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Grid Code Modification Proposal Form

GC0175: Removing references to “Fax” or “Facsimile” within the Grid Code

Overview: This modification seeks to remove references to “fax” and “facsimile” from the Grid Code in order to reflect both current and future methods of communication between relevant Users and the National Energy System Operator (NESO) due to the national decommissioning of the Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN).

Modification process & timetable



Status summary: The Proposer has raised a modification and is seeking a decision from the Panel on the governance route to be taken.

This modification is expected to have a: Medium impact

Generators, Demand Users, Interconnectors, Distribution Network Operators, NESO

Modification drivers: Efficiency, EU Compliance, GB Compliance, New Technologies, System Operability, System Security, Transparency

Proposer's recommendation of governance route

Standard modification to proceed to Code Administrator Consultation

Who can I talk to about the change?

Proposer:
David Halford

Code Administrator Contact:
Lizzie Timmins

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	David.halford@nationalgrideso.com	Elizabeth.timmins@nationalgrideso.com
	07812 774065	07840708429

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What is the issue?

NESO currently use fax machines within the Electricity National Control Centre to send and receive data from Primary and some Secondary Balancing Mechanism Units (BMUs). A number of these data submissions from BMUs support critical functions such as System Restoration, by transmitting data such as Unit Availability. Fax machines are ageing technology, with hardware support contracts ending (or have ended) and replacement parts difficult to source. The management of paper output is also time-consuming for reporting and audit purposes.

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Why change?

The Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) that fax machines use, is due to be switched off by the start of 2027¹ which will result in all non-voice services that use this network ceasing. In readiness for the PSTN switch off, an alternative method of communication between relevant Users and NESO will need to be established to ensure current interactions can continue. It should also maintain the stability and audit trail that the current fax solution provides.

What is the proposer’s solution?

While there is an option to upgrade existing faxes to utilise digital line technology (via a digital adapter), this still does not address the current issues with the use of faxes in terms of hardware support and paper management. With this in mind, we believe a more future proof digital solution is required that provides the same functionality of the current fax solution but improves efficiencies and costs for Users.

The proposed solution, (to be defined under an “umbrella term” as the “Designated Information Exchange System”, will be an Azure based platform which will allow both Users and NESO to provide web form submissions and acknowledgements which are currently transmitted via fax through the use of paper forms.

The platform will be accessed through the Users Internet Service Provider (ISP) via a secure, encrypted login which will be maintained and administered by NESO.

The platform will require no software licence obligations from the User and will be designed to be extendable to ensure any future requirements can be incorporated, and scalable to accommodate both existing and future Users.

It is proposed that a phased approach will be introduced following the implementation of the proposal with Users being moved across to the new platform over a period of time that we will be agreed. The rationale for a phased approach is to ensure Users are fully comfortable with the use of the new platform prior to the phase out of fax machines.

The proposed new definition of the “Designated Information Exchange System”, will also include “facsimile” in order for the solution to accommodate the phased roll out of the platform from the implementation of the proposed changes where both the use of faxes and the platform will be in use.

¹ <https://business.bt.com/why-choose-bt/insights/digital-transformation/uk-pstn-switch-off/>

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This proposal will also take the opportunity to update references to fax or facsimile within the Grid Code that relate to “non-Control Room” activities. For example, Connections Compliance to reflect the current methods of communication that now takes place for these interactions, such as email.

Draft legal text

See Annex 1 which details the proposed changes across the Grid Code.

See Annex 2 which is an overview of proposed Legal Text changes

What is the impact of this change?

Proposer's assessment against Grid Code Objectives	
Relevant Objective	Identified impact
(a) To permit the development, maintenance and operation of an efficient, coordinated and economical system for the transmission of electricity	Positive The proposal should create efficiencies in relation to communication between Users and NESO and replace outdated technologies.
(b) Facilitating effective competition in the generation and supply of electricity (and without limiting the foregoing, to facilitate the national electricity transmission system being made available to persons authorised to supply or generate electricity on terms which neither prevent nor restrict competition in the supply or generation of electricity);	Neutral
(c) Subject to sub-paragraphs (i) and (ii), to promote the security and efficiency of the electricity generation, transmission and distribution systems	Positive The proposal should create efficiencies in relation to communication between

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in the national electricity transmission system operator area taken as a whole;	Users and NESO and replace outdated technologies. This in turn should have a positive impact from a system security point of view as increased response times should be realised.
(d) To efficiently discharge the obligations imposed upon the licensee by this license and to comply with the Electricity Regulation and any relevant legally binding decisions of the European Commission and/or the Agency; and	Neutral
(e) To promote efficiency in the implementation and administration of the Grid Code arrangements	Neutral

Proposer's assessment of the impact of the modification on the stakeholder / consumer benefit categories

Stakeholder / consumer benefit categories	Identified impact
Improved safety and reliability of the system	Positive There could be a slight improvement from a system safety point of view as key communications relating to processes such as system restoration should be more efficient in relation to data transfer and response times.
Lower bills than would otherwise be the case	Neutral
Benefits for society as a whole	Neutral
Reduced environmental damage	Positive

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	This proposal will eliminate paper and plastic wastage in respect of the printing of faxes and the need for fax ink toner cartridges.
Improved quality of service	Positive The new process will introduce efficiencies for both Users and NESO which should result in an improved quality of service from a communications point of view.

When will this change take place?

Implementation date

10 working days after authority decision date.

Date decision required by

As soon as possible

Implementation approach

It is proposed that a phased approach will be introduced following the implementation of the proposal with Users being moved across to the new platform over a period of time that we will be agreed. The rationale for a phased approach is to ensure Users are fully comfortable with the use of the new platform prior to the phase out of fax machines.

Proposer's justification for governance route

Governance route: Standard modification to proceed to Code Administrator Consultation.

We believe these proposed changes will have a positive impact for Users with the removal of outdated technology.

Updates have also been shared at the Grid Code Development Forum (GCDF) as the project has progressed with feedback incorporated into the proposed solution.

We believe that modification should follow the Standard route as we are not seeking to add or remove any of the current actions that take place between NESO and Users but purely amend the method that these actions are communicated.

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The proposed changes will also result in Users being able to continue with the use of fax after implementation while the phased roll out of the new platform takes place.

Interactions

CUSC BSC STC SQSS
 European Network Codes EBR Article 18 T&Cs2 Other modifications Other

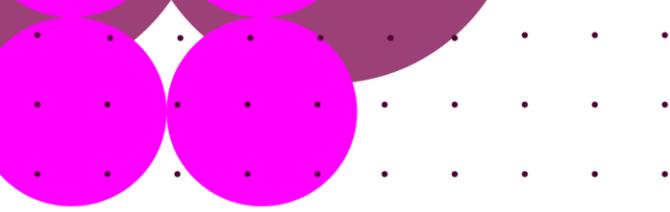
Changes will also be required to the CUSC and STC Procedures to reflect the changes that are being proposed to the Grid Code in respect of the removal of references to Fax and Facsimile.

While we believe that EBR interactions do exist, we believe these to be minimal.

Acronyms, key terms and reference material

Acronym / key term	Meaning
BMU	Balancing Mechanism Unit
BSC	Balancing and Settlement Code
CUSC	Connection and Use of System Code
EBR	Electricity Balancing Regulation
GC	Grid Code
GCDF	Grid Code Development Forum
ISP	Internet Service Provider
PSTN	Public Switched Telephone Network
STC	System Operator Transmission Owner Code
SQSS	Security and Quality of Supply Standards
T&Cs	Terms and Conditions

² If your modification amends any of the clauses mapped out in Annex GR.B of the Governance Rules section of the Grid Code, it will change the Terms & Conditions relating to Balancing Service Providers. The modification will need to follow the process set out in Article 18 of the Electricity Balancing Regulation (EBR – EU Regulation 2017/2195). All Grid Code modifications must be consulted on for 1 month in the Code Administrator Consultation phase, unless they are Urgent modifications which have no impact on EBR Article 18 T&Cs. N.B. This will also satisfy the requirements of the NCER process.



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