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I0278 – ESTABLISHING THE SAFE ISOLATION PROVIDER (SIP) AS A STANDALONE REC METERING PARTY

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FOR DISCUSSION

1 PURPOSE

The purpose of this paper is to provide industry Parties with a background on REC Issue I0278 – Establishing the Safe Isolation Provider (SIP) as a Standalone REC Metering Party. This includes why this Issue was raised and activities that have been conducted to better understand Parties' challenges with the current SIP framework, start to assess what should be within the scope of this new standalone Party considering impacts it could have on others, before looking at feedback shared by Parties as a basis for discussion to help frame the solution development of this Issue and help define the scope of SIPs as a new standalone Party in the REC.

2 I0278 – SUMMARY

2.1 ISSUE OVERVIEW

REC Issue I0278 – Establishing the Safe Isolation Provider (SIP) as a Standalone REC Metering Party has been raised to formally recognise the SIP as a standalone REC Metering Party to align with Ofgem's Strategic Direction Statement, enabling easier access to certified SIPs, meeting market demand and ensuring safety standards. This follows the realisation that since the introduction of the SIP role into the REC in June 2023, the structure as it currently stands, has proven insufficient to meet market demand, to ensure consistent safety standards, and has been a deterrent for organisations to apply to become one given the current dual governance with the Distribution Connection and Use of System Agreement (DCUSA) and the added layer onto existing Metering Equipment Manager's (MEM) Accreditations.

As a result of these barriers, a substantial amount of isolation work is occurring outside of established governance frameworks which increases the risk of unsafe installations and potential harm to Consumers, MEMs and unaccredited practitioners' safety, on top of other issues such as an unequal system with supplier-led installations vs independent installers, a low competitive market, and decarbonisation delays.

Gaining a comprehensive understanding of current barriers and possible impacts of a new framework is crucial to determine the new scope in which SIPs should operate in.

2.2 ACTIVITIES TO DATE

To build a better picture of the situation, the Code Manager sought initial views on this Issue from various industry stakeholders from January until March 2026, such as the Energy Network Association (ENA), the Independent Network Association (INA), Future Energy Networks (FEN), the Association of Meter Operators (AMO), the UKRPA, and Electrical Safety First. These discussions confirmed the need to gather further input from the industry before it is possible to establish what a clear governance framework for SIPs can look like.

The Code Manager therefore conducted an information request that was open for six weeks between February and March 2026 to Distribution Network Operators (DNOs), MEMs – including Meter Operator Agents (MOAs), Electricity Metering Operatives (EMOs) and SIPs – and to Revenue Protection Agents (RPAs), to better assess industry views on what a streamlined framework for SIPs could look like, reflect on potential impacts and anticipate risks that may arise with the creation of a standalone Party that is already existent in a different setting within the REC, and ensure high standards for safety are met across the industry.

The Code Manager also had conversations with the ENA who has worked on a project to assess how to support suppliers on fuse upgrades. The work conducted has included investigating the creation of a training module for MEMs and SIPs with the National Skills Academy for Power (NSAP). The ENA is currently developing an Engineering Recommendations (EREC) to be used as a template for the training material. Their project is likely to come to a close by October 2026.

2.3 MAIN THEMES SHARED BY PARTIES

In total, ten responses to the information request were received. Respondents were supportive of this change whilst raising concerns around safety and integrity of supply. The consensus was that the current framework presents challenges stated in the Change Report, is too prohibitive, and poses confusion for some. However the new framework should be clearly defined to ensure a high level of safety management and data integrity, which should be possible though strong governance, training, audit, reporting frameworks once a clear scope of permitted activities for this Party have been determined. The focus should remain on safe isolation works, and there is an opportunity to provide a clearer route for existing Parties conducting SIP works, but also competent contractors. Some considerations were given on which MEM accession requirements should be kept and which were missing, with some respondents believing that the focus should be on electrical safety competence, and the accession requirements should be proportionate to the activity conducted, rather than importing the full MEM accession requirements which are currently seen as a barrier to entry for some. DNOs believed that standalone SIPs should notify them in the same way they are currently being notified, i.e. by dataflow through the Data Transfer Network (DTN), and MEMs confirmed this preference by sharing safety issues, weak communication and audit trails, damaged equipment, should standalone SIPs not have access to the DTN to record and report issues. Whilst DNOs shared their current timescales for resolution when an issue prevents the installation of an isolator, which should be carefully thought of with the introduction of a new limit of 28 days for electrical remedial works in social housing which will come into legislation in November 2026 as part of the Electrical Standard Regulation (ESR). MEMs also raised concerned about having different types of SIPs (physical SIPs, flow-only SIPs and combined SIPs) given several challenges

including the complexity of communicating and reporting correct information to the right Party. All respondents agreed that pliers or equipment for standalone SIPs should be carefully controlled, traceable and auditable to ensure a safe and secure sealing of equipment and protect against meter tampering and interference. They also believed that standalone SIPs should undergo relevant training to be able to identify energy theft/meter interference through a defined escalation route – which could be to report it directly to Crimestoppers. However, they should not be expected to investigate it as this work should be left to the RPA. DNOs mentioned they would be supportive in principle of standalone SIPs operating on DNO's networks without additional authorisation if SIPs were to go through a robust training and assessment model which would need to be created and agreed upon. All other respondents agreed that an accredited training programme should be developed to ensure a consistent and high standard for standalone SIPs, with some mentioning they could be designed similarly to programmes provided by the Energy & Utility Skills Register (EUSR).

2.4 SUMMARY

Engagement with trade associations and stakeholders through the information request showed that Parties are supportive of this change and are determined to ensure that high safety standards through a robust training, vigorous qualifications and a strong audit process are implemented within this new framework.

3 AIM OF THIS WORKING GROUP

The engagement with trade associations and the information request helped identify some key attributes that need to be taken into consideration when establishing the framework for standalone SIPs. Further input from the industry is needed to develop these requirements and offer a strong governance framework.

The Code Manager therefore proposes the following approach with this working group session for developing a solution for I0278:

- Agree on where the responsibility of the standalone SIPs starts and ends;
- Agree on which activities standalone SIPs should be permitted to work on:
  - De-energise
  - Re-energise
  - Fuse replacement
  - Upgrade tails between cut-out and meter
  - Check tightness of cut-out terminals
  - Shared services with other Parties
  - Meter access
- Discuss the above points considering safety, training and qualification requirements.

Further working group sessions will be hosted to focus on specific aspects of SIP works to build the end-to-end process.