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MP090

'Incorporation of Non GBCS Non-Mandated Alerts into the SEC'

Modification Report

Version 1.0

14 September 2020

Corporate member of
Plain English Campaign
Committed to clearer
communication

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About this document

This document is a Modification Report. It sets out the background, issue, solution, impacts, costs, implementation approach and progression timetable for this modification, along with any relevant discussions, views and conclusions.

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This document also has four annexes:

- **Annex A** contains the business requirements for the solution.
- **Annex B** contains the redlined changes to the SEC required to deliver the Proposed Solution.
- **Annex C** contains the full DCC Impact Assessment response.
- **Annex D** contains the full responses received to the Refinement Consultation.

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1. Summary

This proposal has been raised by Emslie Law from SSE.

Many DCC Users only recognise Alerts defined in SEC Schedule 8 – ‘Great Britain Companion Specifications’ (GBCS). As a result, DCC Users’ systems have not been designed to recognise Non GBCS Non-Mandated (NGNM) Alerts that are not defined in the GBCS. These Alerts are currently being sent to DCC Users with no contextual information and no means to disable them. To monitor and manually define these Alerts is an inefficient working practice, especially if the DCC User deems the Alert unnecessary. This will continue until the NGNM Alerts are migrated into the SEC.

Three options were considered for migrating the NGNM Alerts into the SEC, each with different levels of functionality associated with them, and therein different predicted costs.

1. Migrate the NGNM Alerts into GBCS Table 16.2 only;
2. Migrate the NGNM Alerts into GBCS Table 16.2, with associated changes to the DCC Parse and Correlate software; or
3. Migrate the NGNM Alerts into GBCS Table 16.2, with associated changes to the DCC Parse and Correlate software, and make them configurable by DCC Users.

The Proposer, supported by the Working Group, decided to go ahead with the second solution option, to incorporate the Alerts and implement supporting technical changes but not make the Alerts configurable. This solution will cost approximately £17,000 with a three-month lead time from project initiation through to completion. As this modification will make changes to the GBCS implementation is recommended in the November 2021 SEC Release (unless an earlier Release make updates to the SEC Technical Specifications), if approved as self-governance modification.

2. Issue

What are the current arrangements?

Device Alerts are unsolicited messages sent by Devices to DCC Users e.g. a Supplier. SEC Schedule 8 ‘GB Companion Specification’ defines the structure of the Alerts and contains a listing of Alerts, distinguishing between mandated and non-mandated Alerts. These GBCS Mandated Alerts and GBCS Non-Mandated Alerts can be found in Table 16.2 within the GBCS.

NGNM Alerts are Alerts that are built into Devices by Device manufacturers. These conform to GBCS formats but are not included in GBCS Table 16.2.

Suppliers and manufacturers have a general (but non regulatory) responsibility to ensure all Alerts supported by their Devices beyond those specified in the SEC are captured in the Non-GBCS Non-Mandated Alerts Register on the [SEC Website](#) until they are adopted into the SEC.

What is the issue?

Providing the Alert is in the correct format, the GBCS Parse & Correlate software allows any Alerts (whether they are included in GBCS or not) sent by Devices to be passed to the DCC User.

Many DCC Users only recognise Alerts defined in the GBCS as when the Smart Metering Implementation Programme (SMIP) was in its infancy Non GBCS Alerts were not expected to be in use. As a result, DCC Users' systems have not been designed to recognise NGNM Alerts.

As these are currently not included in the GBCS, the Parse & Correlate software provides the Alert code but does not provide a description of the problem the Alert is communicating. Suppliers therefore receive Alerts but are unable to identify the reason for them. Whilst Suppliers could access this information from the SEC website, this would be highly manually intensive. Alternatively, each Supplier could amend their systems to incorporate the Alert codes from the SEC website, but this would involve a large number of individual system changes.

Additionally, whilst a Supplier may know which NGNM Alerts to expect from meters and Devices installed by themselves, they will continually inherit meters and Devices for which they were not the original installer and will be unaware of NGNM Alerts on Devices that have 'churned' to them.

What is the impact this is having?

Depending on the individual Alert either the Supplier or the Network Operator can configure the Alerts by setting them on or off according to their business needs. In order to make NGNM Alerts configurable these would need to be included in GBCS Table 16.2 and be added to the DCC User Interface Specification (DUIS) Schema. If this is not implemented, Suppliers and Network Operators will receive large numbers of Alerts which have no description and which they are not able to stop receiving.

3. Solutions

Proposed Solution

The solution chosen was the second option, to incorporate the Alerts into GBCS and implement supporting technical changes to allow them to be readable, but not make them configurable. The Proposer agreed that this solution was best as the incorporation of these changes will help the Service Users to identify the NGNM Alerts but will not be as expensive as making the Alerts configurable. The Proposer, supported by the Working Group, believed that the business case was not sufficient to support the changes to make the Alerts configurable.

4. Impacts

This section summarises the impacts that would arise from the implementation of this modification.

SEC Parties

SEC Party Categories impacted			
✓	Large Suppliers	✓	Small Suppliers
✓	Electricity Network Operators	✓	Gas Network Operators
✓	Other SEC Parties	✓	DCC

Large Suppliers, Small Suppliers and Network Parties are impacted as they receive Non GBCS Non-Mandated (NGNM) Alerts but are unable to identify the reasons for them. This change will allow them to recognise Non GBCS Non-Mandated (NGNM) Alerts that are not defined in GBCS.

Device manufacturers will be impacted as SEC Parties receiving Alerts will now have greater visibility around them and potentially more innovation can take place.

The DCC will be impacted as they will have to make system changes to implement the solution.

DCC System

The full impacts on DCC Systems and DCC's proposed testing approach can be found in the DCC Impact Assessment response in Annex C.

SEC and subsidiary documents

The following parts of the SEC will be impacted:

- Schedule 8 'GB Companion Specifications'

Consumers

There will be no impact on Consumers.

Other industry Codes

There will be no impact on other industry Codes.

Greenhouse gas emissions

There will be no impact on Greenhouse gas emissions.

5. Costs

DCC costs

The cost for the DCC to implement this modification will be £17,000. The breakdown of these costs are as follows:

Breakdown of DCC implementation costs	
Activity	Cost
Design, Build and Pre-Integration Testing (PIT)	£17,000
Systems Integration Testing (SIT)	TBC
User Integration Testing (UIT)	TBC
Implement to Live	TBC
Application Support	TBC

More information can be found in the DCC Full Impact Assessment response in Annex C.

SECAS costs

The estimated SECAS implementation costs to implement this modification is two days of effort, amounting to approximately £1,200. The activities needed to be undertaken for this are:

- Updating the SEC and releasing the new version to the industry.

SEC Party costs

During the Refinement Consultation, no Parties provided any information on costs to implement this modification.

6. Implementation approach

Agreed implementation approach

Panel has agreed an implementation date of:

- **4 November 2021** (November 2021 SEC Release) if a decision to approve is received on or before 4 May 2021, or
- **3 November 2022** (November 2022 SEC Release) if a decision to approve is received after 4 May 2021 but on or before 3 May 2022.

As the changes impact a Technical Specification, they must be implemented in a SEC Release that includes an uplift to the Technical Specifications to prevent more than one change to the Technical Specifications in a calendar year. The November 2021 SEC Release is the next SEC Systems Release that this modification can be included in which is expected to include Technical Specification

changes. If, following a decision and allowing enough lead time, an earlier Release made updates to the Technical Specifications this modification may be included in that Release.

No SEC Parties provided any information around User system lead times during the Refinement Consultation.

7. Assessment of the proposal

Solution development

Configuration

The Alert codes allocated to the NGNM Alerts were indicative of configurable Alerts. For this reason, the first Preliminary Assessment detailed the solution to allow these Alerts to be configurable (functionality for the DCC User to turn them on and off). However, at the Working Group the Proposer stated that was not what was required. SECAS challenged this, explaining that these Alert Codes indicated they should be configurable, which was further discussed at the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) led Technical Specifications Issue Resolution Sub-Group (TSIRS). The recommendation was that all solution options should be assessed and leave it up to the Modification Process to select the favoured option.

A second Preliminary Assessment was performed against two other solution options. This was shared for discussion at the June 2020 Working Group.

Discussion on the solution options

Following the outline of SECAS' proposed next steps, the Working Group were asked which of the solution options they preferred. The Proposer highlighted that the current solution used to address the issue aligns closely with the solution option 2, and that there would need to be a strong justification to configure Alerts as the price difference between the two alternative options is vast. It was asked whether these Alerts could be configured on the Device or via the DCC. The consensus was that most Alerts can be configured on the Device.

Working Group members commented that option 2 seems most sensible from a price perspective. The Proposer expressed that if Alerts are not currently configurable then there isn't a justification to make such Alerts configurable in the future. The Proposer also stated that though it would be beneficial to make these Alerts configurable, the cost of implementing option 3 is not justifiable.

The Working Group was expressing a preference for option 2. However, it was agreed that all of the solution options should be put forward in the Refinement Consultation to obtain broader input.

Support for Change

The three options were presented to a second Working Group. The Proposer confirmed that the preferred option was option 2 and that option 3 was significantly more expensive without a business case for making that change. The Working Group agreed that option 2 was the preferred option however, they considered that another Party may want to implement option 3. The Proposer agreed

that if this was the case another Party could raise a draft proposal to implement this, although they would have to justify it with a sound business case.

Views against the General SEC Objectives

Proposer's views

The Proposer believes this modification would better facilitate SEC objective (a) as it supports the efficient provision, installation and operation, as well as interoperability of Smart Metering Systems. The implementation of NGNM alerts into the GBCS would ensure DCC Users' systems can recognise these alerts.

Appendix 1: Progression timetable

The Modification Proposal will be presented to the Panel on 11 September 2020.

Timetable	
Event/Action	Date
Draft Proposal raised	16 Oct 2019
Presented to CSC for comment and recommendations	29 Oct 2019
Panel converts Draft Proposal to Modification Proposal	15 Nov 2019
First Preliminary Assessment requested	15 Nov 2019
First Preliminary Assessment returned	11 Feb 2020
Modification discussed with Working Group	4 Mar 2020
Second Preliminary Assessment requested	15 Apr 2020
Second Preliminary Assessment returned	11 May 2020
Modification discussed with Working Group	3 Jun 2020
Refinement Consultation	12 Jun – 3 Jul 2020
Impact Assessment costs approved by Change Board	24 Jun 2020
Impact Assessment requested	7 Jul 2020
Impact Assessment returned	18 Aug 2020
Present Modification Report to Panel	11 Sep 2020

Appendix 2: Glossary

This table lists all the acronyms used in this document and the full term they are an abbreviation for.

Glossary	
Acronym	Full term
BEIS	Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

Glossary	
Acronym	Full term
DCC	Data Communications Company
DUIS	DCC User Interface Specification
GBCS	Great Britain Companion Specification
NGNM	Non GBCS Non-Mandated
SEC	Smart Energy Code
SECAS	Smart Energy Code Administrator and Secretariat
TSIRS	Technical Specification Issues Resolution Sub-group