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Operations Group Meeting 86

10 January 2023, 09:20 – 16:00

Teleconference

OPSG_86_1001 - Final Minutes

Attendees:

Category	Operations Group Members
Operations Group Chair	Dave Warner
DCC	Ian Drummond
	Lisa Moran
Network Parties	Shuba Khatun
	Gemma Slaney
Large Suppliers	Kevin Donnelly
	Emslie Law
	Rochelle Harrison
	Tim Larcher
	Nick Coombs
	George Macgregor
	Ralph Baxter
	Laurence Cross
Small Suppliers	Cassie Bowerman
Other SEC Parties	Geoff Huckerby
	Elias Hanna

Representing	Other Participants
DCC	Marlene Gibson-Skinner
	Gary Fairclough
	Val Cumberland
	Darren Robbins (Part) (<i>Agenda Items 3 & 6</i>)
	Graeme Liggett (Part) (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)
	Claire Aspin (Part) (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)
	Lynette Heywood (Part) (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)

Managed by

	Jason Hynes (Part) (Agenda Item 4)
	Nik Ives (Part) (Agenda Item 5)
	Steve Hyde (Part) (Agenda Item 7)
	Ian Groves (Part) (Agenda Item 8)
	Robbie McMillan (Part) (Agenda Item 9)
	Kelly Lowe (Part) (Agenda Item 9)
	Pete McEnerney (Part) (Agenda Item 9)
	Dot Alabi (Part) (Agenda Item 9)
	Donald Duodu (Part) (Agenda Item 9)
	Brad Myers (Part) (Agenda Item 11)
	Umang Shah (Part) (Agenda Item 11)
CGI	Adam Lingwood
	Martin Hill
SEC Panel	Angela Love (SEC Panel Chair designate) (part)
SECAS	Veronica Asantewaa (Meeting Secretary)
	Joey Manners
	James Boraston
	Eugene Asante
TABASC	Julian Hughes
BEIS	Danny Holt
	Rachel Allen
	Jackie Wright (Part) (Agenda Item 8)

Apologies:

Representing	Name
Other SEC Parties	Michael Snowden

1. Previous Meeting Minutes

The Chair invited Operations Group (OPSG) members to comment on the Draft Minutes from OPSG 85. The OPSG:

- **AGREED** the redlined comments; and
- **APPROVED** the minutes from OPSG 85 as final.

2. Actions Outstanding

SECAS presented the OPSG Actions Outstanding. Actions were noted as completed where appropriate.

Action Ref.	Action	Date Raised	Last Target Date	Revised Target Date	Owner
OPSG 79/07	The DCC to confirm if the BCDR 2023 failover test for TSP services is required, as this is believed to be an 'Active/Active' service and therefore would not have a traditional failover mechanism.	13/09/2022	13/12/2022	N/A	DCC
The DCC reported that this is not an Active/Active Service (rather an Active/Passive) therefore the concerns around the traditional failover mechanism are not applicable in this case and the failover test for TSP is not required. The Technical Architecture and Business Architecture Sub-Committee (TABASC) Chair noted that they would expect that Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery (BCDR) tests should still need to take place to ensure that the services were configured and failed over appropriately. The DCC agreed to brief the OPSG on the various architectures and the implications for the required approaches to BCDR. Status: Open					

The OPSG agreed to close the following actions with no further comments: OPSG 74/03, OPSG 80/03 and OPSG 81/11.

The OPSG **NOTED** the update.

3. DCC Operational Update

The DCC presented its regular update on its service operations.

The DCC reported that a combined total of 23.72 million smart meters were connected to the DCC service, this total is comprised of 14.02 million SMETS2 smart meters and 9.70 million SMETS1 meters.

The DCC highlighted that in December 2022, there were close to 1.3bn Service Requests, an increase of 70 million from November 2022. The DCC noted that SRV4.6.1 and SRV4.8.1 continue to be the largest increase in daily volumes, this was due to the User systems preparing for the January Price Change Event. The DCC has predicted that SRV volumes will double in 2023, reaching approximately 2.2bn by year end. The DCC have projected that this will be driven by an increase in SMETS1 migrations, Other User and DNO volumes. The OPSG requested that the DCC provide a view of the peak demand, for example, in a half hour: this could be for the "cumulative meters installed or migrated" graph.

An OPSG member reiterated that, as previously emphasised, reporting on performance should follow the following style: observed features of performance; analysis of the causes for the observed features; identification of actions to address the identified causes; progress on actions. The DCC noted that it will work together with SECAS and the OPSG Chair to review the format of the Operational Update.

The OPSG noted that the DCC will need to engage more with Users to understand the expected service User behaviour during Price Change Events, in order to mitigate any potential congestion on

the service. The OPSG requested that the DCC provide a view of predicted mitigations and actions ahead of future Price Change Events.

The OPSG also asked DCC to urgently consider whether any further precautionary measures are needed in advance of the February EBSS period.

The DCC noted that overall there had been a 20% reduction in Incidents at the end of 2022 compared to 2021. An OPSG member requested that the DCC provide a comparison of the Incidents in 2021 and 2022, and how DCC strategic improvements have helped to reduce the number of Incidents.

The OPSG noted that for the last two years Category 1 and category 2 Incidents had continued at on average of two or three per month.

The DCC reported that there had been three Category 2 Incidents raised in December 2022.

The DCC reported that Communication Service Provider North (CSP N) had now achieved 59 days without a Category 1 or Category 2 Incident occurring.

The DCC noted that SMETS1 Final Operating Capability (FOC) achieved 65% success for Prepayment Top Ups (during Service Availability), a 5% increase on the previous month. The DCC noted that, as of December 2022, there are currently 839 FOC Devices operating as Prepayment. The DCC noted that SMETS1 FOC was still much the smallest cohort of prepayment volumes and has seen a small increase in prepayment vends month on month.

The DCC reported that the three Major Incidents in December 2022 have impacted prepayment performance.

The overall prepayment success rate for SMETS1 was 95%.

The OPSG commented on a plateau of 96% in SMETS2 prepayment success in CSP Central and South (C&S) and asked whether the performance will improve in the future. The DCC reported that the Packet Data Protocol (PDP) issues in WNC Devices were a significant factor in this failure rate. The DCC noted that the firmware to fix the issue is currently in the testing phase, and is scheduled to be implemented in March 2023.

The DCC reported that it is currently tracking 60 open Problems, 46 of these have confirmed root cause and remediation plans established.

The DCC presented the Forward Schedule of Change. The DCC reported that there were 150 maintenance changes in December 2022. The DCC noted that there has been no Major Incidents caused by changes within the month and the volume of changes are in line with expectations. The DCC noted that a high impact maintenance window is scheduled for 24 January 2023. The OPSG reiterated that the Annual Outage and BCDR Plan for 2023/2024 will need to be endorsed by members as soon as possible, as Users will need to prepare their systems. The OPSG requested that the DCC provide a draft plan in February 2023 for final endorsement in March 2023.

3.1. SMETS1

The DCC reported that a total of 10 million meters have been migrated and 9.4 million have become operational. The DCC reported that there are now 537k meters left to become operational and the OPSG reiterated the need to understand the extent of non-communicating Communication Hubs (CHs) (SMETS1/SMETS2).

ACTION OPSG 86/01: The DCC to provide a view of the peak usage for the "cumulative meters installed or migrated" graph.

ACTION OPSG 86/02: The DCC to work with SECAS and the OPSG Chair to review the format of the Operational Update, to provide an action driven approach for the monthly operational performance in terms of risks, issues and activities.

ACTION OPSG 86/03: The DCC to present expected mitigation actions (based on expected user behaviour) for future Price Change Events.

ACTION OPSG 86/04: The DCC to produce a draft proposal of the Annual Outage and BCDR 2023/2024 Plan for the February 2023 meeting, for final endorsement in March 2023.

ACTION OPSG 86/05: The DCC to provide a comparison of the Incidents in 2021 and 2022, and how DCC's strategic improvements have helped to reduce the number of Incidents.

The OPSG **NOTED** the update.

4. EBSS and Price Change Event (January)

The DCC presented the outcome of the January Energy Bills Support Scheme (EBSS) and Price Change Event.

The DCC reported that the EBSS and Price Change processes achieved over 90% success rates. The OPSG noted that the infrastructure became congested due to the Scheduled and On Demand traffic which triggered the Data Service Provider (DSP) Load Protection mechanism and led to degradation of the Service. The DCC noted that these messages were also not throttled by the DSP or Users during the event. The OPSG queried whether the Demand Forecast and the understanding of all aspects of the end-to-end process were adequate.

The OPSG asked for increased transparency and reporting on the frequency of invocation of the DSP Load Protection Mechanism, the duration of its use, and the proportion of impacted SRVs.

The OPSG noted that the DCC should confirm the percentage of SRVs that were impacted by the DSP Load Protection mechanism that was triggered between 00:06 – 09:30 on 1 January 2023.

The OPSG also requested monthly reporting on the invocation of the DSP Load Protection Mechanism to include (for example): number of instances, duration (total and longest instance), and number of SRVs impacted.

The DCC noted that it will host a workshop for further engagement with Users. The OPSG noted that Users acknowledged that they had also learnt a number of lessons regarding their own processes relating to price change updates, and that DCC and industry will need to work together to agree best practice for Users and end consumers.

ACTION OPSG 86/06: The DCC to confirm percentage of SRVs that were impacted by the DSP Load Protection mechanism that was triggered between 00:06 – 09:30 on 1 January 2023, and during the EBSS and Price Change Events.

ACTION OPSG 86/07: The DCC to provide monthly reporting on the invocation of the DSP Load Protection Mechanism, e.g. the number of instances, duration (total and longest instance), and number of SRVs impacted.

The OPSG **NOTED** the presentation.

5. Spurious Alerts

The DCC provided an update on the progress of managing Spurious Alerts.

The DCC reported that the number of Spurious Alerts were managed and generally under control. The DCC noted that it aimed to further reduce these Alerts to approximately 10 million per day, assuming identified remediations are deployed.

The OPSG noted that there were signs that 8F3E Alerts were starting to increase again. The DCC noted that the WNC firmware version 2.10.3 will be implemented across the network by Q2 2023. The DCC noted that this will help to reduce the 8F3E Alerts. The OPSG queried whether the WNC firmware version number quoted was accurate, as this may be related to the version 4.1.0.4 release. The DCC noted that it will confirm this.

ACTION OPSG 86/08: The DCC to confirm the WNC Firmware Version that is due to be rolled out across the network in the Q2 2023, as this is thought to be version 4.1.0.4 and not version 2.10.3.

The OPSG **NOTED** the update.

6. Service Outage Strategy

The DCC presented an update on the Service Outage Strategy.

The DCC reported that the CTO Outage Study is currently underway, noting that it will return to OPSG in April 2023 to present its findings. The OPSG highlighted that it has not seen the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the CTO Outage Study therefore were unsure of the scope of the study and the expected outcomes. The DCC noted that the study will focus on how to provide a consistent view of and deliver quality planned maintenance to make sure that any impacts from maintenance changes are reduced. The DCC noted that it will provide the scope and ToR of the study.

The DCC noted that the Adverse Weather Trial is still in progress. The OPSG commented that the Adverse Weather Trial has been ongoing for some time and are keen to have this progress into an enduring process: to achieve this the [relevant] SEC modification must be brought to a conclusion.

The OPSG **NOTED** the update.

7. DSP Tech Refresh Revised Annual Outage Plan

The DCC presented an update to DSP Tech Refresh.

The DCC proposed to include an additional 6 hour High impact maintenance window on 13 June 2023, and extend an existing 6 hour High impact window to an 8 hour High impact window. The DCC noted that the maintenance windows will start at 20:00. The DCC noted that the technical approach of the proposal had been endorsed by TABASC. The OPSG reiterated that, as has been emphasised many times before, it is very reluctant to endorse individual maintenance windows without the context of the Annual Outage and BCDR Plan: It was very disappointing that again individual dates were being raised by the DCC without that context.

The DCC noted that the BCDR dates for the 2023/24 plan are subject to a consultation but will provide a draft Annual Outage and BCDR plan for initial review at the February OPSG meeting, before seeking endorsement at the March OPSG and Panel meetings.

The OPSG questioned what will happen if the maintenance work scheduled for 21 March 2023 fails, as it has done so twice before. The DCC noted that it will stop the maintenance change and review the root cause analysis.

The OPSG endorsed the extended 8 hour high impact window on 21 March 2023. However, the OPSG noted that it will not approve the requested additional 6 hour window until it has seen the Annual Outage and BCDR Plan for 2023/2024.

The OPSG:

- **NOTED** the update;
- **ENDORSED** the extended 8 hour high impact window on 21 March 2023; and
- **DID NOT ENDORSE** the proposed window for 13 June 2023.

8. DSP Target Operating Model (TOM)

The DCC provided an overview of the DSP TOM options; the DCC also reminded the OPSG of the architectural options under consideration. The OPSG discussed the extent to which these TOM options were interdependent with the architectural options.

The DCC noted that Architecture Option 1 and 2 would not require changes to the DSP TOM, and also noted that Options 3,4 and 5 would allow an opportunity to change the structure within DCC operations, allowing DCC to become the service owner for that product.

An OPSG member highlighted that the proposed Architectural Options 3, 4 and 5 could apparently be implemented with the current DSP TOM model and that the selection of TOM need not be simply on the basis of the architectural option decision.

The OPSG noted that the DCC will also need to provide a view of the associated costs for each option, since otherwise it will be extremely difficult to make any assessment of the relative attractiveness of the options. The OPSG would not expect to see detailed cost estimates for this purpose.

The OPSG noted that, as discussed at the workshop in December 2022, it will require further description of the User impacts of the architectural options, and similarly of the TOM options, to enable it to consider the attractiveness of the proposals.

BEIS noted that it would be seeking assurance from the DCC that adequate engagement with Users had been undertaken.

The OPSG noted that next steps in engagement needs to be planned in detail to allow for assessment of the various options.

The OPSG **NOTED** the presentation.

9. June 2023 SEC Release - Readiness Review

The DCC provided an update at the 6 month check point for the June 2023 SEC Release.

The DCC reported that [MP134B 'Use of SMKI Certificates relating to a SoLR event - Part 2'](#) has been postponed.

Regarding the CR4427 (implementation of additional XML signing credentials) the DCC reported that only VM02 will be implementing this in the June 2023 Release, the rest of the Service Providers implement this in the November 2023 Release. The DCC noted that there will be no User impacts.

The OPSG noted that the Release is on track and no issues or risks have been identified.

The OPSG highlighted the need to review the date for the June 2023 Release as outlined in action 79/06¹ as it may impact the Price Change Event in July 2023. The DCC noted that it will complete a

¹ OPSG 79/06: The DCC and SECAS to investigate if the date for June 2023 SEC Release should be rescheduled due to it being close to the July 2023 price change event.

risk assessment and is expected to return to the OPSG in February with an outcome. The OPSG noted that this should also include a clear statement on any cross-code implications of a change in date.

10. OPSG Issues Log

SECAS presented one new candidate Issue for inclusion onto the OPSG Issues log. The OPSG agreed that Issue OPSG-110 (User Systems receiving SMETS1 N56 Alert UTRN details for Top Ups) should be added to the log.

The OPSG noted two candidate Issues presented for closure. The OPSG agreed that Issues OPSG-027 (Bulk Comms Hub (CH) Returns) and OPSG-098 (CH Delivery Defect Rejection Process) can be closed with no further comments.

The OPSG:

- **NOTED** the presentation;
- **ENDORSED** the inclusion of Candidate Issue 110 on the OPSG Issues Log; and
- **AGREED** that Issues OPSG-027 and OPSG-098 can be closed.

11. GBCS 3.2 CH Upgrade/Releases

The DCC presented a plan for the GBCS v3.2 CH firmware updates.

The OPSG provided feedback on the proposed plan on deploying GBCS v3.2 CH Firmware and were pleased that the planning recognised the Price Change and EBSS events. The OPSG asked that the EBSS periods not yet included in the plan be explicitly added.

The DCC noted that it has introduced micro pilots of approximately 10k firmware upgrades for each Device. Regarding future GBCS CH plans (i.e., GBCS v4.1 CH Firmware), the OPSG noted that the DCC should try to consider and include relevant dates such as the EBSS and Price Change Events.

The DCC noted that the progress of the firmware upgrades and lessons learnt will be discussed at IMF and OPSG.

The OPSG **NOTED** the update.

12. Secure BCDR Test

The DCC provided a proposal to replan the Secure BCDR test, following the failed Failover test conducted on 10 December 2022.

The DCC noted that the Secure Load balancer linked to the DSP Global Traffic Manager was initially believed to be the cause for the failed test, but further investigation had ruled this out. The DCC confirmed that the root cause had not conclusively been identified.

The DCC noted that the Failover test is planned for 21 January 2023, with the failback on 18 February 2023. The DCC noted that the failback test date will be an additional 6 hour high impact maintenance window.

The OPSG, although reluctant to add further outage windows, agreed that it would be prudent to carry out the Secure BCDR test and endorsed the proposed 6-hour window on 18 February 2023. The OPSG again emphasised that it requires to see individual proposed changes in the broader context of the Annual Outage & BCDR plan.

The OPSG **NOTED** the update.

13. OPSG Priorities and Work Plan 2023

SECAS presented items on the OPSG Priorities Log, and a view of agenda items forecast for Q1 2023.

SECAS reported that there are currently 39 items on the OPSG Priorities Log, noting that the majority stem from OPSG Issues and Risks. The OPSG reported that 11 Priorities had been actioned and closed in 2022.

The OPSG queried how the priorities and activities align with the SECAS OPSG costs following the SEC Board annual budget considerations.

An OPSG member noted that their expectation was that it was the DCC's responsibility to track these activities, ensure they are delivering outcomes, and provide assurance to the OPSG accordingly; there was a need to ensure that there was not duplication of effort. The OPSG also questioned the level of involvement and work required of the OPSG against each topic. SECAS agreed to work with the DCC to provide visibility of planned dates for completion of activities on the log, and provide future expectation of OPSG workload.

ACTION OPSG 86/09: SECAS and the DCC to provide visibility of planned dates for completion of activities on the OPSG Priorities Log, identify ownership, and hence identify future expectation of the OPSG workload.

ACTION OPSG 86/10: SECAS to provide a view of how the OPSG priorities and activities align with the OPSG cost following the annual budget setting.

The OPSG **NOTED** the presentation.

14. Customer Perspective

None were proposed.

15. Any Other Business (AOB)

15.1. OPSG In Person Meeting

The OPSG noted that the SECAS will send a doodle poll for members to choose their preferred dates for in person meetings for 2023.

15.2. Performance Assurance Framework (PAF) Update

The OPSG noted that the Panel agreed that the proposals to include a PAF in the SEC will progress to the modification process.

15.3. FOC Trilliant Performance

The OPSG noted that some Users are experiencing ongoing Incidents where device reads are not being returned in the read response payload. An OPSG member noted that there seems to be issues on obtaining the Trilliant firmware for their use on SMETS1 enrolled Devices. The DCC noted that it will investigate the concerns raised and report back to the OPSG.

There was no further business, and the Chair closed the meeting.

Next Reporting Meeting: 23 January 2023; Main Meeting: 14 February 2023.