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Communications Hub Returns Process

October 2025 Issues Group – Meeting Summary

Attendees

SEC Party Category	Working Group Members	Representing
Large Suppliers	Andrew Firth (AF)	Centrica
	Emma Johnson (EJ)	Centrica
	Julie Brown (JB)	Centrica
	Sharon Armitage (SA)	EON
	Ralph Baxter (RB)	Octopus Energy
	Mahfuzar Rahman (MR)	Scottish Power
	Kevin Clark (KC)	Utilita
Small Suppliers	Steve Blackler (SB)	E Gas & Electricity
	Patricia Massey (PM)	BEAMA
Other SEC Parties	Beth Tatton (BT)	Calisen
	Daniel Davies (DD)	ESG Global
	Martin Bell (MB)	EUA
	Kirsty Maddock (KM)	National Grid Electricity Distribution
Network Parties	Jamie Lowe (JL)	Northern Power Grid

Other Participants		
DCC		
Brad Baker (BB)	Graeme Milligan (GM)	
Robbie McMillan (RM)	Tim Troy (TT)	
DESNZ		
Rachel Allen (RA)		
SECAS		
Simon Grimwood (SG) <i>Working Group Chair</i>	Marc Rhodes (MRh) <i>Lead Analyst</i>	Abi Obadan (AO) <i>Meeting Secretary</i>
Ali Beard (AB)	Georgie Severin (GSe)	
Ofgem		
Ian Chalfon (IC)		
SECCO		

Other Participants
Ashton Briggs (ABr)
Other Working Group Attendees

Overview

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

Background

- The process within the SEC for Communications Hub (CH) returns has multiple gaps or requirements for clarity to aid a successful process and enable better reporting for the CH returns process for industry.

Potential Solution

- A Review of the CH returns process and amendments to SEC Section F 'Smart Metering System Requirements' and Appendix I 'CH Installation and Maintenance Support' as required to reflect this.

Working Group Discussion

SECCO (ABr) mentioned that Operations Group (OPSG) are looking into the CH returns process as there are parts of the SEC that need tightening, so the process runs smoother. (BT) stated that the Data Communications Company (DCC) had been looking at the CH returns process for the last 6 years and hoped that this modification wouldn't be going over the same ground as previously, noting it wouldn't be a good use of time. (JB) queried what the solution would be to the modification. Working Group Chair (SG) clarified that it would be a review of the returns process with changes to legal text where required. (JB) acknowledged the pain points which had been highlighted in the issue. (JB) further stated that there was a need for clarity on what the intended outcomes of the modification will be. (ABr) replied that currently the triage process can be misinterpreted as it mentions damage to the outer casing as part of the visual inspection which is often failing due to superficial marks which then prevents triage taking place. Additionally noting that one of the potential solutions would be the use of a visual inspection form. (JB) stated that part of the problem is that the return is either fault or no fault which doesn't provide you with any information. (JB) also queried the timetable. SECAS (MR) clarified

that the timetable was provisional at this stage as the investigation work hadn't started. Explaining that as it was undertaken timescales would become clearer.

Scope

Issues Group member (BT) asked to clarify the scope of the review and whether it would just be 4G CHs. (ABr) stated the belief was that it would cover everything. (BT) noted that the understanding was that there was not going to be any triage for 2G and 3G as they are not going to be refurbished, just removed. (ABr) stated that the intention was to try to make the existing BAU process work. (BT) cautioned that as the process hasn't worked for the last 6 years that progress was unlikely to be quick. (ABr) clarified that once some investigation has taken place timeframes will be assessed and scope determined. (RB) noted that it may be difficult to drive short term improvements due to the volume of CH returns that the DCC will be receiving, so changes made through this modification may be most appropriate to 4G. (JB) suggested that there may be an opportunity for quick wins by tightening up the legal text wording for returns as oppose to adding new return reasons to the system. (ABr) confirmed that a phased approach had been discussed as there may be some fixes which are quicker than others.

Next Steps

The following actions were recorded from the meeting:

- Raise at Change Sub-Committee - October 2025
- Present to Sub-Committees – October 2025
- Legal text review – November 2025