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DP155 'Communications Hub Re-Flash'

Modification Report

Version 0.2

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Corporate member of
Plain English Campaign
Committed to clearer
communication

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About this document

This document is a Modification Report. It currently sets out the background, issue, impacts and progression timetable for this modification, along with any relevant discussions, views and conclusions. This document will be updated as this modification progresses.

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1. Summary

This proposal has been raised by Sasha Townsend from the Data Communications Company (DCC).

Currently, the Smart Energy Code (SEC) allows for the return of Communications Hubs (CHs) in accordance with SEC Section F 'Smart Metering System Requirements' (F8) and Appendix I 'CH Installation and Maintenance Support Materials'.

However, the SEC does not currently accommodate the process of returning a Communications Hub to the DCC for the purpose of re-flashing the Device and then retaking delivery of that Device once the re-flashing process has been complete. Furthermore, there is not an Explicit Charge that could be used for this service.

Installing older versions of Communications Hubs such as the Release 1.3 version presents issues for Suppliers. This is due to the over-the-air (OTA) upgrade which, when run at installation, can take a significant amount of time and increases the length of installation.

This modification is expected to impact the DCC but is not DCC System impacting. It will also impact Supplier Parties.

2. Issue

What are the current arrangements?

Communications Hub returns

Currently, the SEC allows for the return of Communications Hubs in accordance with SEC Section F 'Smart Metering System Requirements' (F8) and Appendix I 'CH Installation and Maintenance Support Materials'. SEC Parties can return Communications Hubs to the DCC and will be charged either one of two Explicit Charges:

- K7.5(o) – CH returned and redeployed
- K7.5(p) – CH returned and not redeployed

These Explicit Charges are set at the beginning of each Regulatory Year and can be found in the DCC Charging Statement.

Upgrading to Release 2.0 Communications Hubs

Release 2.0 is the currently the latest version of Communications Hub and there is currently a transition to Release 2.0 from the Release 1.3 Communications Hubs. Release 2.0 will be aligned with the latest Technical Specifications and will allow smart meters to be installed in a greater proportion of homes.

Due to the transition to Release 2.0 Communication Hubs, the DCC has been developing a proposal to enable the upgrading of firmware to Release 2.0 by re-flashing the Devices. This re-flashing activity will upgrade the firmware of any Communications Hubs returned to the DCC to the latest Release 2.0 firmware with the DCC then redelivering these to each SEC Party that uses the service.

This proposal will allow the re-use of Release 1.3 Communications Hubs and prevent the potential scrapping of such Devices in the future. It may also make Release 2.0 Communications Hubs available to SEC Parties faster than the standard Communications Hubs manufacturing lead times.

What is the issue?

Installing older versions of Communications Hubs, such as the Release 1.3 version, presents issues for Suppliers. This is due to the OTA upgrade which when run at installation can take a significant amount of time and increases the length of installation.

Release 1.3 Communications Hubs for the Communications Service Provider (CSP) North Region are currently being held in volume by SEC Parties as there is no quick means to update them to the latest version of Release 2.0 Communications Hubs. Allowing them to be returned to the DCC for re-flashing and then return to the Supplier Party will allow for faster installation times at consumers premises and less installation complications.

However, the SEC does not currently accommodate the process of returning a Communications Hub to the DCC for the purpose of re-flashing the Device and then retaking delivery of that Device once the re-flashing process has been complete. Furthermore, there is not currently an Explicit Charge that could be used for this service, meaning the costs for this would be spread across all Parties.

What is the impact this is having?

If this issue is not resolved, Release 1.3 Communications Hubs will continue to be held in volume by Suppliers due to the difficulty they have in updating these Device in a reasonable amount of time.

Impact on consumers

Not resolving this issue could mean Smart Metering installations could take significantly longer than they should. Also, it could increase the chance of consumers being left with out-dated Communications Hubs which do not allow consumers to reap the full benefits of smart metering.

3. Impacts

This section summarises the **anticipated** 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

Supplier Parties

This modification will impact Suppliers as it seeks to make it easier for them to update to Release 2.0 Communications Hubs and install these at consumer premises.

DCC

This modification will impact the DCC as it will be required to provide a service to receive Release 1.3 Communications Hubs, perform the re-flashing and then deliver them back to SEC Parties. They will also need to set an Explicit Charge and consult on that charge.

DCC System

This modification is not expected to impact the DCC System but this will be investigated during refinement.

SEC and subsidiary documents

The following parts of the SEC will be impacted:

- SEC Section K 'Charging Methodology'

SECAS and the DCC will assess the full impacts on the SEC during refinement.

Consumers

This modification will aim to benefit consumers by ensuring they have the latest possible version of Communications Hubs installed and to provide a better consumer experience by preventing prolonged installation times.

Other industry Codes

This modification will not impact other Industry Codes.

Greenhouse gas emissions

This modification will not impact greenhouse gas emissions.

Appendix 1: Progression timetable

SECAS will present this Draft Proposal to the Technical Architecture and Business Architecture Sub-Committee (TABASC) on 1 April 2021 before presenting it to the Change Sub-Committee (CSC) for final comment and recommendations on 27 April 2021.

Timetable	
Event/Action	Date
Draft Proposal raised	18 Feb 2021
Presented to CSC for initial comment	30 Mar 2021
Presented to TABASC for initial comment	1 Apr 2021
Presented to CSC for final comment and recommendations	27 Apr 2021

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
CH	Communications Hub
CSC	Change Sub-Committee
DCC	Data Communications Company
OTA	Over-the-air
SEC	Smart Energy Code
SECAS	Smart Energy Code Administrator & Secretariat
TABASC	Technical Architecture and Business Architecture Sub-Committee