MP116 ‘Service Request Forecasting’

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May 2021 Working Group – meeting summary

Attendees

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| **Attendee** | **Organisation** |
| Ali Beard | SECAS |
| Holly Burton | SECAS |
| Harry Jones | SECAS |
| Bradley Baker | SECAS |
| Khaleda Hussain | SECAS |
| Joey Manners | SECAS |
| Robin Healey | SECAS |
| Sasha Townsend | DCC |
| Remi Oluwabamise | DCC |
| Easton Brown | DCC |
| David Walsh | DCC |
| Gary Bailey | DCC |
| Graeme Liggett | DCC |
| Richard Amey | DCC |
| Gav Parott | DCC |
| Robin Seaby | DCC |
| Sarah-Jane Russell | British Gas |
| Lynne Hargrave | Calvin Capital |
| Julie Geary | E.ON |
| Alex Hurcombe | EDF Energy |
| Daniel Davis | ESG Global |
| Terry Jefferson | EUA |
| Gordon Hextall | Gemserv (SSC Chair) |
| Phil Twiddy | Gemserv |
| Alastair Cobb | Landis + Gyr |
| Ralph Baxter | Octopus Energy |
| Emslie Law | OVO Energy |
| Mafs Rahman | Scottish Power |
| Matthew Alexander | SSEN |
| Rachel Norberg | Utilita |
| Gemma Slaney | WPD |
| Kelly Kinsman | WDP |

Overview

The Smart Energy Code Administrator and Secretariat (SECAS) provided an overview of the issue identified by [MP116 ‘Service Request Forecasting’](https://smartenergycodecompany.co.uk/modifications/service-request-forecasting/), the Proposed Solution put forward by the Data Communications Company (DCC) and the completed actions from the March 2021 Working Group meeting. The DCC also provided an update on their forecast modelling project and the DCC User Guidance document.

Issue:

* Every quarter each DCC User must submit an eight-month Service Request (SR) forecast stating how many SRs they anticipate they will send in the following eight months.
* Each forecast takes approximately two days to complete per DCC User
* Experience has shown that the forecasts submitted are often inaccurate

Proposed Solution:

* Remove obligation on DCC Users to submit quarterly Service Request forecasts
* The DCC will provide a report on the 15th Working Day of the months of January, April, July and October. This will set out a forecast of the number of Service Requests that the DCC expect will be sent in each of the six months following the end of the reported month
* The DCC will provide a report on the 10th Working Day following the end of the month that sets out the number of Service Requests sent during that month, a report setting out the current value for every Monthly Service Metric and a comparison of the current value against the relevant Monthly Service Threshold
* The DCC will provide a report to the Smart Energy Code (SEC) Panel that sets out the aggregate number of Service Requests sent by all Users collectively during that month. Comparisons between actual numbers and the most recent forecast will be included
* The DCC will provide commentary for any identified reasons why the expected level of accuracy has not been met
* DCC Users will be requested to feed into the DCC forecasts and make the DCC aware of any scenarios that could result in an increased number of Service Requests being sent as per the DCC Guidance document

DCC User Guidance document:

The DCC asks that Users support the production of these Service Request forecasts through their insight, guidance, and cooperation to maintain the monthly target Service Request forecast accuracy target of 10%.

* The DCC will present and review each forecast and its assumptions with Panel or its delegated authority
* Once accepted by the Panel or its delegated authority, the Service Request forecast will be published on SharePoint
* The Panel or its delegated authority will review the forecast accuracy each quarter and provide corrective guidance
* The DCC may seek clarification through User Service Management reviews or Users directly of behaviour changes
* Users are asked to notify the DCC of expected future changes in their Service Request profile
* Users are asked to notify the DCC of changes to their meter installation capacity of more than 10%
* Annually the DCC and the Panel or its delegated authority will review with Users the purpose, content and structure of the Service Request Forecast
* Annually the DCC will conduct a workshop with Users to capture the assumptions and macro trends for inclusion in its 48-month Service Request forecast. This workshop will take place in October each year

Working Group discussions

Previous discussions held

SECAS sought to clarify whether Anomaly Detection Thresholds (ADTs) are within scope of MP116. The Working Group confirmed that although they follow a similar process to Service Request forecasting, ADTs are separate and therefore out of scope of this modification. Though this modification seeks to remove the obligation on Users having to complete the forecasts, a Working Group member stated that Users will still have to complete a very similar process in order to obtain ADTs and to feed in their information to the process.

Service Request criteria

In relation to Service Request criteria, the DCC stated that each Service Request forecast will predict the volume of distinct Service Requests (excluding retries), as indicated by their Service Request ID, sent over the time period covered by the forecast. There has been one identified exception to this which is Service Request Variant (SRV) 11.1 ‘Update Firmware’ as a single SR results in the DCC sending multiple commands to Devices.

A Working Group member raised the relevance of [MP117 ‘Bulk CH returns’](https://smartenergycodecompany.co.uk/modifications/bulk-ch-returns/) as The Proposed Solution increases the number of Global Unique Identifiers (GUIDs) on the following Service Requests for issuing Communications Hubs:

* SR 8.14.3 ‘Communications Hub Status Update – Fault Return’
* SR 8.14.4 ‘Communications Hub Status Update – No Fault Return’

The DCC has confirmed that there will be a cap of 999 GUIDs available per Service Request. The SECAS Technical Operations team stated that the SR is only received by the Data Service Provider and therefore will have no impact on MP116. This will be monitored as MP117 progresses in case of any alternative solution being put forward.

Forecast reporting proposal

The DCC discussed the forecast reporting, whereby the DCC will produce two SR forecasts covering Smart Metering Equipment Technical Specifications 1 (SMETS1) and Smart Metering Equipment Technical Specifications 2 (SMETS2) and a single variance report.

The quarterly SR variance report will present the monthly variance between actual and forecast volumes at an aggregate level. The criteria for an SRV to be included in the report is for the SRV to be more than 0.25% of aggregate SR volumes. Currently, this means that approximately 30 SRVs are included and account for 95% of SR volumes in total. Clarification was sought for several SRs. SRV 11.1 will be tracked by the Transaction ID due to the nature of the SR. SRV 2.1 ‘Update Prepay Configuration’ and SRV 8.1.1 ‘Commission Device’ were flagged as possible inclusions. The DCC stated that the current recorded volume of these SRVs means that they are not shown on the list. The DCC took an action to provide the list of SRVs and their respective volumes in a table that will be distributed as part of the Refinement Consultation.

Service Request forecast output

The DCC informed the Working Group of the content of the Service Request forecast:

* Commentary on expected SR volumes
* Detail the assumptions made in producing the forecast
* Present the predicted SR volumes by SRV by month
* Present the predicted number of Devices installed and enrolled by month
* Guidance and thresholds for SRV volume changes that Users should bring to DCC’s attention
* Provide charts of aggregate SRs and the top ten SRVs, covering a period of 12 months (six months of actual volumes and 6 months of predicted volumes).

A Working Group member queried what the consequences are for having accurate/inaccurate forecasts. They stated that the current method has become redundant because of its inaccuracy but this has not had an impact on network capacity. The SECAS Technical Operations team responded that accurately forecasting usage enables the DCC to introduce greater capacity and aids long-term planning. The DCC also stated it benefits Service Providers in helping them manage their own capacity from month to month by projecting usage at a component level.

It was further discussed that Users’ forecasts have lacked accuracy for some time, but it has not impacted network capacity. This is due to the DCC developing and producing their own internal forecasts. The DCC reiterated that the intent of this modification is to formalise the new process for producing more accurate forecasts and have it codified into the SEC. The SECAS Technical Operations team also stated that the current obligation in the SEC does not fulfil its purpose and this modification aims to address this.

A Working Group member queried whether an alternative solution should be considered as Users still have to complete a majority of the same work for ADTs and so suggested whether the accuracy tolerances could be expanded. The DCC responded that the 10% tolerance is in line with Service Provider contracts.

It was asked whether there would be any penalty system in place if the DCC Service Request forecasts fell outside the accuracy tolerances. It was discussed that it will be more important to identify and understand where the inaccuracy stemmed from to help improve the modelling for future forecasts. The provision of tangible data from Users would aid the DCC in meeting their accuracy targets.

DCC User Guidance document

The DCC presented the key points of the DCC Guidance document which was drafted after the March 2021 Working Group. The Working Group agreed to send their queries and suggestions to SECAS to help further improve the document.

A Working Group member showed concern regarding the User input as it was deemed too vague in the current draft of the DCC User Guidance document. They stated that theoretically, a User may make a substantial change in their SR volumes, but it may not go beyond the 10% accuracy tolerance and would not inform the DCC. If several Users took this approach, the 10% accuracy tolerance would be exceeded but the DCC would not be informed by Users.

A member asked if the requirement on DCC Users is likely to be mandated, however the DCC stated that it will remain only as guidance. A question was asked if Users would want to disclose commercially sensitive information when advising the DCC of increased SR volumes. This could potentially be identified by competitors This will be captured in the next draft of the DCC User Guidance document. it was also discussed that it would be advantageous for the DCC to set out some examples of when they would expect Users to inform the DCC of an expected increase in SR volumes.

A query was raised regarding the use of the DCC SharePoint. The Working Group member asked if the upload of the report would be done so manually or if automation could be introduced. This is due to frustrations where other reports (separate from Service Request forecasting) are not uploaded on time and in some cases uploaded incomplete. The DCC stated that the report will be uploaded manually, and they will endeavour to provide the report on the agreed day/time.

SECAS asked Working Group members to send any queries regarding the Proposed Solution and the DCC User Guidance document to the SEC Change team inbox. These will then be addressed between SECAS and the DCC, before being brought back to the Working Group with an update.

A Working Group member thanked the Proposer and DCC for drafting the DCC User Guidance document and stated that it has provided a positive foundation on which to build on.

Next Steps

The following actions were recorded from the meeting:

* Working Group members are to email any queries and/or suggestions they may have regarding the Proposed Solution and DCC User Guidance document to the SEC Change team.
* SECAS will work with the DCC to address any queries and/or suggestions before returning to the Working Group.