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DP077 'DCC Service Flagging' Problem statement – version 0.2

About this document

This document provides a summary of this Draft Proposal, including the issue or problem identified, the impacts this is having, and the context of this issue within the Smart Energy Code (SEC).

Proposer

This Draft Proposal has been raised by Paul Saker from EDF.

What is the issue or problem identified?

What is the issue?

The industry needs a simple and reliable mechanism for identifying where smart devices are, or are not, present at a location. This information is necessary for Suppliers to establish whether there is a Smart Metering System they can communicate with at that location, and for Distributors to correctly handle Alerts.

The current approach, as recommended by the DCC, is to use the DCC Service Flag held in the gas and electricity registration systems. This is created using the D0350 'Notification of DCC Services at Metering Point' data flow triggered from the DCC Central Systems when the first meter in a Smart Metering System is commissioned, which sets the value of the Service Flag to 'A' for active. The other current Service Flag values available are 'S' for suspended and 'W' for withdrawn.

Some specific issues in this approach are:

- The DCC Service Flag is being set to 'A' where a Smart Metering System is installed but has not been commissioned, and therefore cannot be operated as 'smart'. It appears that this may be set to 'A' when the meter status is set to 'whitelisted' or 'installed not commissioned' which is not what is expected based on the definition of Enrolment within the SEC as found in SEC Sections A 'Definitions and Interpretations' and H 'DCC Services'.
- The DCC Service Flag will remain as 'A' even when a Smart Metering System is removed and not replaced or is replaced with a legacy meter (i.e. there are no smart meters installed) as there is no DCC Service Flags to reflect that removal.
- The DCC Service Flag may remain as NULL, where a valid Flag value hasn't been set even though a SMEST2 meter has been installed if the meter has been installed without a Wide Area Network (WAN) connection being made, otherwise known as an 'Install and Leave' process.
- The DCC Systems include a value of 'N' for Not Active to address the situations where a meter is or has been present but is not operating in smart mode, but this value is not propagated into the registration systems.
- The future use of the 'S' and 'W' values in the D0350 flow and the associated systems should be investigated as part of this modification as:
    - The 'S' value is not currently used; and
    - The DCC Service Flag of 'W' appears to be no longer required as a result of the removal of the non-domestic opt-out.

It is important that the problems in this approach are addressed, or the approach changes on a timely basis as it is having a direct impact on and impeding the switching process for some consumers with smart meters. The reliability and accuracy of the switching process is something that Ofgem are focussing on now through their Switching Programme.

Outside of the scope of the Ofgem switching programme, this also highlights an issue from a technical perspective where Suppliers with Smart Meter stock cannot get a wholly reliable source of information to determine which Smart Meter devices are 'dumb' or have been removed from a Smart Metering System. There is no simple and reliable mechanism for identifying where smart devices are, or are not, present at a location. This information is necessary for Suppliers and Distribution Network

Operators to establish whether there is a Smart Metering System they can communicate with at that location.

How does this issue relate to the SEC?

SEC Section E 'Registration Data' specifies an obligation on the DCC to provide information to Gas and Electricity Registration Data Providers (RDPs) where an Enrolled Smart Meter System is associated with the relevant network. SEC Appendix X 'Registration Data Interface Specification' details the definition of a Service Flag and the relationship of the interfaces between the RDPs and the DCC concerning data flows as defined in the Data Transfer Catalogue (DTC).

Any change to the DCC Service Flagging system, alterations to the way that this process is carried out, states the flags are made in (Active, Suspended or Withdrawn), data flows or other contributing factors will need to be captured in the above SEC Sections and anywhere else that is identified as part of any solution developed.

What is the impact this is having?

If the issue is left unchecked, it may result in consumers not being offered a full choice of products or services as part of the Change of Supply process leading to reducing consumer confidence in the Smart Metering Programme.

It could also lead to Suppliers having to expend additional resources and effort to correct any issues and reducing confidence in the existing business process for suppliers with Smart Metering stock for attaining information concerning Smart Metering Systems about the location and condition of individual devices, whether they are fully operational, in a ‘dumb’ state or have been removed and/or damaged.

Distributors may receive alerts from non-SMETS2 meters at a Meter Point Administration Number (MPAN) where they expect there to be a SMETS2 metering system,

This issue will hinder Ofgem’s Switching Programme between Smart Metering devices if the reliability and accuracy of the current switching process worsens. This will impact other Supplier Parties, through having consumers switch to their services but not having their Smart Metering Systems operating with “smart” functionalities, and Network Parties, by having to provide information to the DCC so that the DCC meets their obligations requiring them to provide details to RDPs about the status of enrolled Smart Meter Systems.

What are the views of the industry?

Views of the DCC

The DCC initially enquired as to why this change was needed when they said the individual device information could be taken through the 'Device Status' and that any solution would impact the DCC Total System. At the CSC meeting, the DCC stated that their earlier view had been revised to saying that only the Data Service Provider (DSP) should be affected from an initial perspective, although this could be subject to change depending on the solution taken.

Views of SEC Parties

The views of Parties were captured and posted to the SEC website. A Large and a Small Supplier both commented on and expressed their agreement with the raised issue. Citizens Advice had commented on this too, stating they desired a transparent system where consumers would know what services are available to them in the case of switching between Suppliers.

Views of Panel Sub-Committees

The Technical Architecture and Business Architecture Sub-Committee (TABASC) stated that they held an interest in this Draft Proposal and that they questioned whether what was being asked constitutes a defect rather than a modification. SECAS took note of this and noted to the TABASC that this would still be an area for a modification as it would change the DCC Service Flagging System, rather than get it to work how it has been described in the SEC. This is due to the original design having some issues with providing information for individual devices, and only providing the information at a Smart Metering System level.

Views of the Change Sub-Committee

The Change Sub-Committee were supportive of this Draft Proposal. They noted that they would support the conversion of its status from Draft Proposal to Modification Proposal after obtaining the views from other SEC Parties and Sub-Committees during the Development Stage, and that they were in favour of resolving the issue being discussed.

The Change Sub-Committee noted the TABASC's consideration of whether this should be a defect but agreed that the wider solution would require a modification. However, members stressed that any effort from the DCC in resolving internal issues and defects, such as errors arising due to the DCC setting values incorrectly, should not be incurred under the modification, and that the costs passed to industry should only be for improvements to the process.

The Change Sub-Committee also emphasised that the solution would need to work in all current and future scenarios, including for SMETS1 as well as for SMETS2. Members noted Ofgem's switching programme and highlighted that any solution to this proposal will need to consider the impacts it will have on this programme of work.