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DP092 ‘New Planned Maintenance methodology’

Problem statement – version 0.1

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 Chris Thompson from the Data Communications Company (DCC).

What is the issue or problem identified?

Updating Planned Maintenance methodology – DCC trial of a new approach

In February 2019 the DCC noted to the SEC Panel that the method for delivering Planned Maintenance releases was sub-optimum. As such it wished to move to a risk-based approach to help deliver Planned Maintenance releases more efficiently.

Part of the new approach required amendments to existing rules of when the DCC were to produce a schedule of Planned Maintenance changes and at what times of day such changes should be implemented. The DCC therefore requested the Panel grant a derogation to these rules whilst a 6-month trial on the new methodology was carried out.

The Panel agreed to a derogation until November 2019 on the condition that the DCC first present an updated Forward Schedule of Change (FSC) to the Operations Group Sub Committee (OPSG) and that clarity was provided over some of the terminology used. Following discussions at the OPSG a trail of the new Planned Maintenance approach began on 1 April 2019.

The OPSG were to receive monthly reporting on the performance of the trail, with a full review of the trial after three months (July 2019).

Conclusions of the DCC trial

At the October 2019 Panel meeting, the DCC noted the trial was coming to an end and had proved a success, a view supported by feedback at the July OPSG. The DCC requested an extension to the derogation whilst full results of the trail were presented to the OPSG in October/November and a resulting Modification Proposal to introduce the new approach could be raised.

The Panel granted a further three-month extension whilst the OPSG discussed the results and a modification could be progressed.

How does this issue relate to the SEC?

SEC Section H8.3 sets out that the DCC may only undertake Planned Maintenance between 20.00 hours and 08.00 hours, and that the duration of Planned Maintenance should not exceed six hours in any given month. Furthermore, Section H8.4 states the DCC must provide a schedule of Planned Maintenance at least 20 Working Days prior to the start of each month that the Planned Maintenance is due to occur.

The new DCC methodology proposes the introduction of one High Impact and up to three Low Impact Planned Maintenance windows per month. Whilst the Planned Maintenance will continue to take place between 20:00 and 08:00 hours (as per Section H8.3) each Planned Maintenance window will have a maximum duration of six hours.

The DCC will continue to publish the schedule of Planned Maintenance (as per Section H8.4) and issue an email notification to all Parties 20 Working Days ahead of the month in which Planned Maintenance will occur. This notification will set out when the scheduled windows are for high and low impact changes and provide high level information on what Parties should expect in each window.

If additional Low Impact Planned Maintenance windows are required beyond this notice, a revised notice will be issued to Parties.

It is intended that high impact changes will have a minimum lead time of 20 Working Days and low impact changes a minimum lead time of 10 Working Days.

The new methodology places emphasis on how Planned Maintenance impacts Parties when it is taking place and how it affects Parties once deployed. The rules used by the DCC to select appropriate changes as high and low impact need to be captured in SEC governance.

What is the impact this is having?

The current Planned Maintenance methodology does not differentiate the specific services, nor the business impact of changes, which has several impacts:

- Low impact changes are considered in the same way as complex or high risk changes. For example, downtime on the Self-Service Interface (SSI) is treated in the same manner as Core Communication Services. The business impact and risks associated with these examples are very different.
- Notice periods are the same regardless of overall business impact. This results in unnecessary delays on low impact, low risk changes.
- The existing lead times also result in significantly extended deployment times on changes. Any alterations to scheduled changes result in significant delays.
- With the specific constraint on downtime and with no differentiation on the impact of change on Users, the result is that very large numbers of changes, both high and low in impact, are implemented in a single change window. This increases complexity and risk, whilst simultaneously constraining the DCC's ability to deliver key changes in a timely manner.
- With a focus on downtime, the result can be that high risk or complex changes where no disruption to the Services is anticipated are not classed as Planned Maintenance and therefore do not get included in the forward schedule of change.

Many of the changes included in the Maintenance windows are designed to resolve business and operational issues that impact the overall quality of DCC Services, as well as there being many changes specifically requested by the industry as enablers to their business.

What are the views of the industry?

Views of the DCC

The DCC believes the trial has been a success and that the new approach should be taken forward by amending the current SEC provisions.

Views of Panel Sub-Committees

The Operations Group is due to meet on 5 November to discuss the final output of the trial. However, views expressed to date are positive that the trial has been a success. More detailed feedback will be available after the November meeting.