

This document is classified as **White** in accordance with the Panel Information Policy. Information can be shared with the public, and any members may publish the information, subject to copyright.

SECMP0024 ‘Enduring Approach to Communication Hub Firmware Management’

October 2020 Working Group – meeting summary

Attendees

Attendee	Organisation
Ali Beard	SECAS
Joe Hehir	SECAS
David Walsh	DCC
Gary Williams	DCC
Robin Seaby	DCC
Dean Florence	DCC
Sasha Townsend	DCC
Jonathan Sharp	DCC
Simon Trivella	British Gas
Allan Row	British Gas
Lynne Hargrave	Calvin Capital
Alex Hurcombe	EDF Energy
Robert Williams	E.ON
Julie Geary	E.ON
Alistair Cobb	Landis & Gyr
Elias Hanna	Landis & Gyr
Daniel Davies	Utiligroup
Mahfuzar Rahman	Scottish Power
Matthew Alexander	SSEN
Emslie Law	OVO (SSE)
Rachel Norberg	Utilita
Gemma Slaney	WPD

Issue

The Smart Energy Code Administrator and Secretariat (SECAS) stated the issue is that there is no enduring process for managing firmware updates to Communications Hubs (CHs).

In addition, Suppliers are not notified when firmware updates are activated on CHs.

Proposed Solution

The Proposed Solution is for the Data and Communications Company (DCC) to generate an Alert to the Service User upon successful activation of CH firmware, containing the firmware version of the newly activated firmware.

DCC's current process when updating Communications Hub firmware

DCC's current process

SECAS acknowledged members views from the previous Working Group meeting that even with a new Alert, Suppliers still felt they did not have enough oversight over the process. In addition, they felt the process lacked enough formality as its not contained in the SEC, whilst the SEC also allows the DCC to give seven-days' notice when updating firmware on CHs.

Noting the Party feedback, the DCC gave an overview of process it currently follows and broke this down into stages:

1. The DCC will work with the Communications Services Providers (CSPs) and the CH Manufacturers to agree what changes should be included in the release e.g. Change Requests, modifications, manufacturer enhancements.
2. The DCC will then submit a plan to build and test the firmware, including Pre-Integration Testing (PIT), Systems Integration Testing (SIT) and User Integration Testing (UIT).
3. Once the CSPs have designed the firmware release, a "micro pilot" will be carried out, whereby around 10-20 Globally Unique Identifiers (GUIDs) are used to test the Over-The-Air (OTA) release.
4. Next a "pilot" will be carried out with around 5,000 GUIDs. Here the DCC will identify any category 1 and 2 Incidents raised and decide whether to proceed with the roll-out.

The DCC noted that at each of the above stages, decisions are made alongside Parties as to whether to proceed to the next stage.

The DCC also advised that the seven days notice referenced in SEC Appendix AB 'Service Request Processing Document' is an absolute minimum. However, the "micro pilot" and "pilot" tend to take between two to four weeks. The DCC also noted that in its most recent CH firmware release, one months notice was given to Parties.

Working Group views

The Proposer acknowledged the process but noted that four years ago it did not exist, hence the need for a modification to be raised at the time. However, even with this process now in place, the Proposer noted that it is yet to be documented and the DCC are not obligated to abide by it. As with other processes in the SEC, the Proposer felt it should be governed like any other.

Working Group members noted that in some cases the process gets expedited e.g. for urgent security related reasons. The DCC advised that it must have this flexibility in place in order for it to act on such scenarios in a timely manner. The Working Group agreed, but again felt the rules should be documented. The DCC advised that appropriate governance is already in place and that it works with Parties to make sure they are aware of such scenarios.

Publication of the Firmware Management Policy

The DCC acknowledged that its Firmware Management Policy requires an update and made a commitment to do this by early-November 2020.

SECAS suggested that once updated, the Firmware Management Policy be published on the SECAS website as with several other DCC-owned documents. This would ensure ease of accessibility. The Working Group agreed with this approach.

Next steps

The following actions were recorded from the meeting:

- The DCC is to update its Firmware Management Policy and make this available to SECAS for publication on its website.