SUMMARY POLICY ISSUE PAPER – FOR EDAG DISCUSSION

Title of Paper	**Agent Appointments**		
Issue Ref	BPD i28	Date: 11 July 2016	
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Issued to DA		Discussion at DA	

Summary and recommendation

1. This paper addresses issues primarily related to the design of the solution and programme scope, namely:

    a. Should the Centralised Registration Service (CRS) include a repository of the agents appointed to each meter point?
    b. Should the programme include the development of a new solution to manage the appointment / de-appointment of agents to meter points?

2. Suppliers appoint agents to perform a variety of roles relating to the provision and management of metering assets[1] and for the retrieval and processing of meter readings[2]. For some functions, customers have the option of contracting directly with an agent, in which case the supplier is required to appoint the customer's contracted agent. The role of shipper in the gas industry is distinct from that of other agents but, for the purposes of this paper and unless otherwise stated, shippers are treated similarly to agents.

3. Excepting in cases where the customer decides to contract directly with an agent (which is most prevalent in the larger non-domestic sector), this issue does not have a direct impact on customers when they switch. However, post-switch errors by agents can lead to inaccurate or delayed billing.

4. We invite DA to authorise the following recommendations:

    a. The CRS should include a central repository of agent identities for a defined set of agents (shipper, MOP, MAP, DC, DA and the new role of Meter Communications Provider)
    b. In gas the role of MAM should be unbundled to allow the separate identification of MOP and MAP (i.e. to harmonise gas and electricity)

[1] Meter Asset Providers (MAPs), Meter Asset Managers (MAMs), Meter Operators (MOPs) and Meter Communications Providers
[2] Data Collectors (DCs), Data Aggregators (DCs)

c. The agent appointment process should continue to be managed by suppliers. They will have a choice on whether to use existing solutions or utilise notifications generated by the CRS: new workflow management facilities to support this activity should not be included in the scope of the programme

Analysis

5. In TOMv2 we proposed that CRS should be the master source of the agent IDs at each meter point. There was no mention of workflow management processes to support the appointment / de-appointment of agents: this question arose as we developed the business process models.

6. Suppliers appoint a wide range of service providers to perform tasks on their behalf. Agents are a sub-group of these service providers and provide services which are defined in industry Codes (e.g. UNC, SPAA, MRA). Our analysis considered which types of agent IDs might be held by the CRS. It concluded that agent IDs should be recorded where parties other than the appointing supplier have a valid interest in knowing who is appointed (e.g. so a network operator knows who to call out in the event of emergency work being required). This principle underpins our first recommendation.

7. In gas, the MAM agent generally performs roles which, in electricity, are identified separately, namely MOP and MAP (although in gas a MAP may exist separately from the MAM but is not recorded in central systems). In practice, the roles are similar across gas and electricity and separate agents could be identified for gas meter points thus harmonising the process across fuels.

8. Currently, suppliers issue individual appointment notices to request an agent to take responsibility for a specified meter point. The agent sends a response to accept or reject the appointment. De-appointment notices are also exchanged. These messages are exchanged using the Data Transfer Network (DTN) or the Information Exchange (iX) network. Following an electricity switch, the gaining / losing agents exchange information about the equipment installed at the meter point and its configuration: in gas this information is held by the UKLink system.

9. Although they are handled similarly to agents, shippers present a special case because of the scale of their potential liabilities (i.e. for the value of the gas and the associated transportation charges). Shipper validation matrices are used to register valid combinations of supplier and shipper. When a switching request is received, the shipper / supplier combination is validated, thus avoiding erroneous appointments. It is proposed that shipper / supplier validation matrices are retained but that supplier / agent validation matrices are not required for other agent types.

10. In developing the business process models, the Design Team has given careful consideration to the involvement of agents in the switching process. The process models that have been reviewed by the User Group and EDAG show the gaining

supplier submitting a registration request containing the identity of all the agents they have appointed. They also show notices being sent to gaining and losing suppliers, agents and network operators when a switch is executed. Used in conjunction with an appropriate contract these notices could be used as the transactions confirming an agent appointment / de-appointment[3]. They could also trigger the exchange of meter-related data between interested participants Some suppliers commented that this approach would enable the existing processes to be streamlined, reducing timescales and errors.

11. As an alternative to the process described in paragraph 10, suppliers could continue to use the existing appointment / de-appointment data flows, using the notices from CRS to confirm a switch at the time it is executed.

Summary of key points from stakeholders

Business Process Design User Group

12. The User Group supported the list of agent types to be recorded in the CRS repository, including the addition of a Meter Communications Provider (MCP)[4] (although noting that a more detailed definition is required) and the harmonisation of MOP and MAP roles across gas and electricity.

13. With regard to the agent appointment processes there was acceptance that development of a new workflow management solution was not required to meet the programme's objectives. Some suppliers argued that there would be merit in establishing a single harmonised approach to managing agent appointments and information flows between agents. When the design of the new CRS is agreed and the build is underway, suppliers will be free to decide how they wish to manage their agent appointment processes including whether to use the switching notices to trigger the contractual appointment.

PWC feedback

14. In their role as an external challenge to the Programme, PWC supported the proposals regarding harmonising agent roles and holding a repository of agent IDs within the CRS.

15. PWC queried whether a decision on agent appointment workflows should be deferred until a choice has been made regarding solution architecture options as some options might provide workflow features. However from the programme's perspective this is a scope issue and although the availability of workflow features might facilitate the implementation process, the introduction of agent appointment workflow management should be deferred, possibly to be picked up as a post go-live enhancement.

[3] This does not apply in the case of shippers.
[4] An MCP is required for all meters with digital communications, for example smart and advanced meters.

DA Decision Log

Date of DA Meeting	
Decisions (from Ofgem website)	
Notes	