Data Communications Company

# DCC Consultation on Updates to the Traffic Management Document

## Conclusion on a Proposal to Allocate Service Responses and Requests to a Priority Band in Northbound Prioritisation

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# 1. Introduction and context

## 1.1. Purpose of this document

1. The purpose of this document is to conclude on the Data Communications Company's (DCC's) recent consultation on amending the Traffic Management Mechanism Document (TMMD) to allocate Service Requests and responses to a Priority Band in Northbound Prioritisation.

## 1.2. Background

2. DCC Change Request CR4668, included within SECMP0028, was implemented as the first part of the Market-wide Half Hourly Settlement (MHHS) Capacity Uplift changes in November 2024 and introduced a mechanism for the prioritisation of traffic Northbound from the Data Service Provider (DSP). This mechanism accelerates the passage for a business process that requires processing within seconds (such as Prepayment commands and important Alerts) from the DCC User to the Device.

3. When the network is particularly busy, the receipt of large volumes of DCC Scheduled Responses at the DSP can impact the timely delivery of High Priority Alerts. As part of the Northbound Prioritisation solution, 'High Priority' Alerts are defined in Paragraph 7 within the TMMD, these are placed at the front of the queue for Alerts to be returned to Service Users in advance of any DCC Scheduled Responses.

4. DCC consulted on updates to the TMMD, proposing that DSP Northbound processing shall be updated to prioritise selected High Priority messages over Low Priority messages. The configuration is that Northbound Prioritisation is always applied.

5. The TMMD was originally introduced by SECMP0062 and describes the configurable Priority Bands assigned to Northbound messages and Alerts. The SEC requires that any change to these Priority Bands within the TMMD should be through industry consultation and approval from SEC Panel.

6. DCC has undertaken bilateral engagement with SEC Parties and presented to the Technical Architecture and Business Architecture Sub-Committee (TABASC) to describe, discuss and seek support for our proposed changes.

7. The priorities of message responses and Alerts are as follows:

   Priority, Response and Alert Type

   a. High Priority – all On Demand Service Request Responses

   b. High Priority Alerts (includes N56)

   c. Other Alerts – Device Alerts and DCC Alerts

   d. Scheduled Service Request Responses

   Further configuration details were provided in the draft TMMD v5.0.

# 2. Analysis of responses

8. DCC thanks respondents for their detailed responses to the consultation, which we have considered and has resulted in further updates to the TMMD.

9. DCC received three written responses to this consultation: one Small Supplier, one Network Operator and one Other SEC Party (Device Manufacturer).

10. All respondents challenged the proposed configurations and Priority Bands as per the draft TMMD.

11. DCC has analysed the feedback provided. This section sets out an overview of the responses received to this consultation and DCC's response.

## 2.1. Question 1

12. DCC sought views on the configurations for Northbound Prioritisation and the associated Priority Bands.

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| **Q1** | Does the inclusion of the configurations for Northbound Prioritisation and the associated Priority Bands in the TMMD provide a clear definition of how changes to the configuration be requested and delivered? |

| SEC Party Category | Response | DCC Response |
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| Other SEC Party and Supplier Party | Two respondents queried how changes to the configuration can be requested and delivered. | The method for DCC Users to suggest changes to the configuration has been added to the TMMD. |
| Other SEC Party and Supplier Party | Two respondents stated that the TMMD should contain the rationale for the current prioritisation in appropriate detail. | The purpose of the TMMD is to provide a listing of parameters and configurations, not the rationale behind design decisions. The rationale has already been provided through the associated Full Impact Assessments shared as part of the Change Management governance, and as presentations to TABASC and Operations Group. |
| Other SEC Party | Some Alerts appear to be missing from the document and some listed are incorrect. They also questioned whether DCC will consult on and update SEC Appendix AB 'Service Request Processing Document' as per SEC Modification MP208 'Northbound Prioritisation of N56 Alerts'. They also queried whether the Alert Management Mechanism will take precedence over Northbound Prioritisation. SEC Sub-Committee input was also queried. | SEC Modification MP208 was withdrawn on 21 April 2023, and a separate DCC Change Request was used to progress Northbound Prioritisation. The update to the legal text will be added through a housekeeping Modification as part of the SECAS-led SEC Modification Process. DCC will notify SECAS of this. |
| Supplier Party | They advised that as a key stakeholder in Northbound Prioritisation (due to their number of Smart Metering Equipment Technical Specifications 1 (SMETS1) prepayment customers), they felt that the prioritisation listed in the draft TMMD were incorrect and detrimental to its customers' interests. The respondent also noted that prior to this consultation, they have not provided feedback into the consultation process on priority order. They noted that DCC should consider whether the process taken to arrive at the priority order is compliant with the Competition Act 2018. | The purpose of the TMMD is to provide a listing of parameters and configurations, not the rationale behind design decisions. The rationale has already been provided through the associated Full Impact Assessments shared as part of the Change Management governance, and at presentations to TABASC and Operations Group. DCC advises that these Sub-Committees were responsible for setting the contents of the Priority Bands, and the individual Alerts in the Priority Bands, and are the result of DCC User recommendations who have their customers' interests at the forefront of their decisions. |
| Network Party | The proposed configurations do not provide clear definitions of how changes will be configured or what the real-world scenarios and impacts could be. They also stated that there are limited technical details around how the prioritisation will take place and if there are any safety mechanisms planned to be in place to manage all the delayed Service Requests. | All configurations and settings presented in the TMMD were agreed through multiple presentations and discussion at Working Groups, Operations Group, and TABASC that were run in the period immediately prior to their implementation. This included full explanations and descriptions for each traffic management mechanism.<br><br>The purpose of the TMMD is to provide a listing of parameters and configurations, not the rationale behind design decisions. |

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| Network Party | In the event of a major system stability outage which affects large areas of the country, there could be a large and continuous backlog of pings and/or Power Outage Alerts (AD1s). This may mean scheduled Service Requests never get through, or are compressed into a smaller time window which could lead to issues if they progress into the next day, or it could create a bottleneck downstream. Due to the importance of timely processing of the pings and/or Power Outage Alerts in such an event, they must remain a priority and work arounds need to be in place for any issues that arise for scheduled Service Requests. | DCC advises parties that each mechanism is separate and independent of the others, and each only impacts specific components of the DCC Total Systems. The Alert Management Mechanism only functions inside the Data Service Provider (DSP), and reduces the number of duplicate Alerts from individual meters. Note that AD1 and other Alerts specified in the Alert Exclusion List are not impacted by this function. Power Outage Alerts generated by Devices are not impacted by Southbound Prioritisation as this only impacts the Southbound "edge" of the DSP which communicates with Communication Service Providers (CSP), and does not impact CSP handling and onwards transmission. Northbound Prioritisation only impacts the connections between the DSP and Service Users if that network connection has too much traffic for the allowed bandwidth. |

# 3. Summary of drafting changes

13. After reviewing the responses received and taking into account the points made, DCC is proposing that changes are made to the version of the Traffic Management Mechanism Document (TMMD) that was consulted upon. This redlined version can be found in Attachment 1 to this document.

14. The changes made to the TMMD include:

    a. Alerts in the table in Section 5.1, pages 8 and 9 updated to match the current configuration.

    b. Inclusion of a method for DCC Users to propose changes to the configuration and subsequent steps.

    c. Additional text to clarify that each of the mechanisms in the document impact specific and limited components of the Smart Metering System.

# 4. Next steps

15. DCC is of the view that it has had appropriate engagement and consultation with industry on the configuration that have been proposed in this consultation. DCC has amended the TMMD and will present the conclusions and TMMD updates to the SEC Panel and Operations Group, as well as publish this document on the DCC Website.

16. Following engagement with the SEC Panel and Operations Group, DCC will publish the updated TMMD as part of the June 2025 SEC Release (26 June 2025).

# 5. Attachments

- Attachment 1: updated Traffic Management Mechanism Document v5.0.