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Operations Group Meeting 27

3 December 2019, 10:00 – 17:00

Gemserv, 8 Fenchurch Place, London, EC3M 4AJ

OPSG_27_0312 - Draft Minutes

Attendees:

Category	Operations Group Members
Operations Group Chair	Dave Warner
DCC	Mo Asif
	Alex Henighan
Network Parties	Gemma Slaney
	Matthew Alexander
Large Suppliers	Tony Shanahan
	John Noad (Alternate for Nassar Zeb)
	Rochelle Harrison
	Martin Christie (Alternate for Zoe Marklew)
	Paul Clark
	Ed Webber
Small Suppliers	Kate Barnes
Other SEC Parties	Elias Hanna
	Geoff Huckerby

Representing	Other Participants
DCC	Wendy Liddell
	Penny Brown
	David Walsh (Teleconference)
	Ian Brown (Part)
	Mehtab Singh (Teleconference)
CSP C&S	Stephen Easton (Part)
CSP N	David Morris (Part)
	Rob Puryer (Part)
	Veronica Asantewaa (Meeting Secretary)

SECAS	Tim Hall
	Huw Exley
	Alan Bateman (Part)
	Ali Beard (Part)
	Jordan Crase (Part)
	Bradley Baker (Part)
	Alessandro Scarlatti (Part)
	Damian Bevan (Part)
TABASC	Julian Hughes
BEIS	Natasha Free
	Fahad Akhter

Apologies:

Representing	Name
Large Suppliers	Joey Manners
	Endika Enes
Small Suppliers	Simon Dowse
	Kate Frazer
Other SEC Parties	Tom Woolley

1. Previous Meeting Minutes

The Chair invited Operations Group (OPSG) members to comment on the Draft Minutes from OPSG_26, OPSG_26a and OPSG_26b.

A Distribution Network Operator (DNO) member noted that under Any Other Business (AOB) in the minutes relating to OPSG_26, it states that a DNO had found two SMETS1 issues that could impact the OPSG's recommendation to the SEC Panel for the Live Service Criteria, however only one issue was detailed in the minutes. It was noted that at the time of OPSG_26, only one issue had been reported and only after the meeting was the second issue raised.

OPSG **AGREED** that the minutes from OPSG_26a and OPSG_26b would be published as final, and OPSG_26 minutes would be published as final once the above amendments had been made

2. Panel Feedback Report

The OPSG noted that the fact that the DCC had made changes to the Code Performance Measures (CPMs) made for SMETS1 reporting without consultation had been raised to the SEC Panel. The Panel had subsequently raised an action on the DCC to address this. It was noted that the OPSG Chair had also written to the DCC stating that it must comply with the SEC requirement to consult on proposed changes to the PMR.

The OPSG **NOTED** the update.

3. Actions Outstanding

SECAS presented the actions outstanding table from OPSG_26. Actions were noted as completed where appropriate. It was noted that a number of actions had not been completed by the target date, and new deadlines for these actions were set.

Action ID	Action	Date Raised	Last Target Date	Revised Target Date	Owner
OPSG 16/02	The DCC to provide the approved and new cost comparison information as soon as possible, and to confirm which costs had been included in the indicative charging statement, for Production Proving; this action replaces: Action OPSG_05/02.	08/01/2018	03/12/2019	07/01/2020	DCC
<p>The OPSG noted that this has still not been discussed at the Finance Forum. The OPSG Chair noted that this action will remain open until feedback has been received.</p> <p>Action Status: Open</p>					
OPSG 22/12	DCC to investigate the cost benefit analysis of the Ecosystems Management Framework.	02/07/2019	03/12/2019	07/01/2020	DCC
<p>The outcome of this action is the same as OPSG 16/02, and therefore this action will remain open until feedback is received from the Finance Forum.</p> <p>Action Status: Open</p>					
OPSG 24/02	The DCC to review and analyse the traffic generated on the network caused by the power disruption and subsequent reconnections.	03/09/2019	03/12/2019	07/01/2020	DCC
<p>The DCC requested more time to investigate this action. A DNO member requested a detailed analysis of the power outage. The DCC will provide an update at the January meeting (OPSG_28).</p> <p>Action Status: Open</p>					
OPSG 24/08	DCC and SECAS to work together to establish what the SEC requirement is for how Critical Commands should be forecast.	03/09/2019	03/12/2019	07/01/2020	DCC/SECAS
<p>The DCC requested more time to investigate this action. A DNO member noted that clarification will be required before the next forecast submission is due in January. The DCC agreed to clarify what is required at the January meeting (OPSG_28).</p> <p>Action Status: Closed</p>					

Action ID	Action	Date Raised	Last Target Date	Revised Target Date	Owner
OPSG 25/14	DCC to canvas Users for their views on a per User Problem Record and for other suggestions.	01/10/2019	03/12/2019	07/01/2020	DCC
<p>The DCC noted that it had not received any input from Users. The OPSG Chair stated that the DCC will need to canvas Users.</p> <p>Action Status: Open</p>					
OPSG 26/08	DCC to produce guidance notes for suppliers on how to avoid the production of superfluous Alerts.	05/11/2019	03/12/2019	07/01/2020	DCC
<p>The DCC noted that it could not provide guidelines until after the Alerts workshop, which is scheduled for 21 January 2020. A Small Supplier (SS) member asked if there was any informal guidance that could be used in the interim. The OPSG Chair highlighted the urgent need for these guidelines and requested the DCC to provide them as soon as possible.</p> <p><i>[Post Meeting Note: DCC also sent an advice note to Parties on 12 December regarding Elster meter firmware and will issue further guidance as other solutions/work arounds are identified.]</i></p> <p>Action Status: Open</p>					
OPSG 26/11	DCC to investigate the issues in SMETS1 using Service Request Variance (SRV) 6.15.1 to Update Certificates.	05/11/2019	03/12/2019	07/01/2020	DCC
<p>The DCC noted that the system is working as designed and highlighted that it is using a different approach for SMETS2 meters.</p> <p>Action Status: Closed</p>					

The OPSG **NOTED** the update.

4. Major Incidents

DCC presented slides to the OPSG which addressed several of the issues that were raised in the Major Incident Review Report for INC000000503961.

The DCC noted that the Data Service Provider (DSP) Major Incident Manager (MIM) did not engage with the DCC during the Incident, due to the Incident not being visible on the DSP's system, when it was first raised as a Category 2 Incident. The DCC noted that it has created email notifications to alert the Service Centre in real time to avoid a reoccurrence.

The OPSG noted some discrepancies in the timing of the Incident; it was noted that the report highlights that the Incident began at 10:59, however the Incident was raised at 10:20 and escalated to the DSP at 10:30. The DCC agreed to clarify this discrepancy.

The DCC noted that communications to Users regarding the Incident was clear, stating that the “We recommend that customers should suspend installation” status was set to “Yes” throughout the Incident. The DCC noted that the number of Install and Commissions was less than half the number expected for the day, as the Incident occurred on a Saturday where the installations are loaded in the morning to early afternoon. This also caused delays and cancellations of appointments for installations that day, and the process was difficult to re-start. A Larger Supplier (LS) member noted that, although the DCC had communicated that installations during the incident should be suspended, it is the Supplier’s decision whether to follow the advice.

The DCC explained that it is working with the DSP to provide a new set of measures to categorise Category 1 and 2 Incidents, which will incorporate business scenarios. The OPSG Chair requested that the proposal should be in writing and reflect User’s views on Incident management, and what has degraded the service. The OPSG Chair suggested that this may be reviewed in the Operational Metrics Review Project.

The OPSG Chair asked DCC to include in the final report a reference to the DSP’s change of policy (subsequent to the incident) regarding the disconnection of failing equipment.

The DCC **AGREED** to provide an updated Incident Review Report at the January OPSG meeting (OPSG_28) for approval.

ACTION OPSG 27/01: The DCC to clarify the discrepancies in the timing of Incident INC000000503961.

ACTION OPSG 27/02: The DCC to provide an updated Review Report for Incident INC000000503961.

ACTION OPSG 27/03: The DCC to provide a proposal for a new set of measures for Incident management which will reflect User views.

ACTION OPSG 27/04: SECAS to review the DCC’s Incident management proposal and refer to the Operational Metrics Review Project.

ACTION OPSG 27/05: The DCC to include in the Incident Review Report a reference to the DSP’s change of policy (subsequent to the incident) regarding the disconnection of failing equipment.

5. DCC Operational Update

This was deferred to the January 2020 OPSG meeting (OPSG_28).

6. CSP N Installation failures/times

A Communication Service Provider North (CSP N) representative presented slides on their installation failures and improvement plans. A LS member noted that the 20% failure rate of the Install and Commission process for CSP N was significantly higher than the 5% in CSP Central and South (C&S). CSP N explained that they had not expected the ‘chatty meter’ issue to generate so much traffic. Further, the issue is exacerbated in their network, as Alerts have priority over other traffic.

The OPSG raised concern that the current level of Alerts is causing a degradation in service performance, and that the seriousness and immediacy of the Alerts problem was in conflict with previous briefings on the impact of Alerts from the DCC. Further, the question had been raised several times during the evaluation of [SECMP0062 'Northbound Application Traffic Management -](#)

[Alert Storm Protection](#) and the DCC had given assurances that only the DSP needed protection and the CSPs could handle the additional traffic.

The OPSG noted that SECMP0062 is currently going through the modification process, however it will not assist in decreasing the amount of Alerts being generated.

The CSP N noted that the level of incidents in the summer was stable and said they did not realise there was a serious problem with Alerts on the system until Users began raising an increased number of issues with the Install and Commission process. The CSP N stated that 'they could see the messages flowing through the network' and OPSG members queried why they could not see that Service Requests were not flowing freely due to the Alerts taking priority.

The CSP N noted he measures they were taking to reconfigure and tune the network, including moving CHs from the Admin channel to the other 11 channels which they have available. The OPSG expressed concern that, in presentations at various forums, the DCC and CSP N had stressed that each CSP N tower had 12 channels available, however it is now apparent that only one was being used. The OPSG expressed disappointment that CSP N has only just begun reconfiguring and tuning the network when Alerts issues were first reported by them in the PMR in May 2019.

The CSPN said that although the improvements in performance due to the reconfiguration and tuning were difficult to predict because of the number of factors involved, they expected an improvement in performance of more than 10% by the end of December; this included the time needed for the network to "learn" the new configuration. The OPSG asked the DCC to ensure CSP N reported the improvement achieved to the next OPSG meeting in January.

In response to questions from the OPSG Chair, CSP N said they had no dynamic model/simulation of the network to assist them in assessing the likely impact of the reconfiguration and retuning. The OPSG requested that DCC ensure that the CSP N provides an explanation for why their stated lack of a network model/simulation is justified.

A LS member noted the requirement for a revised strategy for dealing with Alerts across the DCC, and queried how CSP N will inform Users of the impact that Alerts is having on the network. The CSP N noted that in addition to presenting this issue at the Smart Metering Design Group (SMDG), they will also engage with Users.

The Technical Architecture and Business Architecture Sub-Committee (TABASC) Chair also noted that CSP N will need to take care how it manages the Alerts, noting that regardless of whether the issues with Install and Commission are resolved, the level of Alerts may still increase to a point where the system may not be able to recover. The OPSG Chair suggested that the TABASC review the issue of architecture and design of installation failures.

The OPSG requested that the DCC provide a clear statement on the impact of Alerts in the CSP N region.

The OPSG **NOTED** the update.

ACTION OPSG 27/06: The DCC to ensure CSP N reported the improvement achieved to the next OPSG meeting in January (OPSG_28).

ACTION OPSG 27/07: The DCC to provide a clear statement on the impact of Alerts in the CSP N region.

ACTION OPSG 27/08: TABASC to review the architecture and design of installation failures in both CSP regions.

ACTION OPSG 27/09: The DCC to ensure that CSP N explain to OPSG and TABASC why their stated lack of a network model/simulation is justified.

7. CSP C&S/CSP N Audits

The CSP C&S and N provided an update on the work that is currently underway to validate and improve their technical infrastructure.

CSP C&S noted that it had seen benefits from the audit, specifically with the power outage issues which have remained stable. The OPSG Chair questioned the involvement of SEC Parties during this audit. CSP C&S noted that the initial audit was only for high category Incidents relating to installations, however at the end of the first quarter, more issues began to occur on different platforms affecting the systems' performance. The OPSG Chair suggested that the CSP C&S provide a report which outlines how the unsatisfactory User experiences to date have been reflected in the drivers for the audit, and, in turn, how the changes made as a result of the audit, will improve the User experience.

CSP N stated that their audit covers traffic and capacity management. The OPSG questioned the assertion by CSP N, that using independent individual consultants for this work provided a complete, independent and authoritative opinion. It was recognised that using such experts would provide technical insight in specific areas. CSP N assured the OPSG that they will remain impartial during the audit.

A LS member expressed their disappointment in the service provided by CSP N, noting that they are yet to see any improvements. The OPSG Chair noted his frustration that Users have been experiencing poor performance for two years and still no improvements have been made or lessons learnt.

The OPSG noted that amongst the key issues faced across all CSPs was poor system configuration management and requested confirmation from the CSPs that this will be assessed in the audits.

The OPSG **NOTED** the update.

ACTION OPSG 27/10: The DCC to provide a clear statement on the impact of Alerts in the CSP N region.

ACTION OPSG 27/11: CSP N to investigate use of meter simulations to reduce the number of increased Alerts.

ACTION OPSG 27/12: The CSPs to report on how the unsatisfactory User experiences to date have been reflected in the drivers for the audit, and, in turn, how the changes made as a result of the audit will improve the User experience.

ACTION OPSG 27/13: CSPs to confirm that management of system configuration is included in the audits.

8. Meter Firmware OTAs

Both CSPs presented an update on their meter firmware Over The Air (OTA) upgrades.

CSP C&S noted that they had achieved the Minimum Service Levels for November at 97%, however this is still below Target Level. CSP N reported improving service levels reaching 88%, although this

is still below minimum. A LS member challenged this noting there had only been a 50% success rate of OTA firmware upgrades despite them submitting requests batched by Post Code as requested. They are often seeing connectivity issues, especially in CSP N. The TABASC Chair noted that more clarity is needed on measurement points used to measure the OTA upgrades, to ensure it is consistent with what Suppliers are using. It was noted that this point had not been raised by DCC in previous discussions of the meaning of the metric.

The OPSG reiterated that both CSPs should be working according to remediation plans, so as to achieve Target Service Level by December 2019, as previously agreed. The DCC must advise the OPSG if this cannot be achieved.

The OPSG **NOTED** the update.

ACTION OPSG 27/14: CSPs to clarify the measurement points used in OTA firmware updates to ensure it is consistent with what Suppliers are using.

ACTION OPSG 27/15: CSPs to continue to implement their remediation plan for OTA firmware updates so that the Target Service Level is achieved for December, and to report back to the January OPSG meeting.

9. CH Exceptions

The DCC presented an update on Communication Hub (CH) Exceptions. The DCC reported progress for a number of categories of CHs Exceptions, noting improvements in a number of areas.

SECAS queried how many installations (out of the total number of installations reported as incorrect CH Variant installations in CSP C&S) are new installations, and how many of these installations have been replaced. It was noted that the number of incorrect installations had decreased in October and a comparison is needed which shows the total number of installations across CSP C&S and whether there is improvement in the proportion of incorrect installs. The DCC noted that it will work with Users to reduce the number of incorrect CH installations, as Users installing incorrect CH variants are currently in breach of the SEC.

The OPSG **NOTED** the update.

ACTION OPSG 27/16: The DCC to work with users to reduce number of incorrect CH installations.

10. Alerts

The DCC reported actions which could reduce the volume of the main four Alert types by 20% - 25%. The remainder are under investigation.

The CSP N mentioned that a growing number of Alerts are caused by specific device combinations and that this materially impacts service performance. The OPSG questioned how the seriousness of this impact will evolve.

The OPSG noted that there will need to be a plan to produce guidance documents on Alerts to encapsulate the lessons learnt.

The DCC suggested that Suppliers may need to cease installing certain device combinations with WNC CHs, however the DCC further stated that it would have to be careful how this is approached. Due to the demand for rollout it cannot stop the distribution of certain devices.

The OPSG noted that the DCC will need to present an overall picture of the how the increased volume of Alerts affects the end-to-end service in each region.

The OPSG **NOTED** the update.

ACTION OPSG 27/17: The DCC to present an overall picture of the how the increased volume of Alerts effects the service in each region.

ACTION OPSG 27/18: DCC to produce guidance documents on Alerts and send this out to members.

11. BCDR Update

The DCC reported on completed testing and provided a plan for additional resilience testing, and a plan for all BCDR testing in 2020. The OPSG Chair noted that the DCC should continue to have engagement with customers on testing activities, and it was noted that DCC would periodically report to the OPSG on BCDR.

The OPSG **NOTED** the update.

12. Customer Perspective

No proposals were raised by OPSG members.

13. Operational Metrics Review Project

Members of the Operational Metrics Review Project Team provided the OPSG with an update on the progress to date, and requested engagement from Users.

The OPSG noted that Ofgem would be looking to take account of the outcomes of the project in their review of the OPR.

The OPSG **AGREED** that an Operational Metrics Workshop will take place on Monday 16 December from 11am – 4pm.

14. TABASC Effectiveness Review Briefing

SECAS presented an analysis of the TABASC Effectiveness Review responses. SECAS noted that eight responses had been received, which consisted of four LS members, three SS members and one DNO member.

Regarding the responses to the DCC system and processes review, the OPSG Chair was somewhat surprised at the level of satisfaction with the service, as the general feeling from OPSG members suggested that the service was not satisfactory in significant ways. A LS member noted that if this review was split by region then there would have been a different view from each region

SECAS noted that it will be contacting Users over the next few weeks to update the report, and any further comments should be sent to SECAS before the next meeting (OPSG_28).

The OPSG **NOTED** the update.

ACTION OPSG 27/19: OPSG to send any further comments on the TABASC Effectiveness Review to SECAS by the January meeting (OPSG_28).

15. Modifications Update

SECAS presented an update on [MP088 'Power to raise modifications'](#), [SECMP0062 'Northbound Application Traffic Management - Alert Storm Protection'](#) and [SECMP0067 'Service Request Traffic Management'](#).

The OPSG noted that it would like to continue to be updated on the progress of MP088. SECAS explained that the SEC Working Group requested that the OPSG should be a part of the operational reporting and management process were SECMP0062 and SECMP0067 to be implemented. A LS member stated that the current modifications do not address the issues faced by the CSPs, and that both CSPs and DSPs need protecting. A DNO member reiterated there has not been a consistent statement from the DCC about the CSP and DSP protection against Alerts, and another Modification will need to be raised for CSPs.

The OPSG **NOTED** the update.

16. New Draft Proposals and Modification Proposals

The OPSG **AGREED** an interest in [DP094 'Supporting prepayment customers in no SM WAN scenarios'](#), [DP096 'DNO Power Outage Alerts'](#) and [DP097 'Improving SMETS2 Meter Installs for New Connections'](#).

17. OPSG Issues Log

This was deferred to the next meeting (OPSG_28).

18. Maintenance Trial Extension

The DCC provided an update on the maintenance trial.

A LS member noted that the DCC will need to make sure that any impact on OTA upgrades is minimised, noting that these take several days to complete, and service interruptions can cause the OTAs to fail.

The OPSG reiterated its request that the DCC provides specific examples of how the categorisation of changes had worked during the trial.

The OPSG **ENDORSED** the DCC proposal that the trial continue until [MP092 'New Planned Maintenance methodology'](#) has been implemented or rejected, subject to a quarterly review at the OPSG.

ACTION OPSG 27/20: The DCC to provide examples of how the categorisation of changes had worked during the maintenance trial.

19. OMS & CH returns update

This was deferred to the next meeting (OPSG_28).

20. Any Other Business (AOB)

The OPSG supported the approval mechanisms for SMETS1 migrations proposed by BEIS, which will be presented to the Panel. The OPSG requested that the DCC explicitly reports on any relevant operational circumstances, whenever it proposes an increase in migration rate. *[Post Meeting Note: Further input from a Large Supplier member was subsequently received and advised to BEIS. This generally supported the approach and requested some specific additions.]*

Next Reporting Meeting: 27 January 2020

Next Regular Meeting: 7 January 2020

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