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SEC Issues Group April 2024 – meeting summary

Attendees

SEC Party Category	Working Group Members	Representing
Large Suppliers	Alastair Cobb (AC)	British Gas
	Emma Johnson (EJ)	British Gas
	Sharon Armitage (SA)	E.ON
	Alex Hurcombe (AH)	EDF
	Joey Manners (JM)	Octopus Energy
	Ralph Baxter (RBa)	Octopus Energy
	Mahfuzar Rahman (MR)	Scottish Power
	Kevin Clark (KC)	Utilita
Small Suppliers	Sam Ward (SW)	Good Energy
Other SEC Parties	Patricia Massey (PM)	BEAMA
	Carl Whitehouse (CW)	Calisen Metering
	Craig Biffen (CB)	EUA
	Stuart Blair (SB)	Northern Powergrid Metering Ltd
	Michael Snowden (MS)	Secure Meters (UK) Limited
	David Lane (DL)	SMS Plc
	Mitch Kerry (MK)	Trilliant Networks Operations Ltd
Network Parties	Emily Waters (EWa)	GTC Pipelines Limited
	Shuba Khatun (SK)	SSEN

Other Participants		
DCC		
David Rollason (DR)		Gary Stuart (GS)
SECAS		
Ali Beard (AB) <i>Issues Group Chair</i>	Rachel Black (RBI) <i>Meeting Secretary</i>	Elizabeth Woods (EW) <i>Lead Analyst</i>
Simon Grimwood (SG)	Georgie Severin (GSe)	Ben Giblin (BG)

Overview

The Smart Energy Code Administrator and Secretariat (SECAS) provided an overview of the issue identified, and the proposed business requirements.

Background

- Prepayment consumers are highly reliant on the smart metering functionality to manage their energy budgets and supply.
- Whilst 'the system' is highly reliable and secure, it is envisaged that if there were a system component failure (especially for an extended period of time) it could potentially critically affect the supply of energy to cohorts of prepayment consumers whilst the affected system was restored.

Potential scenarios

- A Supplier's data centre going offline.
- Communications outage between a Supplier and the DCC.
- Failure of a Supplier at short notice.
- Potential ransomware attack or attacks on more than one Supplier.

Solution options

Possible synergies associated with creating an industry wide solution to the challenge of keeping prepayment customers on supply during any such business continuity event.

Potential solution

- Enabling common systems (potentially managed by DCC) to send a limited set of Service Requests (SRs) to a cohort of Devices to keep them on supply.
- Examples of such SRs might be:
 1. Setting the emergency credit (to a higher limit).
 2. Establishing a wider non disablement calendar.
 3. Switching the mode to credit.
 4. Reducing the tariff (or setting it to zero for a period).
 5. Changing the supplier.

Considerations

- Different solutions favoured by different Suppliers, depending on their Prepayment portfolio and preferred customer approaches in the event of such events.
- Central activity energised to look at the potential scenarios – help to support individual Supplier plans.

Issues Group Discussion

SECAS (EW) provided an overview of the background, potential scenarios and solution options.

Issues Group Chair (AB) asked members if they saw this as a problem in the event DCC or Suppliers go offline and need to keep Prepayment Consumers on supply. Issues Group members noted the scenarios provided cover a wide range and sought clarity if this was for instances when DCC was compromised or when Suppliers were compromised. Issue proponent (AC) noted this was for when Suppliers were unable to communicate with the DCC, however did not want to limit the possible scenarios.

An Issues Group member (SA) queried if there is currently not a solution, and this group is discussing a possible solution from an industry wide position. Issue proponent (AC) noted that they are not aware of any mandated plan and that it would be up to each respective Supplier to determine what interpretation of the solution they would adopt. They added that with any system outage, it can come from varying possibilities.

An Issues Group member (JM) noted that the use of UTRNs was used to try and combat this issue. Issue proponent (AC) responded that this is one possible solution method, however noted there are other possible strategies and if the outages were prolonged if this was a viable solution. Another Issues Group member (KC) noted that [DP266 'Alternative SMETS1 UTRN Generation'](#) has some overlap with this issue, as it's looking at the scenario of, if DCC system is down and unable to create SMETS1 Unique Transaction Record Numbers (UTRNs). Issue proponent (AC) noted that this was also dependent on if there are enough Prepayment consumers already covered by current Supplier contingencies, and if so, no changes would be needed. They added that they did not want to raise a modification without prior wider assessment.

An Issues Group member (JM) noted they agree with the principal of the issue, and added there would be technical issues to overcome. They wondered if this would sit above the SEC with more of a policy position and decision on how Prepayments should be managed. They added that they wanted to uncover if this is a SEC problem or sat with higher powers. Issue proponent (AC) noted requesting input from the DCC regarding the costing which will feed into the policy discussions, and to factor in the cost of doing nothing.

Issues Group members agreed the identified issue should be looked into further, with support for having a formal Risks Register. Issues Group Chair (AB) advised this would be discussed with the SECAS Technical Operations team to determine the progression of the issue via an Industry Project. They added that this would include discussions with Industry and SEC Sub-Committees about what action needs to be taken, and if a modification is needed to deliver the outputs.

Next Steps

The following actions were recorded from the meeting:

- SECAS Change team to discuss with the SECAS Technical Operations team to determine the progression of the issue via an Industry Project.
- SECAS to determine with Industry and SEC Sub-Committees for what action needs to be taken and if a modification is needed to deliver the outputs.