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## SECMP0024 ‘Enduring Approach to Communication Hub Firmware Management’

### December 2020 Working Group – meeting summary

#### Attendees

Attendee	Organisation
Ali Beard	SECAS
Joe Hehir	SECAS
Brad Baker	SECAS
Joey Manners	SECAS
David Walsh	DCC
Robin Seaby	DCC
Dean Florence	DCC
Remi Oluwabamise	DCC
Easton Brown	DCC
Graeme Liggett	DCC
Sasha Townsend	DCC
Simon Trivella	British Gas
Lynne Hargrave	Calvin Capital
Alex Hurcombe	EDF Energy
Robert Williams	E.ON
Ferenc	Green Energy Options
Alastair Cobb	Landis + Gyr
John Noad	Npower
Ralph Baxter	Octo Energy
Mahfuzar Rahman	Scottish Power
Eric Taylor	SLS
Elias Hanna	Smart ADSL
Emslie Law	OVO Energy
Rachel Norberg	Utilita
Gemma Slaney	WPD

## Summary

### Issue

- Lack of a formalised process between the Data Communications Company (DCC) and Suppliers for managing firmware updates to Communications Hubs (CHs)
- Suppliers are not notified when CH's in their estate are updated by the DCC
- Significant risk that a CH firmware update with defects or interoperability issues could be deployed and activated to significant numbers of CHs without Suppliers knowing

### Proposed Solution

The Proposed Solution is for the DCC to generate an Alert to the Responsible Supplier upon successful activation of CH firmware. This Alert will contain the firmware version of the newly activated firmware.

The DCC is also to update its Firmware Management Policy and make this available to SECAS for publication on its website, ensuring transparency of the CH firmware process.

## CH firmware activation Alert

### Supplier benefits

SECAS highlighted the Supplier benefits as a result of the proposed DCC Alert for CH firmware activation:

- Track progress of CH firmware update pilots
- Update back office systems to record the active firmware version on each CH, avoiding the need to query the Inventory periodically to obtain this information
- Plan the deployment of firmware updates to other Home Area Network (HAN) Devices following activation of the new CH firmware

A Network Party advised that it would not expect to receive the proposed new Alert and agreed that it should be sent to Responsible Suppliers only.

### Consumer benefits

SECAS advised that the new Alert will make Suppliers aware of CH firmware updates and therefore quicker to address any HAN issues if they arise. This would have an indirect consumer benefit as it should reduce the risk of Home Area Network (HAN) instability issues.

One Supplier Party noted that there have been several CH releases in 2020, two of which it believes have led to HAN instability issues. The Supplier agreed that the proposed new Alert would aid Suppliers in identifying and resolving such issues.

### DCC Preliminary Assessment of the Alert

SECAS noted the rough order of magnitude cost for Design, Build and Pre-Integration Testing (PIT) is between **£151,000 and £350,000**. It noted the reason for the cost range is due to the solution only

impacting one of the DCC Service Providers as well as it being the Data Service Provider (DSP) which only provides a cost range within its Preliminary Assessment. It added that an Impact Assessment would identify Systems Integration Testing (SIT) and User Integration Testing (UIT) costs for a standalone SEC Release, as well as identify the explicit DSP implementation costs provided as a classified RED annex.

The Proposer, noting the implementation costs, highlighted the benefits of the new DCC Alert and considered that it should be implemented as soon as possible.

The new DCC Alert would require changes to SEC Appendix AD 'DCC User Interface Specification' (DUIS) and require Extensible Markup Language (XML) Schema changes.

### **Implementation timescales**

SECAS advised a minimum of four months would be needed up to the end of PIT to implement the new Alert. Although timescales for SIT and UIT will be confirmed in an Impact Assessment, SECAS assumes a minimum of six months would be needed, taking the full implementation lead time needed to ten months.

Taking this into considering SECAS considered SECMP0024 would be a candidate for the one of the 2022 DCC Systems SEC Releases at the earliest. The Proposer questioned whether it was possible to implement this modification any earlier. However, taking into account a Refinement Consultation and DCC Impact Assessment is yet to occur, SECAS highlighted that there would not be enough lead-time to implement the modification in a 2021 DCC Systems SEC Release. SECAS added that the Panel has already baselined the scope November 2021 SEC Release for the DCC Systems impacting modifications in accordance with the Release Management Policy.

### **DCC's Firmware Management Policy**

The DCC provided an update on the progress with its Firmware Management Policy. It highlighted the policy has been broken down into four key stages:

1. Content agreement
2. Development and testing
3. Over-the-air (OTA) deployment
4. Manufacturer supply chain

The governance and steps needed to reach each stage would be documented in the policy.

The DCC expects the policy to be available by the January 2021 monthly Working Group meeting. SECAS added that if it receives the policy in-time, it will discuss it at the January 2021 monthly Working Group meeting. If members are happy with the policy, SECAS will issue a Refinement Consultation and subsequently seek Change Board approval to undertake a DCC Impact Assessment.

### **Next steps**

The following actions were recorded from the meeting:

- The DCC will provide its updated Firmware Management Policy to SECAS by the January 2021 monthly Working Group meeting.
- Subject to receiving the updated Firmware Management Policy from the DCC, SECAS will issue a Refinement Consultation.