

Consultation

Changes to the Intimate Communications Hub Interface Specification (ICHIS)

Consultation opens: 28 August 2019
Consultation closes: 13 September 2019

Date: 28 August 2019

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1 Introduction and Background to Document

The Intimate Communications Hub Interface Specification (ICHIS) defines a common interface between the Intimate Communications Hubs and Electricity Smart Meters which will be deployed as part of the GB Smart Metering Implementation Programme (SMIP).

Part F of the ICHIS describes testing requirements and obligations relating to the Radio Frequency (RF) implementation of Hosts (SMETS2 Electricity Smart Metering Equipment ((ESME)). Part F2.0 (Testing Methodology of Hosts) of the ICHIS also contains a table which sets out the frequency band, start frequency, stop frequency, mid frequency and whether it is related to the Home Area Network (HAN) or Wide Area Network (WAN) for the various antenna used in different models of communications hubs. This table is shown below:

Frequency band MHz	Start Frequency MHz	Stop Frequency MHz	Mid Frequency MHz	HAN/WAN
423	422	424	423	WAN (includes 'buddy mode')
868	863	876	870	HAN
900	925	960	943	WAN
2100	2110	2170	2140	WAN
2400	2402.5	2482.5	2442	HAN
869	869	870	869.5	WAN MESH

In the winter of 2018, DCC confirmed that it would make amendments to the ICHIS that temporarily adjusted the RF limits applicable to Hosts at a range of different frequencies.

This resulted in a period of derogation (the "**Derogation Period**"), up to and including 30 September 2019, during which Suppliers would be permitted to continue to install Hosts which were outside of the limits set in Part F of the ICHIS, but which met the following limits:

- A temporary relaxation to the limit of RF interference that a Host may emit in the 423MHz WAN frequency to equal or below 17dB;
- A temporary relaxation to the limit of RF interference that a Host may emit in the 900MHz WAN frequency band to equal or below 6.5dB;
- A temporary relaxation to the limit of RF interference that a Host may emit in the 2.4GHz HAN frequency band to equal or below 4dB, and;
- An introduction of a limit that a Host may emit in the 868 MHz HAN frequency band to 5dB and a temporary relaxation to that limit of equal to or below 7dB.

The purpose of this consultation is to invite views on our proposal to extend, for electricity meters only, the existing Derogation Period for Hosts from 30 September 2019 to a date between three and six months after the end of the current Derogation Period.

As the proposed extension impacts the ICHIS, this consultation is being issued under Section H12.5 of the Smart Energy Code (SEC).

The closing date for this consultation is 17:00 on 13 September 2019.

2 Amendments to ICHIS

Following the introduction of the Derogation Period, several more Hosts have been developed that meet the enduring limits in the relevant RF bands. These Hosts are being made available for installation prior to the end of the current Derogation Period – i.e. 30 September 2019.

However, DCC has been informed that some Suppliers may not have installed existing stocks of 'Derogation compliant' Hosts by 30 September 2019; 'derogation-compliant' being those Hosts which do not exceed the temporary decibel limits set for the Derogation Period.

Suppliers have, via the Smart Metering Delivery Group (SMDG), provided information on the number of derogation-compliant Hosts they hold and the time it will take to deplete this stock. Whilst the majority of the remaining derogation-compliant Hosts can likely be installed by 31 December 2019, it is understood that it may take slightly longer for some Suppliers and consequently it is our view that it is prudent to consider a longer extension. From a DCC perspective, the duration of the extension for a period between three and six months has minimal operational impact, as DCC expects Suppliers to install derogation-compliant Hosts in those postcode areas specified by the SM WAN Coverage Database relevant to the installation or complete Over the Air (OTA) firmware upgrades to Hosts if the function is available.

DCC has, in considering the need to extend the Derogation Period, taken into account the length of time understood to be needed by Suppliers to install existing stocks; the potential impact on DCC WAN coverage or service levels; the impact to the SM HAN; and the need to ensure any new end date correctly balances flexibility with the need to ensure a timely transition to the installation of meters that meet the enduring RF limits.

DCC recognises that the depletion of Hosts stock levels is dependent on the ability of Suppliers to access customers premises on the planned date of Installation. DCC considers that the most effective way to mitigate this is to apply an extension period that does not adversely impact the smart rollout. DCC invites Industry members to submit relevant evidence if they believe that the Derogation Period should be later than 31 December 2019.

DCC therefore proposes to change the following sections of the ICHIS to extend the period in which the temporary RF limits apply from 30 September 2019 to a period between three and six months:

- F.5.0 Installation of a Host emitting RF noise at 423MHz
- F.6.0 Installation of a Host emitting RF noise in the 900MHz band
- F.7.0 Installation of a Host emitting RF noise in the 2.4GHz (HAN) band
- F8.0 Installation of a Host emitting RF noise in the 868MHz (HAN) band

DCC will continue to work with its Communication Services Providers (CSP) to ensure that any risks to the DCC WAN are eliminated or minimised, where it is feasible to do so.

DCC will also monitor Installation rates of and engage with Suppliers as appropriate throughout a new Derogation Period and will also continue to maintain the current WAN Coverage Checker to assess whether the extension is sufficient (but is no longer than is necessary) for Suppliers to roll out stock; and to minimise the level of stranded assets.

3 Consultation Questions

DCC would like stakeholders' views on the following consultation questions:

Q1	Do you support the proposed extension of the derogation period to 31 December 2019 and the consequential changes to Parts F5.0, F6.0, F7.0 and F8.0 of ICHIS? Please provide your rationale.
Q2	Do you believe an alternative date should be considered or are there any other factors DCC should take into account when considering the extension of the derogation date? Please provide your rationale.

4 How to respond

Please provide responses by 17:00 13 September 2019 to DCC at consultations@smartdcc.co.uk. If you have any questions about the consultation documents, please contact Aniru Shyllon at aniru.shyllon@smartdcc.co.uk.

Consultation responses may be published on our website www.smartdcc.co.uk. Please state whether all, or any part, of your consultation response is confidential. Please note that responses in their entirety (including any text marked confidential) may be made available to the Department Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and the Gas and Electricity Markets Authority (the Authority). Information provided to BEIS [or the Authority], including personal information, may be subject to publication or disclosure in accordance with the access to information legislation (primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004). If BEIS [or the Authority] receive a request for disclosure of the information [we/they] will take full account of your explanation (to the extent provided to them), but [we/they] cannot give an assurance that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded by us as a confidentiality request.

5 Next Steps

Following this consultation, DCC will consider the responses received and finalise the amended ICHIS and publish it on the DCC website.