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SECMP0007 ‘Firmware updates to IHDs and PPMIDs’

Working Group Meeting – 1 May 2019

Meeting summary

What are the benefits and drawbacks of either option?

The Working Group began by discussing the two solution options given in the Data Communications Company (DCC) Preliminary Assessment. In reference to option 2 ‘*Extend Proven OTA Firmware Method*’ given in the assessment, the Proposer questioned why, if a Device on the Home Area Network (HAN) is on the Central Products List (CPL) should it need to go through Commercial Products Assurance (CPA), as this would considerably increase the costs on Suppliers to implement the proposed solution. A device manufacturer member agreed with this assessment and advised that for their organisation, option 2 could not be explored due to the CPA requirements whilst highlighting that option 2 would be difficult for device manufacturers to facilitate.

The DCC were asked why it had explored option 2 in the first place, advising that it felt as though the Working Group’s comments had been ignored. The DCC confirmed that it was not their intention to ignore the Working Group and that option 2 had been explored as they believed it reduced the complexity of the solution as well as providing the Working Group and the Proposer an alternative to the original approach.

Questions were also raised with regard to the £12.3 million cost for option 1 ‘*Original Approach, Zigbee OTA Delivery*’ given in the assessment, when it was supposed to be the original approach. The DCC noted that option 1 would require different processing patterns for the Data Service Provider (DSP), Communications Service Providers (CSPs) and the Communications Hub. This was due to the requirement for new Service Request 11.4 requiring a change in the DSP and CSP interface in order to accommodate this.

Dual Supplier scenarios

Whilst discussing the benefits and drawbacks of each solution, dual Supplier scenarios were discussed as having a significant impact. The DCC advised that the benefit of utilising Service Request 11.3 was that you know who the Responsible Supplier for the given meter is. The Working Group advised that the requirements for dual Supplier scenarios had already been agreed in previous Working Groups and that both options would allow for either of the Responsible Suppliers, as according to the DSP’s registration data, to submit the relevant Service Requests. SECAS noted that it was the Working Group’s intention for dual Supplier requirements to apply to [SECMP0024 ‘Enduring Approach to Communication Hub Firmware Management’](#) as well as this modification.

Do the costs of either option present a strong business case?

Suppliers and Other Parties agreed that the Preliminary Assessment only considered the costs for the DCC to test and implement the solution but did not account for the costs on other SEC Parties. This

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was due to the emulation testing Parties would have to carry out as part of any solution, as well as the requirement for CPA approval under option 2 of the assessment which puts both a cost and added time constraint on Parties.

The Working Group also advised that a breakdown of the costs are required in order to justify them. The DCC noted that they are currently working with the Panel to improve costs analysis of modifications, making it easier for the Parties to determine the business case for them.

The DCC also noted that costs of the modification were given as if the modification would be implemented as a standalone SEC Release, as Ofgem have requested, as although this isn't what Parties would necessarily want, it is still a possibility it could happen. A Panel member agreed that this is true but that it does not by any means, nor is it intended to, stop the DCC from estimating the costs as if the modification would be delivered as part of a wider scheduled SEC Release.

What will be the solution going forward?

Partly due to the high costs as well as the complexity of the proposed solution, the Working Group agreed that in order to progress the modification, they would seek a combination of the two solutions given in the DCC Preliminary Assessment. The DCC suggested the requirements in option 1 could be constrained to Prepayment Meter Interface Devices (PPMIDs) in order to explore cost savings, and that In Home Displays (IHDs) could be left out of the solution. The Working Group believed that the vast majority of IHDs in the field today were actually PPMIDs with IHD capability, and so this should be acceptable.

However, it was noted that in order to quantify the number of standalone IHDs in the field, Parties would be asked as part of the industry consultation to assess the impact that excluding IHDs from the proposed solution would have on them.

The Working Group pointed out that the removal of the IHD from the proposal could further reduce the role of the IHD in the market.

The Proposer also noted that they did not want to leave out HAN Connected Auxiliary Load Control Switches (HCALCSs) from the solution as they anticipated that a number of Parties would require the OTA capability for these devices, hence why this requirement will remain.

As a result, the Working Group agreed to progress with a combination of the two solutions:

1. Updating firmware over-the-air (OTA) for PPMIDs via Zigbee (option 1)
2. Updating firmware OTA for HCALCS via GBCS (option 2)

Addressing pending firmware updates was discussed as part of the solution. It was suggested that to consider this, as well as the proposed solution as it stands, the wider industry needed to be engaged, especially device manufacturers and that the Technical Specification Issue Resolution Sub-group (TSIRS) would be the most suitable place to gather feedback.

Actions and next steps

The Working Group and the Proposer agreed for the following actions to be taken:

- SECAS to amend the business requirements combining elements of both solution options to form the single proposed solution to be taken forward;

- SECAS to issue a consultation seeking to assess the impacts the proposed solution would have on Parties as well as quantifying the number of standalone IHDs in the field; and
- SECAS to ask the Change Board's permission to request a DCC Impact Assessment on the proposed solution before the consultation has finished in order to maintain the momentum of the modification's progression.