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MP155 'Communications Hub Re-Flash'

July 2022 Working Group – meeting summary

Attendees

Attendee	Organisation
Mike Fenn	SECAS
David Kemp	SECAS
Bradley Baker	SECAS
Joe Hehir	SECAS
Kev Duddy	SECAS
Joey Manners	SECAS
Rainer Lischetzki	SECAS
Sam Manson	DCC
Robin Seaby	DCC
David Walsh	DCC
Matthew Davies	AltHANCo
Patricia Massey	BEAMA
David Steel	British Gas
Julie Brown	British Gas
Alex Hurcombe	EDF Energy
Daniel Davies	ESG Global
Martin Bell	EUA
Danish Mahmood	Landis+Gyr
Ralph Baxter	Octopus Energy
Stephen McLaughlin	Scottish Power
Audrey Smith-Keary	SSE - OVO
Shuba Khatun	SSEN
Matthew Alexander	SSEN
Robert Johnstone	Utilita
Kelly Kinsman	WPD

Overview

The Smart Energy Code Administrator and Secretariat (SECAS) provided an overview of the issue identified by MP155 'Communications Hub Re-Flash', the solution options, a summary of the Data Communications Company (DCC)'s Preliminary Assessment and a summary of the business case.

Issue

- Installing older versions of Communications Hubs presents issues for Suppliers.
- Over-the-air (OTA) upgrade, when run at installation, can take a significant amount of time and increases the length of installation.
- SEC Parties tend to install the Communications Hubs on the latest versions first so these numbers are not reducing at speed.

Proposed Solution

- The DCC User will request the re-flash service through the DCC Logistics team, providing a list of Communications Hubs.
- The DCC will manage the logistics process and deliver the Communications Hubs to the Communications Service Provider (CSP).
- The CSP will re-flash the Communications Hubs and update the Data Service Provider (DSP) with the new Firmware versions using an existing interface.
- The DCC will then manage the return of the Communications Hubs and subsequent back-office processes to support this.

Preliminary Assessment summary

- The DCC have provided a cost of £3,730,000 for Design, Build and Pre-Integration Testing (PIT).
- Implementation will take 12 months up to the end of PIT.
- The total cost for a Full Impact Assessment (IA) is £225,159 and would be expected to be completed in 90 Working Days.
- Cost for implementation would be charged via an Explicit Charge for those who take up the service. Estimated to be between £7.60 - £12 per Communications Hub.

Working Group Discussion

SECAS (KD) presented an overview of the issue, Proposed Solution and the Preliminary Assessment summary.

A Working Group member (DD) queried whether this service would only be available to Suppliers, or whether any DCC User could use it. SECAS (KD) confirmed it could be requested by whoever placed the order for those Communications Hubs.

A Working Group member (AS) questioned how the £3.7m was broken down. The DCC (RS) noted that the costs are not split as part of the Preliminary Assessment, but a breakdown would be given as part of a Full Impact Assessment, if requested. The Preliminary Assessment was based on the CSPs building the service, and then running it for 12 months to address the backlog of Communications Hubs on firmware of n-4 or older. The costs would be recovered via the Explicit Charge from users of the service.

A Working Group member (MB) queried what happens after 12 months. The DCC (RS) advised this is an enduring solution, but the 12 months was how long it was expected to clear the current backlog.

A Working Group member (JB) queried whether Communications Hubs on Firmware older than n-4 could be re-flashed. The Working Group member also queried whether there were any Communications Hubs in the backlog that had passed their validity period, and if so what happens to them. The DCC (RS) confirmed this service could be used for other firmware versions and that the n-4 was used as a basis to develop the assessment. There are currently no firmware versions that are past their validity period but DCC (SM) confirmed they would be scrapped, which is the cost the modification is being compared against.

The Working Group member (JB) questioned what the difference was between the existing refurbishment process and this new re-flashing service. The DCC (SM) resolved to take this away but noted the new service would re-flash Communications Hubs in far higher volumes than the refurbishment process would allow.

SECAS (KD) presented the detail on the backlog of Communications Hubs, noting that the number had previously been static, whereas in the past few months the numbers had begun to reduce. If the backlog continues to reduce at the current rate then it would be cleared by the end of 2023.

A Working Group member (RB) noted that if the Communications Hub backlog is reducing at the current rate then there is no business case to support this modification as it would be cleared 12 months before implementation. They also noted any solution would need to be factored into new contracts for any new Service Providers. The DCC (RS) agreed and had highlighted this to the relevant stakeholders internally.

Another Working Group member (SM) highlighted a possible scenario whereby the service could be implemented but then not used, and queried how those costs would be absorbed. The DCC (RS) noted this was a possibility and would investigate this scenario.

SECAS (KD) summarised that the Working Group did not believe the business case supported this modification and therefore the Impact Assessment should not be requested.

The Working Group had no further comments.

Next Steps

The following actions were recorded from the meeting:

- DCC to investigate cost recovery in the event that the solution is implemented but not used;
- DCC to clarify differences in the refurbishment process to this proposed re-flashing process; and once confirmed
- SECAS to issue the Refinement Consultation.