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DP255

‘WAN issues during Smart Meter installations’

Modification Report

Version 0.2

9 January 2024

Corporate member of
Plain English Campaign
Committed to clearer
communication

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About this document

This document is a draft Modification Report. It currently sets out the background, issue, 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 Emslie Law of OVO.

The Smart Energy Code (SEC) assumes that once a Communications Hub has connected to the Smart Metering Wide Area Network (SMWAN) all associated Devices in that Smart Metering System (SMS) can also connect. The Proposer has experienced cases where the Communications Hub 'births', but there is insufficient WAN to enrol the other Devices in the SMS with the Data Communications Company (DCC). Due to the way the SEC is drafted, even if only the Communications Hub connects to the SMWAN this is still regarded as a successful installation.

The Proposer would like to alter the relevant sections of the SEC to ensure that a successful installation involves all Devices in the SMS being connected to the SMWAN, rather than just the Communications Hub.

2. Issue

What are the current arrangements?

SEC Appendix AC 'Inventory Enrolment and Decommissioning Procedures' sets out the steps SEC Parties need to follow when installing SMS.

Section 4.1 'Commissioning of Communications Hub Functions' states:

"Where the DCC receives a communication originating from a Communications Hub Function which does not have an SMI Status of 'commissioned' confirming that it has connected to the SMWAN, the DCC shall update the SMI Status of the Communications Hub Function to 'commissioned'".

Once the Communications Hub Function (CHF) is set to commissioned, the SEC assumes that there is sufficient SMWAN for all other associated Devices in that SMS to complete the rest of the Install and Commission procedures to enrol Devices in the DCC Service.

What is the issue?

Currently, the SEC is drafted on the assumption that once the Communications Hub births, all other associated Devices can also connect to the SMWAN. The Proposer has experienced cases where only the Communications Hub connects to the SMWAN and there is insufficient SMWAN for all the other Install and Commission activities to take place. This means that although only the Communications Hub is connected to the SMWAN, the installation is still seen as successful.

When this occurs, the installing Party will follow a path within the DCC and SEC where this is viewed as a WAN incident, which will be investigated by Communication Service Providers (CSPs). The Proposer notes that in these scenarios there is no obligation on Suppliers to leave Communications Hubs at the site. However, if the installing Party wishes for the incident to be investigated a Communications Hub must be left at the site.

What is the impact this is having?

This issue is leading to partial or failed installs where not all Devices have been commissioned. In these circumstances, Devices are not visible to the DCC, CSPs or DCC Users.

Impact on consumers

This is leading to a poor consumer experience of the Smart Metering Implementation Programme (SMIP). The consumer will not have a working SMS which leaves them with no benefits from having a Smart Meter installed and would require further visits to try and commission the Devices.

3. Assessment of the proposal

Areas for assessment

What would the Proposer like to achieve?

The Proposer would like to identify the scenarios when all Devices cannot be commissioned. In addition, the Proposer would also like to alter the relevant sections of the SEC to ensure that a successful installation includes not only connecting to the Communications Hub but all Devices in the SMS also operating fully.

Scale of the issue

Smart Energy Code Administrator and Secretariat (SECAS) has worked with Parties and DCC to gauge the scale of the issue. DCC has provided SECAS with preliminary figures that indicate the issue identified in this modification occurs during around 1% - 3% of installations, although this is varies dependent on the CSP Region.

The Proposer notes that these figures may not reflect the full scale of the issue. This is because Parties may experience difficulties at different stages of the install and commission process when attempting to send Service Requests to Devices. As a result of experiencing issues at different stages of the process, it is difficult for Parties to collate an accurate figure of the scale of the issue.

SECAS has received figures from one Large Supplier which suggest this is occurring more frequently than is suggested in the DCC figures.

Install and Leave

The Proposer has experienced issues when there is insufficient WAN to install all other Devices, but the appointment is not classed as an Install and Leave because the Communications Hub has connected to the SMWAN. The Proposer believes clarity on what constitutes an Install and Leave installation should take place.

The Proposer also notes that the instructions for Install and Leave are the same when installing credit and pre-payment Devices. As such, the existing instructions do not cater for the differences when installing a pre-payment Device, such as ensuring it is communicative. SECAS is examining the

existing Install and Leave guidance for pre-payment Devices and the Proposer may raise another Draft Proposal to resolve this issue.

Issues with Devices

SECAS notes that there may be technical issues with Devices which are causing them not to connect to the SMWAN, rather than an issue with the SMWAN itself. This will be explored throughout the modification to ensure that WAN issues are clearly identified, with no overlap of faulty Devices.

Sub-Committee input

SECAS has engaged with the Chairs from the Operations Group (OPSG), the Technical Architecture and Business Architecture Sub-Committee (TABASC), the Security Sub-Committee (SSC) and the Smart Metering Key Infrastructure Policy Management Authority (SMKI PMA) to confirm what input is required from these forums. SECAS believes the following Sub-Committees will need to provide the following input to this modification:

Sub-Committee input	
Sub-Committee	Input sought
OPSG	How will this modification impact reporting of successful installations?
SMKI PMA	Not anticipated to have any input from this forum.
SSC	What impact will this modification have on post-commissioning obligations?
TABASC	Will this require any changes to the Data Service Provider (DSP) and CSPs or business processes?

Appendix 1: Progression timetable

Timetable	
Event/Action	Date
Draft Proposal raised	14 Nov 2023
Presented to CSC for initial comment	21 Nov 2023
CSC converts Draft Proposal to Modification Proposal	16 Jan 2024
<i>Business requirements developed with Proposer and DCC</i>	<i>5 Feb 2024</i>
<i>Modification discussed with SSC</i>	<i>28 Feb 2024</i>
<i>Modification discussed with TABASC</i>	<i>7 Mar 2024</i>
<i>Modification discussed with OPSG</i>	<i>12 Mar 2024</i>
<i>Modification discussed with Working Group</i>	<i>3 Apr 2024</i>
<i>Preliminary Assessment (estimated)</i>	<i>15 Apr 2024 – 15 May 2024</i>
<i>Preliminary Assessment discussed with Working Group</i>	<i>5 Jun 2024</i>
<i>Preliminary Assessment discussed with TABASC</i>	<i>6 Jun 2024</i>
<i>Preliminary Assessment discussed with OPSG</i>	<i>11 Jun 2024</i>
<i>Refinement Consultation</i>	<i>19 Jun 2024 – 11 Jul 2024</i>

Timetable	
Event/Action	Date
<i>Refinement Consultation responses discussed with Working Group</i>	7 Aug 2024
<i>Impact Assessment Request at Change Board</i>	21 Aug 2024
<i>Impact Assessment (estimated)</i>	22 Aug 2024 – 23 Oct 2024
<i>Impact Assessment discussed with Working Group</i>	4 Dec 2024
<i>Modification Report approved by CSC</i>	17 Dec 2024

Italics denote planned events that could be subject to change

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
CHF	Communications Hub Function
CSC	Change Sub-Committee
CSP	Communication Service Provider
DCC	Data Communications Company
DSP	Data Service Provider
OPSG	Operations Group
SEC	Smart Energy Code
SECAS	The Smart Energy Code Administrator and Secretariat
SMI	Smart Metering Inventory
SMIP	Smart Metering Implementation Programme
SMKI PMA	Smart Metering Key Infrastructure Policy Management Authority
SMS	Smart Metering System
SMWAN	Smart Metering Wide Area Network
SSC	Security Sub-Committee
TABASC	Technical Architecture and Business Architecture Sub-Committee