

Ofgem decision to approve SECMP293: Provision of a DCC Enhanced Availability service to DCC users during DCC Service disruption/adverse weather

Decision:	The Authority ¹ determines that this modification ² should be made ³
Target audience:	Data and Communications Company (DCC), Smart Energy Code (SEC) Panel, Parties to the SEC and other interested parties
Date of publication:	06 October 2026
Implementation date:	To be determined by the code administrator

Background

DCC services are periodically unavailable during planned maintenance, some unplanned maintenance, Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery testing and some incidents. During these service disruptions, DCC Users may be unable to communicate with Smart Metering Systems. This can restrict the ability of Distribution Network Owners (DNOs) to use smart meter information to understand the extent of supply interruptions and confirm restoration. For Suppliers this can prevent prepayment top-ups from being processed.

In December 2024 Storm Darragh⁴ overlapped with a DCC planned maintenance window. DNOs reported that the overlap disrupted their response activities. Since then, there have

¹ References to the “Authority”, “Ofgem”, “we” and “our” are used interchangeably in this document. The Authority refers to GEMA, the Gas and Electricity Markets Authority. The Office of Gas and Electricity Markets (Ofgem) supports GEMA in its day-to-day work. This decision is made by or on behalf of GEMA.

² ‘Change’ and ‘modification’ are used interchangeably in this document.

³ This document is notice of the reasons for this decision as required by section 49A of the Electricity Act 1989 and by section 38A of the Gas Act 1986.

⁴ [A look back at the 2024/25 storm season - Met Office](#)

been four overlaps between named storms and planned DCC system outages, with requests to defer two outages rejected by DCC. In June 2021 a previous modification was raised (SECMP166 Adverse Weather Planned Maintenance Process⁵). At the time, there had only been one red weather warning in the preceding eight years. It was therefore determined that the cost of implementing modification outweighed the likelihood of an adverse weather event overlapping with DCC planned maintenance. As a result, the modification was withdrawn.

The modification proposal

SECMP293⁶ was raised by Scottish Power Electricity North-West in June 2025. The final proposal established an Enhanced Availability (EA) service for the current Data Service Provider (DSP) which will handle a small subset of service requests.

The EA service will use an alternative deployment of selected DSP motorway components, hosted separately from the core DSP using a cloud-based solution. When the core DSP is unavailable in a covered service disruption, DCC will use configuration changes to redirect eligible message traffic through the EA service. This will allow a limited set of Service Reference Variants (SRVs), Device Alerts and related responses to continue to be processed. It will not provide the full range of normal DSP services.

The EA service is intended to operate during planned maintenance, supported unplanned maintenance, Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery testing that causes a customer-facing outage, and supported incidents. It will remain dependent on shared DCC infrastructure, including the Communications Service Providers. It will therefore provide additional resilience to a DSP outage but will not operate where a required shared component is also unavailable.

⁵ [MP166-Modification-Report-v0.5.pdf](#)

⁶ [Smart Energy Code Modification MP293](#)

The following SRVs and Device Alerts are included within the EA service:

- SRV 7.4, Read Supply Status, allowing a User to request the current supply status of a Device
- Alert AD1, Power Outage Event, notifying the relevant User of a loss of electricity supply
- Device Alert 0x8F35, Supply Outage Restored
- Device Alert 0x8F36, Supply Outage Restored where the outage lasted three minutes or more
- SRV 2.2, Prepayment Top-Up
- SRV 4.3, Read Instantaneous Prepay Values
- Alert N56, SMETS1 Service Provider Provision of Prepayment Top-Up UTRN

DCC Alerts N12, Failure to Deliver Command to Device, and N13, Failure to Receive Response from Device, will also be generated for messages processed through the EA service, where applicable. DCC clarified during consultation that N12 and N13 are standard responses rather than separate additions to the functional scope of the modification.

The network-related messages will support DNOs by maintaining access to selected supply-status and outage-restoration information during covered DSP outages. The prepayment functionality provided by SRV 2.2, SRV 4.3 and Alert N56 will apply only to supported SMETS1 prepayment Devices. The modification will not provide equivalent prepayment functionality for SMETS2 Devices.

The proposal applies to the current DSP only and will not transfer automatically to future DSP. DCC estimates implementation costs of around £1.3m and running costs of approximately £340,000 a year, subject to usage.

SEC Change Board⁷ recommendation

At the SEC Change Board meeting on 11 September 2026, the Change Board unanimously considered that SECMP293 would better facilitate the SEC Objectives⁸ and the Change Board therefore recommended its approval. Ten members considered that the proposal would better facilitate Objective (a), nine supported Objective (e), four supported Objective (c), and two supported Objective (b).

Our decision

We have considered the issues raised by the proposal and the Change Report⁹ dated 11 September 2026. We have considered and taken account of the votes of the SEC Change Board on the proposal which is attached to the Change Report. We have concluded that:

- implementation of the modification proposal will better facilitate the achievement of the SEC Objectives
- directing that the change is approved is consistent with the Authority's principal objective and statutory duties¹⁰

Reasons for our decision

We consider that MP293 will better facilitate SEC Objectives (a), (b), (c) and (e), and will have a neutral impact on the other applicable Objectives.

⁷ The SEC Panel and <https://smartenergycodecompany.co.uk/documents/sec/mp293-modification-report-v1-0/> Change Board are established and constituted pursuant to and in accordance with DCC Licence 22.26(a).

⁸ The Objectives in accordance with DCC Licence 22.10-22.17

⁹ [SECMP293 Final Change Report](#)

¹⁰ The Authority's statutory duties are wider than matters that the Panel must take into consideration and are detailed mainly in the Electricity Act 1989 as amended and the Gas Act 1986 as amended.

a) facilitate the efficient provision, installation, and operation, as well as interoperability, of Smart Metering Systems at Energy Consumers' premises within Great Britain

Five of the eight consultation respondents supported approval of the modification, and one opposed it. Those respondents that supported the proposal considered that preserving selected communications during DCC service disruptions would improve the operation and resilience of Smart Metering Systems. However, those opposed questioned whether the implementation and running costs were justified given the expected implementation date, the limited remaining life of the current DSP and the migration of meters to future DSP.

We recognise that the period over which the service is expected to operate is limited and that the scale of benefits depends on future outages and adverse weather and that future crossover events are theoretical. However, the Proposer has identified four overlaps between named storms and planned DCC outages since 2024. We note that DNOs experienced material operational effects specifically during the overlap with Storm Darragh in 2024.

The EA service is deliberately limited to selected functions and the current DSP. This reduces the scope and cost compared with the wider options considered during development. It will preserve access to information used by DNOs during restoration activity and support specified prepayment functions when they would otherwise be unavailable. We also note that if the transition away from the current DSP is delayed, the service can continue to provide benefit, although we have not relied on a delay as the central basis for approval.

The EA service is not complete disaster recovery. It remains dependent on shared components and will not mitigate every outage scenario. We have considered these limitations when making our decision. The proposal nevertheless provides an additional and defined layer of resilience where the necessary shared infrastructure remains available.

We consider MP293 to be a proportionate resilience measure against a potential operational risk. On balance, maintaining the selected functions during covered DSP outages will facilitate the efficient operation of Smart Metering Systems. We therefore consider that MP293 better facilitates Objective (a).

b) enable the Licensee to comply at all times with the General Objectives of the Licensee, and to efficiently discharge the other obligations imposed upon it by this Licence

The proposal provides a codified basis for DCC to maintain selected communications when the core DSP is unavailable in covered circumstances. In doing so, it supports DCC's efficient discharge of its obligations under Licence Conditions 16 and 17 to provide services pursuant to the SEC and meet the applicable requirements for Core Communication Services.

We consider this will support DCC in efficiently discharging its obligations and therefore better facilitates Objective (b).

c) facilitate Energy Consumers' management of their use of Energy through the provision to them of appropriate information by means of Smart Metering Systems

The solution includes messages supporting prepayment top-up and access to relevant prepayment information. DCC clarified during consultation that this benefit is limited to supported SMETS1 prepayment consumers. We have considered the consumer benefit on that basis.

Maintaining these functions reduces the risk that an affected prepayment consumer cannot apply credit remotely during a covered DSP outage. This benefit can arise during relevant

service disruptions whether or not the disruption coincides with adverse weather. We therefore consider that MP293 better facilitates Objective (c).

e) facilitate such innovation in the design and operation of Energy Networks as will best contribute to the delivery of a secure and sustainable Supply of Energy under the Principal Energy Legislation

Those who supported the modification by response to the consultation and at the change board both considered the EA service would improve network resilience by allowing DNOs to retain access to selected supply-status and outage information during adverse weather. One respondent argued that a solution expected to benefit a limited number of winters should not be regarded as sustainable.

We consider the proposal to be a targeted innovation in the operation of the existing smart metering communications infrastructure. It preserves selected digital information that can assist DNOs to assess supply interruptions and restoration during a compound event involving adverse weather and a DSP outage. This can reduce reliance on less efficient operational mitigations and support more effective restoration decisions.

This conclusion is consistent with Ofgem's wider approach to network resilience. In the ED3 Framework Decision¹¹, we stated that electricity networks must be resilient for consumers today and in the future, and capable of withstanding risks and threats such as climate change. It also recognises that climate change and more disruptive weather events are increasing, and that distribution networks require a suitable level of resilience to those threats.

¹¹ [ED3 Framework Decision](#)

More recent ED3 business-plan guidance also recognises that climate-resilience measures may include operational, digital and system-based interventions, and that proportionality may be established through a structured qualitative narrative rather than detailed monetisation in every case. SECMP293 is not an ED3 investment decision. However, this wider policy context supports treating climate-driven disruption as a network resilience risk and considering proportionate operational and digital mitigations.

We recognise the EA service is time limited because it applies only to the current DSP. However, a measure can contribute to secure and sustainable network operation during its useful life without being permanent. Given the historic occurrence of adverse-weather and DCC-outage overlaps, and the focused nature of the service, we consider MP293 better facilitates Objective (e).

We have also considered whether the costs of the proposal are proportionate to the expected benefits. DCC estimates implementation costs of approximately £1.3 million and annual running costs of approximately £340,000, subject to actual usage. While the precise timing and scale of future adverse-weather overlaps cannot be predicted with certainty, we consider the risk credible, the consequences material, and the proposed mitigation targeted. The service preserves a limited set of functions, applies only to the current DSP, and reflects the exclusion of wider and more expensive options. On balance, we consider the costs proportionate to the resilience and consumer benefits identified above.

Decision notice

In accordance with standard licence condition 23 of the Smart Meter Communication licence, the Authority hereby determines that modification proposal SECMP293: Provision of

an DCC Enhanced Availability service to DCC users during DCC Service disruption/adverse weather be made.

Shaun McRaith

Senior Policy Lead – Retail Market Operations

Signed on behalf of the Authority and authorised for that purpose