gateway, and if so whether this would require Suppliers to change their processes. The Proposer (EL) advised that as the DCC has 24 hours in which to spread out scheduled reads to avoid traffic peaks, this is not a Supplier gateway issue but an issue of the DCC sending too many messages at once.

The Working Group member (MR) further queried whether this should be addressed as a DCC defect. SECAS (MF) advised the results of the DCC's Change Request will identify the cause of the processing delays and show whether this constitutes a defect.

Another Working Group member (AK) noted that their organisation sees spikes of Prepayment top up requests all through the night, and suggested one explanation is consumers receiving Universal Credit payments at midnight. The Proposer (EL) added that their organisation sees a drop in N56 delivery success from 99% to as low as 87% between 05:00 and 06:00. A Working Group member (JB) stated more analysis is required which should be delivered by the DCC's Change Request.

A Working Group member (MR) asked if Alert delivery timings were delivered in MP122A 'Operational Metrics'. SECAS (JM) advised the Alerts reporting requirement is intended to be delivered under MP122B 'Operational Metrics – Part 2', which won't be implemented until November 2023.

The Proposer (EL) emphasised that although CR4630 was raised several months ago we are yet to see any progress, and that given the impact on potentially vulnerable customers this isn't acceptable. The Proposer (EL) and SECAS requested that the DCC provide an expected date for completion of CR4630 by Friday 7 October 2022.

Next Steps

The following actions were recorded from the meeting:

- The DCC to provide an expected date for completion of CR4630 by Friday 7 October 2022.

Post-meeting Update

- The DCC has advised the anticipated return date for CR4630 is Friday 25 November 2022.