

6 INDUSTRY COMMENT

SMALL CHANGES, BIG DIFFERENCE

Simon Bennett reports on the Strategic Metering Review's Quick Start Projects.

If you ask someone in the water industry how to "improve metering", there's a good chance that your question will be met with more questions. "Do you mean how we install them? Repair them? Read them? Who owns them? What technology we use? What happens to the data...?"

It is, of course, all these things – and many more besides.

The need for clarification demonstrates how "all roads lead to the meter" – whether it's helping reduce demand, identify and reduce leakage or producing accurate and timely bills for customers.

Recognising this, MOSL was asked by trading parties to lead a Strategic Metering Review in the non-household (NHH) market and take a holistic approach to the challenge. The objective of the review is to develop a programme of work to increase the amount of accurate, timely meter reading data and number of meter readings in the market.

In May 2021, the review identified two strategic themes: enhanced metering technology – the first phase of which was published in April 2022 – and meter-related roles and responsibilities.

Quick start projects

But the review is not just about big, strategic pieces of work. It is also about identifying and delivering a series of smaller changes to make a big difference.

The change could be anything that helps trading parties find, install, read or transfer data from a water meter. It could be to address an issue with a process, a solution



to a 'pain point' or friction, or to help trading parties adopt a consistent approach.

The changes don't have to be complicated. Often, the simpler the solution, the better: for example, amending the Central Market Operating System (CMOS) validation rules or removing the case sensitivity for meter details, or changing the definition of a visual meter reading in the codes to include digital images.

As well as improving processes,

the Quick Start Projects (QSPs) help drive the right behaviours by focusing on the benefits of timely and accurate meter reads for customers and market settlement. They

also shine a light on areas and code changes that may have been missed and existing code obligations that may have been forgotten – or not known about at all.

More than a dozen QSPs have been started to date, each of which is sponsored by a member of the Metering Committee, which provides oversight of the projects and a forum for trading parties to debate and challenge ideas. MOSL selected the first QSPs in 2021/22. This year's projects have been chosen by Committee members and our aim is that next year's work programme will be determined by the market. We're delighted to see how the ownership of this work has transitioned from MOSL to the market.

The Committee is also overseeing several of the Market Improve-



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ment Fund (MIF) projects, which will provide metering insights, drive improvement and stimulate future quick start projects. Current initiatives include 'Project Looking Glass', which is researching long unread meters, and 'Project AMIDST', which is trialling the process of transferring smart meter data into CMOS.

Collaboration remains key

Conscious that projects requiring a code change can take months before coming into effect, we encourage trading parties to work together collaboratively on metering issues wherever possible and use the guidance we have produced.

We're delighted to see some great collaboration by trading parties to reduce long unread meters, agree the definitions for hard to read meters and develop solutions for reading and using wholesaler reads more effectively. It would be great to see all trading party 'pairs' working together to at least clear all the 'legacy long unread meters' – those that haven't been read since the market opened – by the end of 2023.

Is the hard work paying off so far? Based on metrics such as the number of long unread meters and the number of meter reads now entering the market, absolutely. But there is still plenty of work to do.

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QUICK START PROJECTS

- Reduction in the number of long unread meters.
- Changes to meter read validations to increase the number of reads entering CMOS first time.
- Changes to CMOS to allow customers' meter readings to be used.
- Reducing meter readings rejected for data validation reasons (e.g. case sensitivity).
- Standardised definition of 'hard to read' meters, enabling a consistent approach and a market-wide view of the issue.
- Standardised reasons for estimated reading when transferring to a new retailer ('T-reads').
- Standard definitions of 'skip codes' and providing best practice guidance (working with RWG).