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Operations Group Meeting 105

23 October 2023, 12:20 – 16:00

Teleconference

OPSG_105_2310 – Final Minutes

Attendees:

Category	Operations Group Members
Operations Group Chair	Dave Warner
Network Parties	Shuba Khatun
Large Suppliers	Kevin Donnelly
	Rochelle Harrison
	Sam Draper
	George Macgregor
	Ralph Baxter
	Laurence Cross
Other SEC Parties	Martin Christie
	Michael Snowden
	Alex Ford

Representing	Other Participants
DCC	Danielle Jackson
	Val Cumberland
	Timothy Dunning
	Daniel Heathcote
	Gary Fairclough
	Adam Rawling (Part) (<i>Agenda Item 5</i>)
	Andy Rowley (Part) (<i>Agenda Item 5</i>)
	Ryan Todd

	Gary Stuart
	David Rollason
SECAS	Sarah Roebel
	Eugene Asante
	Cherrelle Mclean
	Tim Newton
	Alison Beard
DESNZ (formally BEIS)	Rachel Allen

Apologies:

Representing	Name
SECAS	Conroy Saunders
Other SEC Parties	Geoff Huckerby
Large Suppliers	Nick Coombs
	Emslie Law
Small Suppliers	Cassie Bowerman
DCC	Ian Drummond

1. Previous Meeting Minutes

The Chair invited Operations Group (OPSG) members to comment on the Draft Minutes from OPSG 103. The **OPSG APPROVED** the minutes from OPSG 103 as final.

2. Actions Outstanding

SECAS presented the actions outstanding.

Action Ref.	Action	Date Raised	Last Target Date	Revised Target Date	Owner
OPSG 102/01	The DCC to provide TABASC with the formal report relating to Incident 1076111 (SSI/SSMI/Remedy/SMKI Repo and all DUIS traffic) for more detailed review.	12/09/2023	28/02/2024		DCC
Status: Closed					
OPSG 102/05	The DCC to provide an update to the OPSG detailing the cause(s) for the low success rates of, and improvement trajectory for,	12/09/2023	31/12/2023		DCC

Action Ref.	Action	Date Raised	Last Target Date	Revised Target Date	Owner
	prepayment and firmware activations observed in SMETS1 FOC.				
Status: Closed					

The OPSG **NOTED** the update.

3. SEC Panel Reports – September 2023

Registration Data Provider (RDP) Incidents

SECAS presented the RDP Incidents report for September 2023. SECAS reported that there were four new Incidents opened in September 2023. Six Incidents were closed overall in September with all outstanding Incidents from previous months now resolved following Registration Data corrections.

The OPSG:

- **NOTED** the SEC Panel Reports.
- **AGREED** with the summary of DCC reporting (Annex 1) noting that the report reflected the service experienced by Users.

4. Performance Measurement Report – August 2023

SECAS presented its review of the Performance Measurement Report (PMR) for August 2023 and noted the associated responses to queries provided by the DCC.

SECAS advised the OPSG that two Category 1 and two Category 2 Incidents were reported in the PMR in August. SECAS queried as to why July and August saw a spike in Incidents. SECAS queried the total number of seven Category 1 and Category 2 Incidents in July and August 2023, and whether there was a concern about the stability of the overall system performance. SECAS advised that certain service providers were now on improvement plans in the Heightened Supplier Management process, with the plans running through to October and November. The DCC also stated it is closely monitoring these plans to prevent any recurrence. The OPSG discussed going beyond the data and focusing on areas of the overall architecture which are not performing to prioritise a remediation plan. It was suggested that a simplified visual of where incidents were occurring in the overall architecture would be beneficial in providing a view on where the issues that need focus are. The OPSG Chair added that such a view had been presented by the DCC previously, but not recently. The Chair also mentioned that such an analysis should seek to distinguish between problems intrinsically related to the architecture, and those related to operational shortfalls (including human error), recognising that the distinction was not always clear cut. Finally, the Chair noted that the DCC had previously been asked to provide this analysis as one input into their work on an Outage Strategy and feedback from the DCC on this strategy work was awaited.

SECAS noted that four of the eleven Code Performance Measures (CPM) were reported as below minimum service level in August 2023.

SECAS advised that although both CPM1 and CPM3 achieved target, performance measures PM1.1 S1SP DXC and PM1.5 S1SP DXC failed to achieve Target Service Level, recording 96.73% and 95.90% respectively. The OPSG noted the decrease in performance from the previous month as SECAS highlighted the ongoing inconsistent performance by SMETS1 Service Provider DXC.

SECAS also advised that PM2 Communications Service Provider (CSP) North achieved Minimum Service Level with 98.11%, a decrease from the previous month's performance, when Target Service Level was achieved for the first time since this measure was reported. PM2 CSP Central demonstrated a slight increase in performance to 98.96% from the previous report but was still below Target Service Level, although PM2 CSP South returned to Target Service Level with 99.33% performance.

SECAS reported that CPM 3A continued to fall below Minimum Service Level, particularly CSP N failing to meet Target Service Level for the first time since inclusion in the Performance Measurement Report, recording 87.46%. SECAS also noted that this is the fifth consecutive failure of CPM 3A in CSP C&S. Noting the extended period for which this measure had not achieved Minimum Service Level, the OPSG proposed adding this onto the list of DCC SEC non-compliances, to which the DCC agreed.

The OPSG stated that given the amount of remediation work being carried out to improve performance it was imperative to understand how performance linked through to User operational experiences to allow prioritisation of topics with the greatest impact. The OPSG noted it would be beneficial to have visibility of any specific related action plan being discussed in other forums.

Additionally, SECAS reported CPM 4 performance increased slightly to achieve 75%, although it continued to fall below Minimum Service Level. The DCC reported that CPM 4 failed following a Category 1 Major Incident (INC000001076111). The OPSG noted that this occurred following a complex failure within Data Service provider (DSP) which caused a router to crash and go into an unresponsive state.

SECAS advised that CPM 6 failed to meet Target Service Level, achieving 99.13%. The DCC reported that CPM 6 was also impacted by incident INC000001076111.

SECAS noted that the Performance Indicator 1 measure for all SMETS2 areas had missed target. The DCC reported that the actions being taken to improve CPM 3A are aligned with improving this performance indicator in all regions.

The OPSG **NOTED** the presentation.

ACTION 105/01: The DCC to provide a simplified graphic of the architecture to include past incidents and where they have occurred including next steps for problematic areas and to include a summary distinguishing between Incidents caused by the architecture and operational matters.

5. Business Processes Indicator Performance Summary

5.1. Business Process Indicators

The DCC reported on the business processes for firmware activations, Tariff Update, and Change of Supply (CoS) in SMETS1 and SMETS2.

The OPSG noted that CoS and Tariff Updates have decreased in volume in SMETS1. Additionally, the DCC noted that CoS performance had continued to improve in all regions due to a single service user scaling back their internal migrations. This prompted a discussion of whether the CoS Business Process Indicator was suitably reflecting real Change of Supplier activity. The OPSG asked DCC to propose how the various types of activity currently encompassed in the CoS BPI might be distinguished.

The OPSG also noted that Tariff Updates have decreased in performance for SMETS2 due to Price Change events.

The DCC advised on the SMETS1 Initial Operating Capability (IOC) and a single User having a failure rate of >90% for the Firmware business process, though most of the responses were duplicate requests. The DCC also noted the decrease in Certificate Management performance in September. The DCC advised that this was due to a high volume of requests from a User with a poor success rate, the same occurrence as reported in July 2023.

5.2. Prepayment Analysis

The DCC noted that it had included new analysis to show 're-try success' and 'subsequent success' buckets to accurately depict components of Pre-Payment performance on the waterfall chart. The OPSG stated the 'subsequent success' which shows unsolicited service responses or delayed success, could cause difficulties for inclusion into MP242 [Change to Operational Metrics to Measure on Success](#). It was noted by the OPSG that it could be considered for inclusion in MP242, but that it was crucial to note the consumer impact that was being reflected. The OPSG also challenged that although the transaction is marked as successful, the timeframe involved could be masked, even if the transaction took 24 hours. The OPSG agreed to discuss the proposed definitions of re-try success and subsequent success further, with more analysis of re-try success and subsequent success to be provided by the DCC in a user-friendly slide.

The DCC noted that the Incorrect Certificate bucket which includes E4 failures now also includes prepay vends failing for devices where the certificate owner does not match the owner recorded in the Smart Metering Inventory (SMI).

The DCC advised that the Communicating bucket now shows prepay vends that have failed with E21 (timeout error) errors, noting that this applies to meters that have evidence of successful communication within the last 60 days. Essentially, these devices which are known to have communicated within the last 60 days have failed to communicate in this instance. The DCC will continue investigations into the Communicating bucket.

The DCC confirmed the Prepayment Glidepath shows improvements that were due to the WNC WAN Self-Heal firmware mitigation and that the DCC foresee a 97.5% success rate by the end of the year.

The DCC noted Install and Commission continues to show relatively stable performance and volume.

The OPSG noted it was difficult for the DCC to map a trajectory for SMETS1 Final Operating Capability (FOC) transactions but would still need to see a summary of this.

5.3 3G Sunsetting Performance

The DCC presented a summary of performance in the areas where the 3G service has been closed. The DCC noted that the slight decline in success rates that had been observed previously had continued. The DCC also noted that, contrary to DCC comments last month, this decline was now thought to be specific to areas where 3G was closed, and not a National effect.

In response to questions from the OPSG, the DCC noted that in some areas declines had been observed in one month followed by a further decline in the next month.

The OPSG emphasised that it was important to understand the cause of these observations, and whether this was the beginning of a downward trend in performance.

ACTION 105/02: The DCC to include information within the BPI pack to explain which different use cases are observed within each process and how the metrics are calculated.

ACTION 105/03: The DCC to return to the OPSG 107 November Reporting Meeting with detailed analysis of the 3G sunsetting performance, provide reasons for the decrease in performance and confirm next steps.

ACTION 105/04: The DCC to present a further description of the proposed ‘re-try success’ and subsequent success’ buckets within the Pre-Payment Waterfall, and to also set out how the various types of retry are reflected in the success rates.

The OPSG **NOTED** the presentation.

6. Risk Register – Progress Report

The OPSG reviewed the existing four highest severity risks and agreed that risks with severity ratings of 15 and above should be escalated to the SEC Panel:

- OPSG-006:** *There is a risk CSP N will fail to meet SEC requirements, creating barriers for Service Users when operating at a large scale. (Severity 20 – Critical).* SECAS advised that the DCC recently updated OPSG on the progress of the Scaling & Optimisation programme, including the findings from the Scheduled Read Window Pilot Phase 1, and the plan for Pilot Phase 2. The DCC reported that Phase 1 was executed according to plan, with no adverse impacts. SECAS advised that it was noted by OPSG members that there were broader strategic matters and options to be considered and requested user engagement on these matters. The OPSG noted that a DCC report on these further matters is expected by the end of the year, and that the Risk Severity should be reconsidered in the light of that report.
- OPSG-019:** *There is a risk congestion on the DCC infrastructure could significantly increase if the growth in usage of DCC Services by Other Users continues. (Severity 16 – High).* SECAS advised that work is ongoing between SECAS and the DCC as part of the SEC Panel sponsored project to provide proposed next steps to address the risks around Peak Demand and Capacity issues to complement the programmes of work the DCC already has underway. The OPSG did not ask for any change to the Risk Severity rating.
- OPSG-002:** *There is a risk the unstable connections between Communication Hubs (CHs) and Home Area Network (HAN) devices impedes the Service User's ability to send Commands to the devices and the device's ability to send Responses & Alerts to the Service Users, in a large number of premises as the rollout progresses. (Severity 15 – High).* SECAS advised that there is an ongoing action to monitor the DCC's development of interoperability reporting to provide a view of Device Model Combinations' and Firmware versions, to establish if the volume of combinations is manageable or impacting Device stability. The OPSG did not ask for any change to the Risk Severity rating.

- **OPSG-017:** *There is a risk that the execution of the DCC's Annual Outage/Planned Maintenance & BCDR Plan may encounter challenges. It is crucial to closely monitor and oversee the entire cycle of activities, ensuring that valuable learnings are effectively implemented and incorporated to address this challenge appropriately. (Severity 15 – High).* The OPSG noted the difficulties encountered in executing recent BCDR testing and failures in the DSP Technical Refresh programme. With the DCC due to present an early draft of the 2024-25 Annual Outage Plan before the end of 2023, the OPSG agreed that the severity rating should remain unchanged until that plan is reviewed.

The OPSG:

- **NOTED** the presentation.
- **AGREED** all four risks above be escalated to the SEC Panel.

7. Major Incident Review

Formal Report for Major Incident INC000001076111

SECAS presented the OPSG with a summary of the DCC Major incident review for Incident INC000001076111, which occurred on 20 August 2023. The time taken to restore service was 6 hours and 30 minutes. All Service Request traffic (SMETS 1&2) was impacted between 6:10am and 12:40pm.

The DCC noted that the Root Cause as a memory leak in the primary router at the primary data centre causing the router to crash and become unresponsive. The Incident resulted in no DCC User Interface Specification (DUIS) traffic being sent or received by the DSP leading to failures in delivery of SRV's and device alerts. Self Service Interface (SSI), Self-Service Management Interface (SSMI), the Smart Metering Key Infrastructure (SMKI) Repo and Remedy were also impacted as they were unavailable for the duration of the outage.

The OPSG discussed the issues encountered during the incident and noted that a memory leak was not a root cause, but rather a symptom of an underlying issue. The OPSG noted the DCC's description of the procedures carried out during the incident and queried the time taken to resolve the incident and the timeliness of communications to Users.

The OPSG reviewed the effectiveness of the DCC's response to the incident as the incident report detailed a Green RAG status for the 'Classification/Prioritisation', 'Investigation/Diagnosis', 'Resolution/Closure', and 'Customer Communications' categories, whilst 'Identification' was categorised as Red. The OPSG challenged the Green status for Customer Communications and proposed Amber as a better status. It was agreed by the OPSG that there will need to be further investigation into the root cause and the timeliness of the DCC's response to the incident. The OPSG asked the DCC to revise the draft report for OPSG to review.

ACTION 105/05: The DCC to return to the OPSG with a more detailed explanation of the root cause, Incident Management, and remediation of Incident INC000001076111, including any remaining outstanding investigation/actions.

The OPSG:

- **NOTED** presentation.
- **AGREED** that the Review Report for Incident INC000001076111 would require another draft to reflect further investigation before it could be published to all SEC Parties.

8. Work Package Q2 2023/24 Lookback

The OPSG reported that actual expenditure came in £20k under budget due to SECAS being under resourced for several months. The OPSG noted that due to the recent filling of staff vacancies, expenditure is expected to be back on budget next quarter.

SECAS also noted that the Panel Chair has indicated that the process for reporting SECAS expenditure to subcommittees will now remain as at present.

The OPSG **NOTED** the presentation.

9. November 2023 SEC Release

The OPSG noted the update and provided no concerns about the implementation of the legal text on 02 November 2023. The OPSG also noted the upcoming system changes in December 2023 which will go through an operational review at the OPSG ahead of implementation. The OPSG **NOTED** the presentation.

10. Any Other Business

10.1. OPSG 2024 Dates

The OPSG presented tentative future OPSG dates for 2024 and noted that future Bank Holidays affected 2024 Panel Dates which had also been planned for 28th May and 27th August. This will be considered and amended dates provided for discussion in the November's main meeting. Additionally, OPSG have requested that the November 2024 in-person meeting be moved to December.

10.2. OPSG 2023 In-Person Meeting

The OPSG noted that the December 2023 Main In-person Meeting will be held in London on the originally scheduled date of 12 December.

Next Main Meeting: 14 November 2023; Next Reporting Meeting: 27 November 2023