

## DCG Community of Technical Experts

### Smart Metering: DCC Wide Area Network Services Information Request

- (1) The information Request dated 8 October required a response by 22 October 2010. Within this timeframe, detailed analysis of the network information associated with the request has not been possible. Our comments are therefore related to a few points within the information request in our area of specialism, that being operational utility communications, primarily using radio.
- (2) The Joint Radio Company Ltd (JRC) is a radio spectrum management company mandated to manage radio spectrum used by the UK gas and electricity industry to communicate with front line maintenance and repair staff (Private Mobile Radio - PMR - systems); and the spectrum used by telemetry and telecontrol systems for the monitoring and control of transmission and distribution (SCADA) networks.
- (3) The comments below are derived from JRC's perspective as a provider of critical communications facilities to support network operations. JRC's individual member companies will provide their own independent comments.

## A. Scope and boundary of the WAN service

- (4) Section 3.1 (b) states that the WAN module will be installed by the energy supplier. For the roll-out of smart meters prior to the establishment of the DCC network, the installer will not be able to determine whether or not a given location for the WAN module is suitable or not, and presumably will therefore optimise the location for communication with the Home Area Network (HAN). When the DCC WAN is introduced, there may therefore be a need to adjust the location of the WAN comms module to adjust its location to enable WAN connectivity. It is not immediately obvious who will make this second visit, and who will bear the cost, especially if relocation of equipment is required?
- (5) Once the DCC WAN is operational, the energy supplier will still be responsible for the installation of the comms module. This creates a conflict of interest since the best location in the home of the comms module for the HAN is unlikely to be optimal for the WAN (if HAN and WAN are integrated into the same physical unit).

## B. Timescale and deployment

- (6) Section 8.4 postulates the award of the contract for the DCC WAN in April 2013, with WAN services provided by November 2013. Imposition of a tight rigid timetable favours a compromised technical solution based on existing networks, as opposed to a solution more specifically designed to meet the

requirements for smart meters with the capability to service smart grid requirements in due course.

- (7) For the mobile phone operators who already have mature networks, this time frame should be achievable. However, where a new network has to be designed and constructed, unless the proposer is willing to bear a substantial risk by building out the network ahead of getting contract, it is impossible.
- (8) If any proposed radio solution requiring spectrum and new radio sites to be established, apart from the lead time to acquire new radio sites (including planning consent to deploy additional antennas on existing sites), the declared preferred government route to acquire spectrum is through market mechanism, principally auctions. Any radio solution requiring spectrum which has to be obtained through auction therefore has significant risk beyond the scope of the network provider.

## **C. GENERAL**

- (9) A certain proportion of the population are hostile to radio technology on the basis of perceived safety risk. If the WAN relies on a radio bearer, will consumers be obliged to accept the service, or will consumers have an option to 'opt-out' if they do not wish to have a radio device installed in their home?

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22 October 2010