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SEC Release Management Policy

Version 2.3

About this document

This document is the Smart Energy Code (SEC) Release Management Policy, established in accordance with SEC Section D10.7.

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1. Purpose

The following matters are subject to the Smart Energy Code (SEC) Release Management Policy:

- The frequency of SEC Releases;
- The allocation of Modification Proposals into a SEC Release by the setting and prioritisation of implementation timetables and implementation dates;
- The creation and oversight of SEC Releases;
- The communications plan for SEC Releases; and
- The implementation of all approved Modification Proposals.

Secretary of State Directions

Amendments to the SEC will be made via approved Modification Proposals. However, the SEC does allow for amendments via Secretary of State directions in accordance with the Energy Act 2008.

Directions from the Secretary of State will typically be achieved through a signed direction letter, or Statutory Instrument, that will specify an effective date for any amendments. Such changes will be delivered either as part of a SEC Release or an ad hoc release as set out below.

2. Roles and responsibilities

SEC Panel

The Panel are responsible for setting the implementation date/approach of a Modification Proposal and setting the scope of a SEC Release. They are also responsible for setting the Go-Live criteria and ensuring that criteria have been met before making a Go-Live decision. The Panel will use input from their Sub-Committees to help make their decisions. During the implementation of a Release, the Panel will act as a project board, ensuring due process is being followed.

If they believe it necessary, the Panel may appoint an independent auditor to monitor the Data Communications Company's (DCC's) implementation process, plans and progress in support of a SEC Release.

The Operations Group

When required, the Operations Group will provide a view on the impact a modification will have on the operational environment and the timing/duration of any required outages. These views will help shape any decisions the Panel need to make regarding implementation approach.

In addition, the Operations Group will help review the Panel's Go-Live acceptance criteria and will assist the Panel with the Release Go-Live decision.

The TABASC

During the progression of a modification, the Technical Architecture and Business Architecture Sub-Committee (TABASC) will be asked to provide feedback on the implementation date and approach of a Modification Proposal, so the Panel may take their views into consideration when setting their approach. The intent is to ensure changes impact similar areas of architecture to minimise the impact on Parties.

The TAG

When required, the Testing Advisory Group (TAG) will be utilised to review and comment on modification testing at an individual Modification Proposal level. The TAG will also be utilised to review and comment on the approach for release level testing, testing progress and testing outcomes, to aid the Panel in any decisions that are required. A timetable of when TAG input is expected will be included as part of the wider implementation approach timescales in the SEC Release Implementation Document (RID).

SEC Party Obligations

SEC Section D10.4 requires each Party to co-operate with the Panel to ensure that approved Modification Proposals are implemented by the respective implementation date. Therefore, the RID will indicate where support from Parties or specific Party Categories are required, to aid the successful implementation of a SEC Release, particularly in relation to the testing approach.

The DCC

The DCC are responsible for delivering the systems elements of SEC Releases in line with their obligations as set out in the SEC. Prior to a SEC Release, the DCC are responsible for producing the Testing Approach Document and for providing a breakdown of estimated release costs. During the implementation of a Release, they are responsible for providing the required reports to the Panel and for providing evidence the Go-Live criteria have been met. Following the release, the DCC will present a report setting out any lessons learnt and the final release costs.

SECAS

The Smart Energy Code Administrator and Secretariat (SECAS) will ~~act as project manager and administrator~~oversee and manage the progression ~~for~~of a SEC Release on the Panel's behalf, ensuring that the agreed steps as set out in the SEC Release approach are followed, and will provide the necessary support to the Panel.

3. Frequency of SEC Releases

Scheduled releases

There will be three scheduled releases of SEC content per year. Two of these scheduled releases will be referred to as 'SEC System Releases' and may consist of modifications that impact both DCC Systems and SEC documentation.

The remaining scheduled release will be referred to as a 'SEC Documentation Release' and may consist of Modification Proposals that only impact SEC documentation and will not impact the DCC Systems. Whilst such releases may have a User impact, if there is no impact on the DCC Systems it is still referred to as a 'SEC Documentation Release'.

It is possible that a SEC System Release may be replaced with a SEC Documentation Release if there are no DCC Systems impacting Modification Proposals scheduled for that SEC Release. However, this will be communicated well in advance.

The scheduled SEC Release cycle will be:

SEC Release cycle		
Release	**Timing**	**Type**
February	Last Thursday in February	SEC Documentation Release
June	Last Thursday in June	SEC System Release
November	First Thursday in November	SEC System Release

The Panel may determine that a scheduled SEC Release can fall on a different date where this would be necessary.

Ad-hoc releases

Where it is not appropriate or efficient to implement a modification in a scheduled release, an additional ad-hoc release of new SEC content may occur. An ad-hoc release may implement Modification Proposals that could be included in either a SEC Documentation Release or a SEC Systems Release. The process for developing and delivering an ad-hoc release is the same as that of a scheduled release.

Impacts on Technical Specifications

Whilst there are two SEC Systems Releases per year, the Panel note the impact that changes to the DCC User Interface Specification (DUIS), the GB Companion Specification (GBCS) and the Technical Specifications can have on SEC Parties. Therefore, the Panel will endeavour to limit such changes to one of the SEC Systems Releases per year, noting that such decisions will take into consideration the efficiency, urgency and cost of each proposal.

Naming convention

Scheduled and ad-hoc releases to the SEC and supporting documentation will be referred to as SEC Releases. Each SEC Release will be titled after the month and year in which the release contents will go-live, e.g. ‘June 2019 SEC Release’.

Change freeze

Circumstances may arise where the Panel may consider introducing a period where no Modification Proposals can be implemented. This will be known as a ‘change freeze’. Before introducing a change freeze, the Panel will first consult with Parties, clearly setting out the rationale for the change freeze and details of the intended period. The Panel will consider the consultation responses when reaching a decision on whether to introduce a change freeze and will clearly communicate their decision to Parties as soon as reasonably practical.

4. Setting implementation dates

Setting dates

The implementation date for a Modification Proposal will be set by the Panel when the Modification Report for that proposal is presented to the Panel. If approved, that is the date a Modification Proposal will be implemented.

In setting the implementation date, the Panel will be able to account for the priority of implementing a Modification Proposal, relative to other targeted or approved Modification Proposals in a SEC Release.

In setting the implementation date the Panel will take into consideration:

- Views of the Proposer, Working Groups, Parties, the DCC and Panel Sub-Committees;
- The requested lead time from Parties and the DCC;
- The complexity and urgency of the Modification Proposal;
- The size and scope of existing SEC Releases; and
- Any potential efficiencies in delivering a Modification Proposal in a specific SEC Release.

Implementation date format

When setting an implementation date, the Panel will ensure that the Modification Report contains a 'decision by date' and, where appropriate, a 'fall back date'. As such, implementation dates will be constructed in the following format:

- DD Month YYYY (Month YYYY SEC Release) if a decision to approve is received on or before DD Month YYYY or
- DD Month YYYY (Month YYYY SEC Release) if a decision to approve is received after DD Month YYYY, but on or before DD Month YYYY.

For example, for a 12-month lead time:

- *25 June 2020 (June 2020 SEC Release) if a decision to approve is received on or before 25 June 2019; or*
- *5 November 2020 (November 2020 SEC Release) if a decision to approve is received after 25 June 2019, but on or before 5 November 2019.*

Where appropriate, implementation dates may also be expressed as being a set number of days after a decision has occurred. In such circumstances the implementation date will be constructed as follows:

- ~~DD Month YYYY (~~XX Working Days following decision~~)~~

Where a Modification Proposal is approved under Self-Governance, this lead time will commence at the end of the referral window that follows the Change Board's vote.

Amending approved implementation dates

Where necessary, the Panel may request the Authority revise implementation dates for approved Modification Proposals. This may be in response to a change in priorities or other identified issues. Parties (including the DCC) may submit a request to change implementation dates for the Panel to consider.

In this circumstance the Panel shall write to the Authority explaining the rationale for amending the implementation date for the Modification Proposal. Where the Panel believe it appropriate to do so, a consultation may be issued to Parties before requesting the amended date, to seek views on the most appropriate implementation approach.

If the Authority agree to the new implementation date, it will automatically supersede the original date. The Panel will inform Parties of the Authority's decision as soon as reasonably practical.

5. Setting the release scope

The SEC Release Implementation Document

Once a Modification Proposal has been approved for inclusion as part of a SEC Release (based upon the implementation date set in the Modification Report) a SEC Release Implementation Document (RID) will be drafted.

Each SEC Release will have its own RID which will be updated as subsequent Modification Proposals are approved, until it is finalised. The Panel will have oversight of each RID and shall approve the RID and any subsequent amendments.

The RID will set out the implementation plan and implementation timetable for the Modification Proposal. It will also set out the impacts, costs and progress of a SEC Release.

Each RID will be published on the SEC Website and made available to Parties. Any Party that wishes to comment on the RID may do so by notifying the SECAS Helpdesk. The Panel will consider the comment or query and act accordingly.

Contents of the Release Implementation Document

The RID will contain details of:

- Each Modification Proposal that has been targeted or approved for inclusion as part of the SEC Release;
- The impacts that each Modification Proposal will have on each Party Category and on the DCC Systems;
- The SEC documentation (including SEC Sections, Schedules and Appendices, other subsidiary documents and guidance documents) that will need to be amended as part of the implementation of the SEC Release;
- The central cost of implementation (i.e. the cost for both SECAS and the DCC to implement the Release) broken down by each individual Modification Proposal where applicable;
- The timescales, activities and risks associated with implementing the content of the SEC Release, including timescales for the commencement and completion of DCC and User testing phases;
- The DCC testing approach (as proposed by the DCC) that sets out the testing activities that will be undertaken to deliver each approved Modification Proposal within the SEC Release;
- The required level of User testing and details of how the DCC shall support Users with testing; and
- The acceptance criteria that shall be agreed by the Panel that will need to be met before the SEC Release can go live.

Setting the release scope

To allow for certainty over the scope of a SEC Release, and to provide sufficient time for Users to prepare for the implementation date, the scope of a release will be set well in advance.

The scope of the systems element of a SEC Release, i.e. those Modification Proposals that impact the DCC and/or User systems, will be set 12 months prior to the implementation date of that release. For Modification Proposals that impact SEC documentation only, and not the DCC systems, the scope of the release will be set at six months prior to the release implementation date.

For example, any DCC or User system impacting modifications in the June 2020 Release would be confirmed as part of the release scope by June 2019 (12 months prior). Any documentation only modifications in the June 2020 Release would be confirmed as part of the release scope by December 2019 (six months prior).

There may be occasions where it would be more efficient, or necessary, to deliver a Modification Proposal as part of a SEC Release after the release scope has been set. In this situation, the Panel may choose to add a Modification Proposal into a SEC Release regardless of when the scope has been set. The Panel will provide any rationale for including a Modification Proposal after the release scope has been set in the Modification Report and communicate their approach to all Parties.

Technical Specification Validity Period

Where a SEC Release will impact on the DUIS, the GBCS or the Technical Specifications, the RID will set out the versions of these documents that will become effective and the Validity Period start dates for these (which would be expected to be the go-live date for the SEC Release). It will also set out whether previous versions of these documents will need to be removed or end dated and, if so, the agreed Validity Period end dates.

The TABASC will be consulted on all Validity Period start and end dates before they are implemented into the SEC.

Baselining the Release Implementation Document

The RID will be an evolving document and will be updated as and when Modification Proposals are approved for the relevant SEC Release. The Panel will be presented with the initial RID and will approve any amendments to that document as it evolves.

When the scope of a SEC Release is set, the RID will be presented to the Panel to be baselined. This version of the RID will include all the information as set out above.

The RID will be baselined at v1.0 once approved by the Panel. Any further amendments to the RID due to Modification Proposals being added or removed from the baselined scope will result in an increase in integer version (v2.0, v3.0 etc.).

6. Setting the testing approach

SEC Release Testing Approach Document

In order to deliver the required sections of the RID that relate to:

- the DCC testing approach and setting out the testing activities that will be undertaken to deliver the SEC Release; and
- defining User testing and details of how the DCC shall support Users with testing,

the DCC shall create a Release Testing Approach Document (TAD) for each SEC Systems Release. The TAD will form an annex to the RID and is considered to be part of the RID.

The TAD ~~should~~ shall be issued to the TAG for review at least nine months preceding the go-live date of a SEC Release. The TAD ~~should~~ shall be finalised and published for all Parties at least six months prior to the go-live date of a release. These dates are a minimum requirement and should not be seen as the standard approach.

The DCC may subsequently amend the TAD. Any further amendments will need to be reviewed by the TAG before they are finalised.

User testing

Users will be kept informed as to what type of testing will be required and when it will take place, in line with the approach set out in the RID. This information will be communicated to Users via email and through the SEC Website. In addition, any supplementary testing information will be made available on the respective release page on the SEC Website.

7. Release cost

Costs included in the RID

Each Modification Report shall include the DCC costs required to deliver that modification as a standalone Release.

These costs will be broken down as:

- Up to end of Pre-Integration Testing (PIT) – including Design, Build and Pre-Integration Testing;
- System Integration Testing (SIT);
- User Integration Testing (UIT);
- Implement to Live;
- One-off operational costs; and
- Ongoing operational costs.

Where applicable, the costs for System Capacity Testing should also be highlighted.

The individual cost of implementing each Modification Proposal in a Release, as set out above, will be included in the RID from its initial draft, up to when it is finalised.

Forecast cost

When a RID is first baselined for a SEC Systems Release (12 months preceding the go-live date), the DCC will provide the Panel with a Forecast Release Cost.

The Forecast Release Cost is the total estimated cost of delivering all targeted and approved Modification Proposals in a SEC Release, and will take into consideration any synergies and savings of delivering multiple proposals in the same project.

The Forecast Release Cost shall be broken down into the same groups as individual Modification Proposals as outlined above. The Forecast Release Cost shall form part of the RID.

Actual cost

Within ~~two~~ three months of the completion of go-live, the DCC shall present to the Panel a report on the actual cost of implementing the SEC Release.

The actual cost report shall set out the variances between the forecast release cost and the actual release cost and shall provide commentary and rationale as to these differences.

Reporting on cost

During the implementation of a SEC Release, the DCC shall provide a regular update on the spend and cost of the release at a frequency requested by the Panel.

8. Release go-live

Acceptance criteria

The acceptance criteria for a SEC Release will be established when the RID is finalised and the scope of the release set. The acceptance criteria will be used as the basis for the decision on go-live. It will set out any specific information or evidence the Panel require in making its decision.

In sufficient time before the go-live date, and as soon as reasonably practical, the DCC will present the Panel with sufficient information to allow them to make an informed go-live decision for the SEC Release. For the avoidance of doubt, sufficient time before the go-live date is considered to be enough time for the Panel to properly consider the evidence submitted, and in any event should be at least six weeks before the go-live date.

The DCC must seek input from the Operations Group and the TAG before a final submission on evidence to the Panel is made.

The acceptance criteria may also require other Sub-Committees to be consulted, depending on the scope of the SEC Release.

Reporting on progress towards readiness

During the implementation of a SEC Release, the DCC shall provide a regular update on the progress towards readiness at a frequency requested by the Panel.

9. Communication strategy

In order to keep Parties informed of the development of SEC Releases, the following communication will be issued by SECAS:

- Notification of the approval of a Modification Proposal and its approved implementation date within one working day of a decision;
- Notification 12 months and six months prior to the release implementation date highlighting cut-off dates and the scope of the release; and
- A notice one month prior to the release implementation date, notifying Parties of imminent go-live.

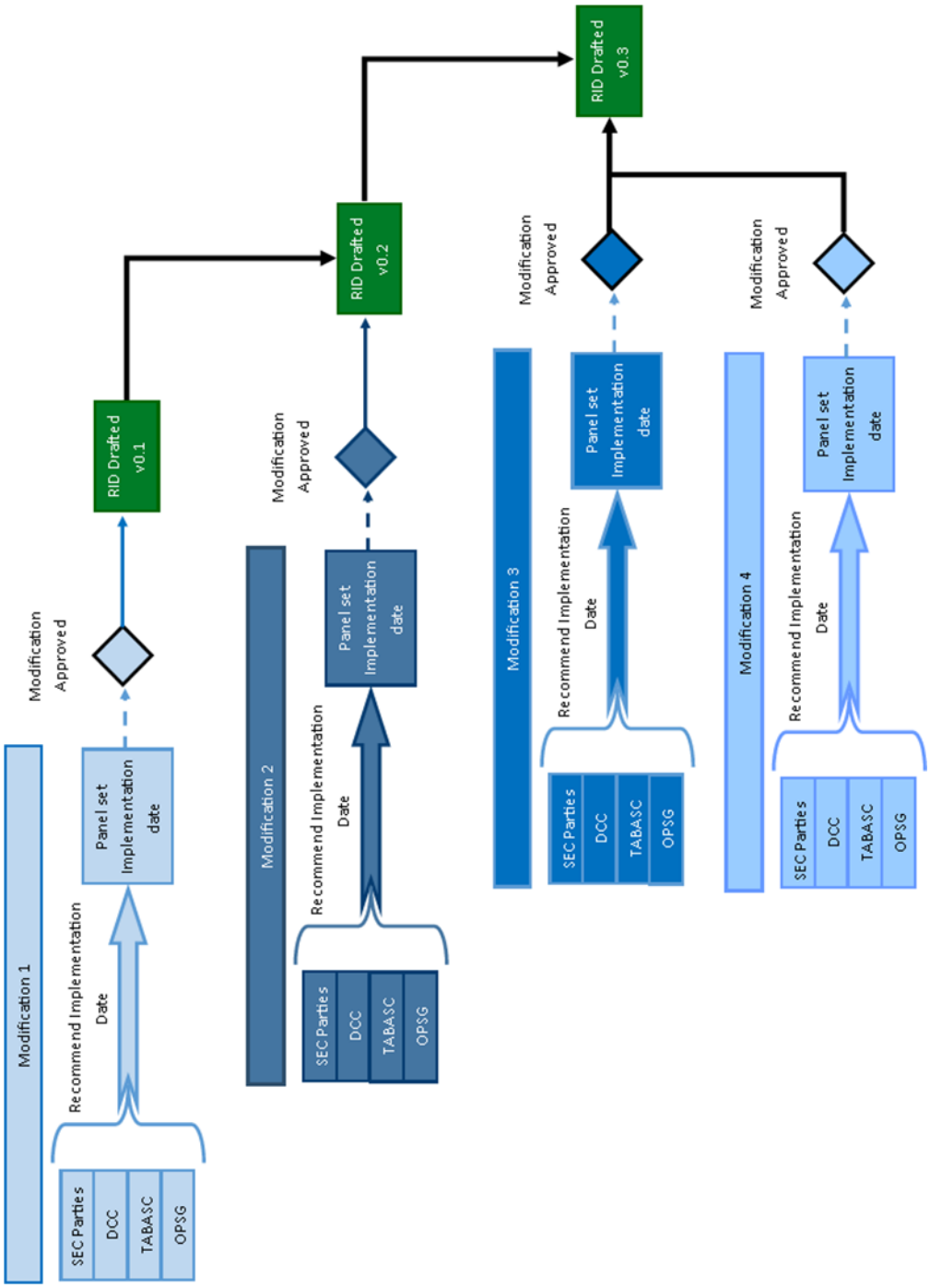
In addition to issuing the notifications set out above, each Modification Proposal will have its own page on the SEC Website which will provide a means to track the progression throughout the process. It will provide details of the targeted, and then approved, implementation date. This information will also be reflected in the Modifications Register.

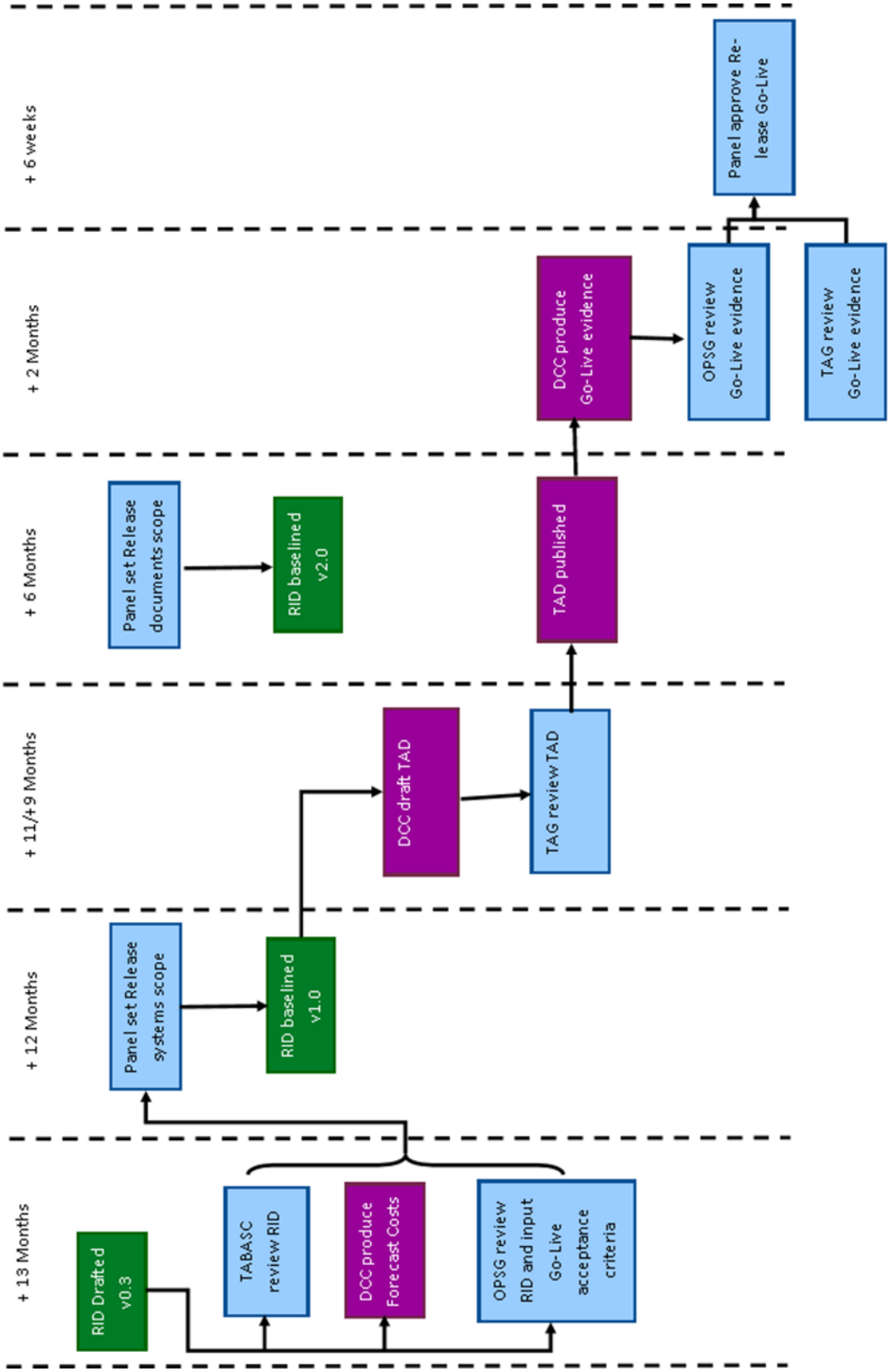
Each SEC Release will also have its own page on the SEC Website, setting out the content of the release as it develops. It will also provide the associated cut-off dates for the inclusion of further Modification Proposals into that SEC Release.

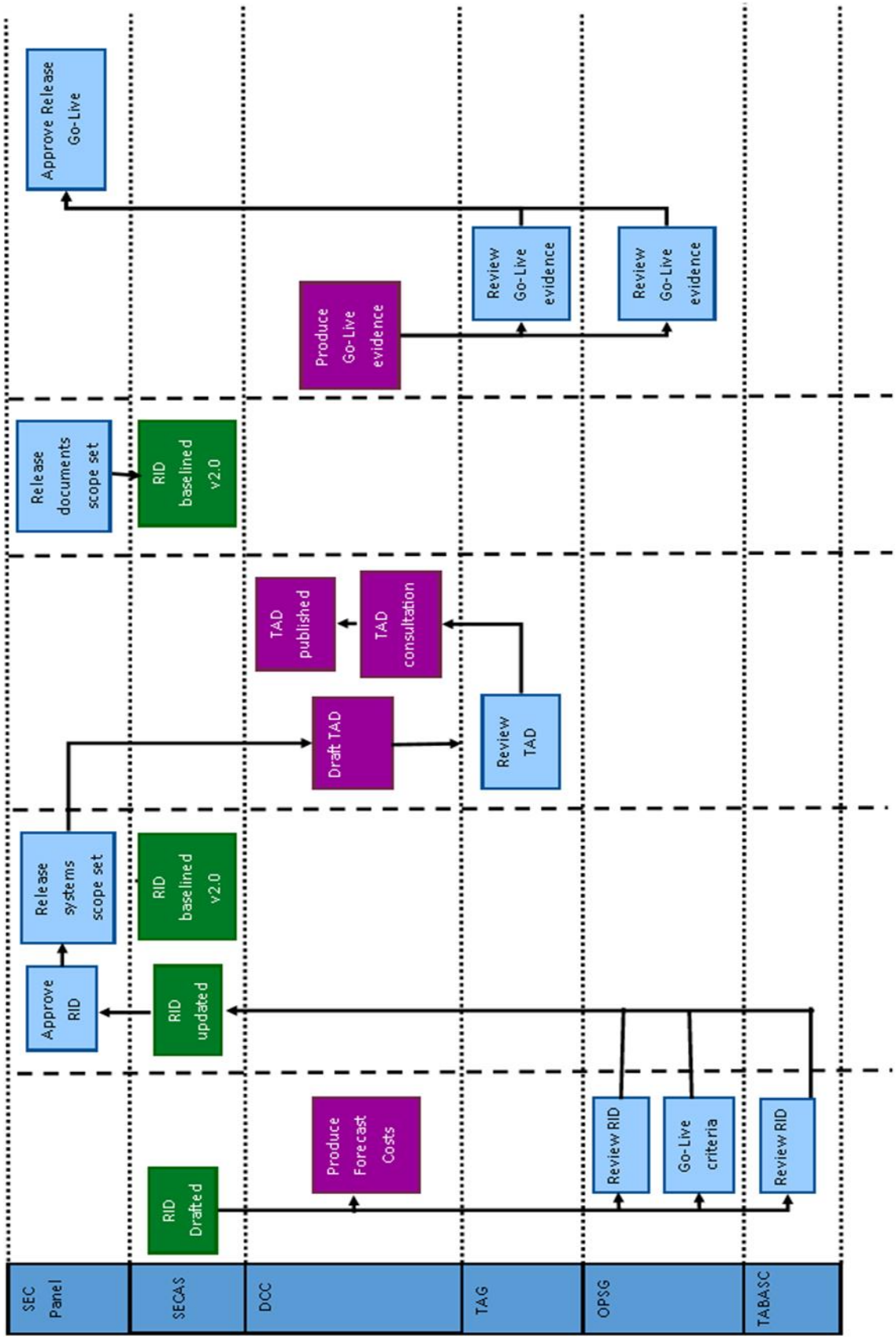
Release notes

As part of the outcome of testing of a Modification Proposal or suite of modifications for a SEC Release, any associated DCC Release Notes will be provided by the DCC and made available on the respective SEC Release page on the SEC Website.

Appendix 1: Summary of the SEC Release timelines




+ 13 Months
+ 12 Months
+ 11/+9 Months
+ 6 Months
+ 2 Months
+ 6 weeks
RID Drafted v0.3
TABASC review RID
DCC produce Forecast Costs
OPSG review RID and input Go-Live acceptance criteria
Panel set Release systems scope
RID baselined v1.0
DCC draft TAD
TAG review TAD
Panel set Release documents scope
RID baselined v2.0
TAD published
DCC produce Go-Live evidence
OPSG review Go-Live evidence
TAG review Go-Live evidence
Panel approve Release Go-Live


SEC Panel
SECAS
DCC
TAG
OPSG
TABASC
RID Drafted
Produce Forecast Costs
Review RID
Go-Live criteria
Review RID
Approve RID
RID updated
Release systems scope set
RID baselined v2.0
Draft TAD
Review TAD
TAD consultation
TAD published
Release documents scope set
RID baselined v2.0
Produce Go-Live evidence
Review Go-Live evidence
Review Go-Live evidence
Approve Release Go-Live

Appendix 2: Version control

Document history				
Version	**Status**	**Issue date**	**Author**	**Comments**
1.0	Approved	11 Dec 15	SECAS	Final for publication
2.0	Approved	09 Feb 18	SECAS	Final for publication
2.1	Draft	05 Jul 19	SECAS	Updated to reflect new SEC Release management framework as introduced by SECMP0061
2.2	Draft	15 Jul 19	SECAS	Version issued for consultation
2.3	Draft	06 Sep 19	SECAS	Version submitted to Panel for approval

SEC
Smart Energy Code

Smart Energy Code

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