

# 4G WAN Coverage Improvement

Consultation on the delivery  
plan

Issued: 9 October 2025

Respond by: 17:00 on 14 November 2025

Contact: [consultations@smartdcc.co.uk](mailto:consultations@smartdcc.co.uk)

Classification: DCC Public

# Table of Contents

<b>1. Introduction and context.....</b>	<b>3</b>
1.1. Background to this consultation .....	3
1.2. Direction to produce an LC13B plan to increase 4G WAN coverage.....	3
1.3. Scope and structure of this consultation .....	4
<b>2. LC13B plan for increasing 4G WAN coverage.....</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1. Enabling and maximising 4G WAN coverage.....	4
2.1.1. Phase 1: Enabling the 4G CH roaming capability .....	4
2.1.2. Phase 2: Assessment of further coverage improvements.....	5
2.2. Further improvement activities.....	5
2.2.1. Implementing the In-life Assurance Methodology .....	6
2.2.2. Producing In-life WAN Assurance Reports.....	6
2.2.3. Prediction methodology refinement.....	6
2.2.4. Coverage checker improvements.....	6
2.3. Customer journey and key engagement milestones.....	7
<b>3. Next steps .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>4. Consultation questions and how to respond .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>5. Attachments .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Appendix A – 4G WAN Coverage Improvement delivery plan milestones .....</b>	<b>10</b>

# 1. Introduction and context

## 1.1. Background to this consultation

1. The Data Communications Company (DCC) is Britain's key enabler to a future smart 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 (Smart Metering Equipment Technical Specifications (SMETS) 2) smart meters, as well as the migration of existing first-generation (SMETS1) meters onto its network.
2. The operation of smart meters is reliant on them being able to communicate with DCC through the Wide Area Network (WAN). The WAN connects individual premises to the DCC network and carries the messages between smart meters and the DCC Systems. Since its inception, DCC has utilised 2G/3G mobile communications technology in the Central and South Geographical Regions and long-range radio technology in the North Geographical Region for SMETS2 meters.
3. DCC has since progressed its Communications Hubs and Networks (CH&N) Programme to deliver futureproofed smart meter infrastructure through the development of 4G Communication Hubs (CHs). The initial batch of 4G CHs were installed in the Central and South Geographical Regions from December 2024 as part of some early testing and an Initial Pallet Validation (IPV). Following the successful delivery of the IPV phase, mass manufacture was approved to begin in April 2025. 4G CHs were subsequently introduced to the North Geographical Region via the Future Connectivity North (FCN) Project on 30 May 2025.
4. Prior to and during CH&N IPV, DCC carried out assurance work on the solution to validate the level of coverage the solution was achieving in practice. This work concluded that the level of coverage likely to be achieved would be lower than DCC's commitment of 99.25% coverage. DCC took the decision to temporarily restrict the number of premises to those where it could assure with high confidence that connectivity would be supported pending the development of its 4G WAN Coverage Improvement plan. DCC has been working with its Service Providers, with support from its independent assurance expert, to develop this plan to achieve its level of assured 4G WAN coverage.
5. This consultation sets out and seeks your views on DCC's plan to develop and maximise the 4G WAN coverage to align to DCC's commitment of 99.25%, along with implementing some further improvement opportunities on coverage assurance.

## 1.2. Direction to produce an LC13B plan to increase 4G WAN coverage

6. To support the progression and delivery of DCC's plans to develop and maximise the current 4G WAN coverage to meet DCC's commitment of 99.25% of Great Britain, the Department for Energy Security & Net Zero (DESNZ) (the Department) issued a Direction to DCC under Condition 13B of the Smart Meter Communication Licence (LC13B) to produce a draft of such a plan and to submit it to the Department.
7. The Direction specifies that this plan should set out and describe the activities that DCC will undertake and the deliverables it will produce to deliver the plan, along with the timelines and interim milestones for these and any dependencies there may be. This plan should include the key milestones around assurance of the coverage uplift and the continued reliability of the coverage checker.
8. DCC has been directed to submit its final plan to the Department by 12 December 2025 following appropriate consultation with SEC Parties and the SEC Panel.

### 1.3. Scope and structure of this consultation

9. This consultation seeks your views on DCC's proposed plan to develop and maximise the 4G WAN coverage across Great Britain. You can find the details of this plan in section 2 of this document.
10. The questions that we seek your views on are listed in section 4 of this document. Please provide your responses to these using the response form attached to this consultation.
11. This consultation is expected to be of interest to all SEC Parties.
12. This consultation will close at **17:00 on Friday 14 November 2025**. Following this, DCC will provide a report to the Department by 12 December 2025 containing its consideration of the responses and its conclusions on its proposed delivery plan. We will publish this conclusions document on the DCC website.

## 2. LC13B plan for increasing 4G WAN coverage

13. DCC has developed its proposed plan for developing and maximising the 4G WAN coverage along with implementing some changes to improve the way coverage is assured and reported on. DCC also wants to explore if there are other improvements that can be made to the coverage checker to support DCC Users. We set out these measures in the plan.
14. DCC is planning to deliver its increase in assured 4G WAN coverage over two phases. The first phase will enable an existing capability within 4G CHs to roam to other specified 4G mobile communication network(s). The second phase will identify whether other measures could be taken to maximise 4G WAN coverage and whether these should be taken forward. These activities are detailed in section 2.1 of this document.
15. It is important that assurance is provided to ensure the changes DCC makes achieve the outcomes expected. As such, DCC is making some changes to support this in the way it assures and reports on 4G WAN coverage, in line with the recommendation provided by its independent assurance expert. DCC also intends to explore if there are other improvements that can be made to the coverage checker to support DCC Users. These activities are detailed in section 2.2 of this document.
16. A summary of the proposed milestones forming the LC13B plan can be found in Appendix A of this document. Please note that the plan set out in this document focuses on the activities that will take place on or after the expected submission date of this plan to the Department.

### 2.1. Enabling and maximising 4G WAN coverage

17. DCC is planning to deliver its increase in assured 4G WAN coverage over two phases, which are set out below:

#### 2.1.1. Phase 1: Enabling the 4G CH roaming capability

18. The first phase of the plan sets out DCC's proposals to enable an existing capability within 4G CHs to roam to other 4G mobile communication network(s). This is expected to provide a meaningful increase to the 4G WAN coverage and will provide the same quality of service.
19. 4G CHs can roam to other networks, as set out in the agreed design, although this feature is not currently enabled. Whilst most of the 4G mobile communication networks covering Great Britain are broadly comparable in their coverage levels, their areas of coverage are not the same. Therefore, enabling 4G CHs to be able to roam to other specified networks will increase coverage levels closer to DCC's commitment of 99.25%.

20. To enable 4G CHs to roam, changes will be required on the 4G WAN. This change will be delivered by DCC's Service Providers and is not expected to be visible to DCC Users. DCC does not expect there to be any CH firmware updates needed to enable roaming. Once enabled, 4G CHs will automatically and seamlessly roam to one of the other enabled networks where the home network does not provide sufficient coverage at a given premises.
21. Ahead of these changes to the 4G WAN being deployed, the solution will undergo focused laboratory testing, followed by a period of Systems Integration Testing (SIT) between **11 December 2025** and **9 January 2026**. A period of User Integration Testing (UIT) will also be provided between **22 January 2026** and **29 January 2026**. As noted above, there is no impact on DCC Users expected as this is a network-only change.
22. Once the changes have been deployed to the WAN, DCC will update the coverage database to reflect the increased 4G WAN coverage provided by its roaming on **30 January 2026**.
23. Following the delivery of roaming, DCC intends to undertake assurance that the predicted coverage that has been reflected in the coverage database is being achieved in practice. DCC intends to have completed this assurance by **23 March 2026**.

### 2.1.2. Phase 2: Assessment of further coverage improvements

24. In the second phase of its plan, DCC will identify other potential measures to maximise the reach of the 4G solution. Some of these solutions may have different implications for DCC Users and for consumers, and DCC will first ensure these are fully understood to enable any decision on whether these are necessary and which might be adopted. The decision on whether any further options are necessary will also be informed by the outcome of assurance on the levels of coverage being achieved following the implementation of roaming.
25. DCC is planning to present its view of potential options and its cost-benefit analysis of these to the Communications Transition Group (CTG), the Operations Group (OPSG) and the Technical Architecture & Business Architecture Sub-Committee (TABASC) in January 2026. A milestone for completing this activity has been included in the LC13B plan for **30 January 2026**.
26. Once DCC has assessed the Sub-Committees' views on the potential options and reviewed the outcome of the assurance on the 4G WAN coverage provided by the introduction of roaming, DCC will present its preferred way forward to the above Sub-Committees for input. This will include DCC's consideration as to whether any further measures are necessary considering the outcomes of the assurance, and if they are, then which option is optimal to achieve its objectives. A milestone for this decision of **31 March 2026** has been included in the plan.
27. At this stage, it is not clear what the outcome of DCC's analysis will be, what options may be taken forward, or whether those options would be supported by industry. As such, it is not possible to set out further milestones in the plan relating to the delivery of these. Instead, the LC13B plan will include a Control Point on **31 March 2026** by when DCC will assess whether further milestones will be needed based on the option(s) (if any) that are agreed to be taken forward. DCC will consult the industry on any further milestones that may be proposed to be added.

## 2.2. Further improvement activities

28. DCC is making changes to support the way it assures and reports coverage, to ensure the changes it makes achieve the outcomes that it expects. These changes are in line with the advice provided by its independent assurance expert. DCC also intends to explore if there are other improvements that can be made to the coverage checker to support DCC Users. DCC is progressing four workstreams to deliver these recommendations, which are set out in this section.

### 2.2.1. Implementing the In-life Assurance Methodology

29. DCC will develop and publish a policy and associated process which details how it will use real in-life data deemed relevant to assure that the 4G communications network is providing the expected service necessary for its customers to install smart meters with confidence. DCC is intending to publish this In-Life Assurance Methodology no later than **28 November 2025**.
30. This methodology document will be further updated as the other areas of further improvement set out below are delivered into the in-life processes.

### 2.2.2. Producing In-life WAN Assurance Reports

31. One of the key areas that will be included in the In-Life Assurance Methodology is the WAN assurance and the corresponding reporting on this. DCC, in collaboration with its independent expert, has developed a methodology for assuring that the signal being received by the CHs will provide reliable coverage. DCC will produce an In-Life WAN Assurance Report on a periodic basis that will contain the results of this assurance.
32. The analysis in this report will provide DCC with the confidence that the 4G WAN is achieving the levels of coverage expected and that the predicted coverage is consistent with the outcomes being achieved operationally. It will also enable DCC to ensure that all 4G CHs are receiving the coverage expected and identify any areas of variability across the 4G estate. This report is expected to be refined and evolve over time.
33. DCC is intending to share a summary of its first In-Life Assurance Report with the SEC Panel in January 2026. A milestone for completing this activity has been included in the LC13B plan for **30 January 2026**. DCC will then provide further summaries to the Panel each quarter up to July 2026.

### 2.2.3. Prediction methodology refinement

34. The coverage detailed within the coverage checker is based on a predictive model from the WAN Provider. The telecommunications industry standard is for cellular predictive models to be based on a mobile phone, not a stationary device. Therefore, even where cellular predictive models are adjusted for stationary CHs (as is the case in the 4G WAN solution), there will be some innate refinement opportunities to optimise the coverage checker once further data is available.
35. To improve the likelihood of successful connections and ensure that there is continued improvement in the success rate of installation of CHs across Great Britain, DCC will work with its 4G WAN Provider to identify improvements to the prediction methodology used for coverage. This will further enhance the accuracy and utility of the prediction methodology and coverage checker, driving an increased success rate for the installation of 4G CHs.
36. DCC will require a period of time to gather enough data from installed 4G CHs before the 4G WAN Provider can perform meaningful analysis. As such, DCC intends to provide a summary of the initial findings back to the SEC Panel no later than **30 April 2026**, or sooner dependent on there being sufficient insights.

### 2.2.4. Coverage checker improvements

37. The coverage checker includes the addresses in which the WAN Provider commits to provide coverage based on its prediction methodology. The predictive nature of the methodology means there will always be a risk that coverage is not found at the premises when an installation is attempted. It is possible that enhancements could be made to the coverage checker to provide more data to the installing Supplier to help it understand this level of risk. This could then be used to optimise installation success. To explore the appetite for such changes, DCC is investigating opportunities to improve the coverage checker.
38. DCC will present its view of options for improving the current coverage database to the SEC Panel and relevant Sub-Committees, which it plans to complete by **17 February 2026**. Two proposals



that are initially being considered include providing the suggested technology to use and providing the probability of a successful installation within the coverage checker.

39. DCC will then proceed to gather customer views and requirements for future improvement and use this information to refine its proposed options. Any proposals will need to be within the constraints of the wider connectivity technology. DCC plans to present the requirements it has gathered from industry and its recommendation of what improvements to take forward back to the Panel and Sub-Committees by **29 May 2026**. DCC will not take forward any of its suggestions until they have been explicitly agreed with the SEC Panel.

### 2.3. Customer journey and key engagement milestones

40. Listening to our customers has been a key activity for DCC to foster a collaborative relationship with our stakeholders. We have set out a comprehensive, customer-centric engagement approach to support the activities set out in this delivery plan.
41. The table below sets out DCC's planned engagement with stakeholder governance bodies during the delivery of the plan. The approach has been designed based on the information our customers have indicated is most relevant to them and in compliance with the SEC Panel's Programme Assurance Policy (PAP). These activities are potentially subject to change, depending on the needs of customers.

Activity	Description	Primary audience	Date
<b>Present summary of the In Life Assurance Methodology</b>	DCC will present a summary of the policy and process which details how it will use real in-life data to assure that the 4G network is providing the expected service necessary.	OPSG, TABASC, CTG	Nov 25
<b>Present deployment options for further coverage uplifts</b>	DCC will present its options analysis to implement further coverage improvement to Sub-Committees.	OPSG, TABASC, CTG	Jan 26
<b>Present first summary of In Life WAN Assurance Report</b>	DCC will share the first iteration of its In-Life WAN Assurance Report summary with the SEC Panel.	SEC Panel	Jan 26
<b>Update on deployment options for further coverage uplifts</b>	Following input on the deployment options presented, DCC will provide an update on its preferred way forward and seek further input on this from the Sub-Committees.	OPSG, TABASC, CTG	Feb 26
<b>Coverage checker customer requirements gathering kick-off</b>	DCC will present its initial analysis and proposed changes to the coverage database for agreement with Sub-Committees before commencing wider requirements gathering with industry.	SEC Panel, OPSG, TABASC, CTG	Feb 26
<b>Confirm delivery of any further coverage uplift</b>	DCC will present its considerations to the Sub-Committees as to whether any further measures are necessary considering the assured coverage outcome on the introduction of roaming, and if they are then which option is optimal to achieve its objectives. DCC will seek the Sub-Committees' agreement on the way forward.	OPSG, TABASC, CTG	Mar 26

Activity	Description	Primary audience	Date
<b>Present summary of coverage prediction methodology refinement</b>	DCC will provide a summary of the outcomes of its work with the 4G WAN Provider to enhance the coverage prediction methodology once enough data has been captured.	SEC Panel, OPSG, TABASC, CTG	Apr 26
<b>Coverage checker customer requirements gathering outcomes</b>	DCC will present the findings from its coverage checker improvement requirements gathering and its proposed next steps back to Sub-Committees.	SEC Panel, OPSG, TABASC, CTG	May 26

### 3. Next steps

42. Following the closure of this consultation, DCC will assess respondents' views and amend the draft LC13B plan as required. DCC will then submit an amended version of this plan to the Department that it considers suitable for approval.
43. DCC is aiming to provide a report to the Department by no later than 12 December 2025. This report will contain DCC's consideration of the responses to this consultation as well as the proposed updated LC13B plan. DCC will publish its conclusions document on its website.
44. Following the Department's decision on this plan, DCC will initiate a request with the Department's Implementation Managers' Forum (IMF) to add relevant Milestones to the Joint Industry Plan (JIP).

### 4. Consultation questions and how to respond

45. We are seeking your views on the following questions:

<b>Q1</b>	Do you agree with the proposed milestones relating to enabling and maximising 4G WAN coverage? <i>Please provide your rationale for your response</i>
<b>Q2</b>	Do you agree with the proposed milestones relating to the delivery of further improvement activities? <i>Please provide your rationale for your response</i>
<b>Q3</b>	Do you consider there to be any additional milestones needed that are missing from this plan? <i>Please provide your rationale for your response</i>
<b>Q4</b>	Do you agree with the proposed customer engagement plan for the 4G WAN coverage improvement activities? <i>Please provide your rationale for your response</i>

46. Please provide responses using the attached response form by **17:00 on Friday 14 November 2025** to DCC at [consultations@smartdcc.co.uk](mailto:consultations@smartdcc.co.uk).
47. Consultation responses may be published on our website ([smartdcc.co.uk](https://smartdcc.co.uk)). Please state clearly in writing whether you want all or any part of your consultation to be treated as confidential. It



would be helpful if you could explain to us why you regard the information you have provided as confidential. Please note that responses in their entirety (including any text marked confidential) may be made available to the Department and the Gas and Electricity Markets Authority (the Authority). Information provided to the Department 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 2018 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004). If the Department 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.

48. If you have any questions about this consultation, please contact us at [consultations@smartdcc.co.uk](mailto:consultations@smartdcc.co.uk).

## 5. Attachments

49. This consultation includes one attachment:
- Attachment 1: Consultation response form

## Appendix A – 4G WAN Coverage Improvement delivery plan milestones

This table summarises the proposed milestones for the delivery of increased 4G WAN coverage described in section 2 of this document.

Ref	Milestone	Description	Date
1	<b>In Life Assurance Methodology Published</b>	<p>Latest date by which DCC will have published its policy and process which details how it will use real in life data deemed relevant to assure that the 4G communications network is providing the expected service necessary for its customers to install smart meters with confidence.</p> <p>This document will be maintained and updated as continuous improvements are implemented.</p>	28 Nov 25
2	<b>Roaming Solution: SIT Entry</b>	Latest date by which SIT starts for all Service Providers.	11 Dec 25
3	<b>Roaming Solution: SIT Exit</b>	Latest date by which a SIT completion decision for all Service Providers is made by the SEC Panel, with support from the Testing Advisory Group (TAG).	19 Jan 26
4	<b>Roaming Solution: UIT Entry</b>	Latest date by which User testing starts in the UIT-A environment.	22 Jan 26
5	<b>Roaming Solution: UIT Exit</b>	Latest date by when the User testing window in the UIT-A environment will close.	29 Jan 26
6	<b>Roaming Solution: Coverage Database Updated</b>	Latest date by which the 4G coverage database will be updated to include the additional premises which will be covered following implementation of the roaming solution.	30 Jan 26
7	<b>Further Coverage Uplift: Deployment Options Presented</b>	Latest date by when DCC will have presented its view of potential options to implement further coverage improvements and its cost-benefit analysis of these (including a do-nothing option) to the SEC Panel or nominated Sub-Committee(s). The decision on whether to take any forward will be made as part of Milestone 11.	30 Jan 26
8	<b>In-Life WAN Assurance Report Implemented</b>	Latest date by which DCC will share a summary of the first iteration of its In-Life WAN Assurance Report with the SEC Panel or nominated Sub-Committee(s).	30 Jan 26
9	<b>Coverage Checker Improvements: Customer Requirements Gathering Kick Off</b>	Latest date by which DCC will have set out to the SEC Panel or nominated Sub Committee(s) its initial view of options for improving the current coverage database and gather customer requirements for future improvement.	17 Feb 26
10	<b>Roaming Solution: Coverage Assurance Completed</b>	Latest date by which DCC will have completed assurance that the predicted coverage that has been reflected in the coverage database following deployment of the roaming solution is being achieved in practice.	23 Mar 26

Ref	Milestone	Description	Date
11	<b>Further Coverage Uplift: Preferred Way Forward Agreed</b>	Latest date by which DCC will have presented its consideration of whether any further measures are necessary in light of its assured coverage outcome from the introduction of roaming, and if they are then which option is optimal to achieve its objectives, to the SEC Panel or nominated Sub-Committee(s).	31 Mar 26
12	<b>Control Point (Further Coverage Uplift)</b>	Date by which DCC will confirm whether further consultation is required to update future milestones in this plan following its decision on implementing further coverage improvements.	31 Mar 26
13	<b>Prediction Methodology Refinement Process Implemented</b>	Latest date by which DCC will provide a summary of the changes that have been made to the prediction methodology based on actual coverage data to the SEC Panel or nominated Sub-Committee(s). This will be dependent on enough data having first been captured.	30 Apr 26
14	<b>Coverage Checker Improvements: Customer Requirements Gathered</b>	Latest date by which DCC will present its analysis and proposed improvements to the coverage database for agreement by the SEC Panel or nominated Sub Committee(s).	29 May 26