Conclusions on the Market Wide Half Hourly Settlement SEC Release Testing Approach Document Consultation

DCC Conclusions on the consultation issued on the draft Testing Approach Document for the Market Wide Half Hourly Settlement SEC Release Testing Approach Document (June 2024)

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1.   Introduction and Context

1. The Data Communications Company (DCC) is Britain's digital energy spine, supporting the transformation of the energy system. DCC is licensed by the Government and regulated by the energy regulator Ofgem to connect smart meters in homes and small businesses across Great Britain to a single secure, digital network. DCC supports the roll-out of second-generation (SMETS2) smart meters, as well as the migration of existing first-generation (SMETS1) meters onto our network.

1.1.   Background

2. Under SEC Section D10.18, DCC has an obligation to produce a SEC Release Testing Approach Document (TAD) which defines the approach to testing changes to DCC Systems arising from a SEC Release. The Market Wide Half Hourly Settlement (MHHS) SEC Release TAD (June 2024) published alongside this document has been produced to satisfy the requirements set out in SEC Sections D10.18 – D10.20.

3. In April 2023 DCC issued a consultation[1] seeking comments on the draft MHHS SEC Release TAD.

2.   Consultation Responses

2.1.   Responses

4. DCC received written responses from three parties, two of which are Energy Suppliers and one response from an Other SEC Party. In addition to the written responses, DCC received comments from stakeholders through engagement activities such as the SEC Testing Advisory Group (TAG) and bilateral discussion with the MHHS Programme.

3.   Analysis of Responses

5. DCC has analysed the feedback provided and views of stakeholders. Subject matter experts within DCC have reviewed every response. DCC has structured the analysis of responses by question. Thus, this section presents DCC's analysis by question in several separate subsections; with an overview of the responses on the topic and a DCC response.

3.1.   Question 1

6. DCC sought views on the overall testing approach asking: **"Do you support the overall approach and scope of the draft MHHS SEC Release Testing Approach Document? Please provide rationale for your views."**

Respondent Views

7. All three written respondents supported the overall approach and scope outlined in the draft MHHS TAD attached to the consultation. The following was stated:

8. The document was detailed, comprehensive and accurately outlines each step in the testing process.

9. The scope and governance approach to the process make sense and are clear as to the objectives of the process as well as outlining what is not in scope.

10. There is a clear plan regarding this release in regard to the wider scope of MHHS Programme.

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[1] https://www.smartdcc.co.uk/consultations/market-wide-half-hourly-settlement-sec-release-testing-approach-document/

11. The document calls out dependencies on other SEC releases and changes as well as the reliance on certain elements of functionality to be included as and when available, and the reliance on the updated versions of the DUIS & MMC to support the MDRA role and the Service Requests it intends to use along with the alerts and responses from devices.

12. The use of different devices as designated makes sense to test different set-ups within the scope of SMETS1 / SMETS2 devices in use.

13. Two respondents noted that they had provided additional comments in response to question two in the consultation.

DCC Response

14. DCC notes the support for the overall approach and have reviewed all the comments received, providing a response in the next section of this document.

3.2. Question 2

15. DCC sought any additional comments on the TAD asking: **"Do you have any other comments on the draft MHHS SEC Release Testing Approach Document? Please provide details and rationales for your views."**

Respondent Views

16. Respondents noted the following in relation to testing windows in UIT:

- The standard UIT window of six weeks has been called out whereas the MHHS UIT is a long 5-month period as per the plan depicted in section 2. Hence the UIT window should be amended in line with the MHHS June SEC 2024 release plan depicted in the document.

- Some DCC Users are connected only to a single environment (UITA and not UITB). A User suggested that DCC implement changes to UITA earlier (a matter of weeks); therefore, giving sufficient time to undertake regression testing before the changes go live. Users understand the DCC proposal is that changes are implemented for a period of 5 working days in UITA before Go Live.

17. One respondent also noted that the Testing Issue Threshold being considered for a single CR is on the high side, which is usually considered for a major release with multiple CRs. The respondent wanted to know if it was possible to reconsider the testing issue threshold to a more optimal number.

18. One respondent also noted that the entry criteria for UIT doesn't call out that new MDRA users are required to complete UEPT before they can qualify to undertake UIT, suggesting that this should be added (whilst noting that this had been called out in other sections earlier).

19. There was also feedback received from DCC in relation to one typographical error and an erroneous reference to a Service Provider's inclusion in testing which had been called out earlier in TAG 101.

DCC Response

20. Regarding the comments received relating to testing windows in UIT, DCC has considered these and updated the TAD with the following:

- The six-week period relates to the period of User Testing planned prior to the start of the overall MHHS Programme SIT activity. As is correctly stated, User Testing may continue beyond this point and will be supported. The Section 6.3 text has been revised to make this clearer. A cross reference has been made to section 2.2 which explains the wider context and that the UIT environment will be available beyond the 6 week window.

- With regard to the comment regarding UIT-A DCC has not changed the TAD. The UIT-A period of one week derives from the code promotion path and durations DCC uses to progress changes into production (both monthly maintenance releases and changes tested in the B stream). In this case SIT-B > UIT-B & SIT-A. Thereafter SIT-A > UIT-A > Production. Extending the UIT-A duration (by advancing its start date) would compromise DCC's ability to deliver the parallel maintenance changes that typically include production fixes. DCC's timescales are aligned to the overall MHHS Programme timescales. Nevertheless regression testing in UIT-A may continue post the 1 week period and any issues raised will be addressed.

21. DCC did not accept a change to Testing Issue Thresholds. DCC will continue to drive to minimise the extant Testing Issues at SIT exit. Operating against the same threshold levels that are proposed for this MHHS release, the extant Testing Issues at SIT completion across all three previous SEC Releases (June 2022, November 2022 and June 2023) totalled five Severity 3s and one Severity 4. Future reductions may be sought, but it should be noted that this would require matching amendments to the Service Provider contracts.

22. DCC accepted the comment regarding entry criteria for UEPT. Further to this an additional reference to this requirement has also been made in Section 6.3 - Requirements & Focus Areas for User Testing - as this section more relates to what users can do in UIT and when. In addition, a footnote has been added to Section 9.2.2 - Entry into UIT - to cover this. It is not a requirement for entry into the UIT Test Phase, rather it is a requirement on MDRA Users in UIT.

23. DCC accepted the typographical and erroneous reference changes reported.

4.   TAG Decision

24. On 31 May 2023, DCC presented the consultation responses and the proposed amendments to the MHHS SEC Release TAD.

25. TAG accepted all of MHHS SEC Release TAD changes presented by DCC as described above.

26. Following amendments and clarifications, TAG approved the TAD in accordance with SEC Section D10.20.

5.   Next Steps

27. Published alongside this consultation conclusion document is the approved version of the MHHS SEC Release TAD (V2.0).

6.   Attachments

Attachment 1: MHHS SEC Release Testing Approach Document v2.0