HM IT Release Management Process (Branch Counters)

Version – V0.4 Draft

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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this process is to establish a standard way of working for any functional additions or updates to Horizon Next Generation Application (HNGA) at Post Office Ltd moving away from an individual project driven specific deployment.

The aim is to establish a regular heartbeat of a quarterly counter releases moving away from an individual project driven specific deployment.

Ownership of the Release process has moved from suppliers back to Post Office, through collaborative working with project and service providers to review and manage Release requirements and scheduling.

The process ensures that all testing, communication, and deployment mechanisms are in place, and in line with those tested prior to deployment of new or modified functionality.

By collating changes into a single Release, controlled through the central schedule, the risk to branch operations will be reduced by decreasing the number of unique deployments.

1.2 Scope

This document provides an overview of the Release Management process, which has been designed in accordance with best practice, ITIL V3 (u. 2011).

The scope of this process covers only the Release Management process for the Horizon (HGNA) Branch Counter Releases. Back office, infrastructure and client applications will utilise the release management processes in place with the application Service Provider and are excluded from the scope.

1.3 Definitions

Release Management defines a standardised process of managing, planning, scheduling, and controlling the rollout of IT Service new products, updates and releases to the production environment. It controls the lifecycle of releases with minimum disruption to Post Office, it's customers and end users. The focus of Release Management is the protection of the live environment.

As defined in ITIL, a Release (also known as a Release package) is a set of authorised changes to an IT service or system. This may include hardware, software, processes, documentation or any other components that are necessary to successfully implement an approved change within the IT Services environment.

1.4 Principles and Basic Concepts of Release Management

Release Policy – Policies attaining to the Release and Deployment in place to achieve a balance between service stability, cost and agility

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<u>Release Identification</u> – All releases identified uniquely with an identification number as defined in <u>Section 5.2 – Release Type</u>

<u>R</u><u>elease Component</u>/<u>Unit</u> – A Release Component (also identified as a Release Unit) consists of the functional changes to an IT system which are usually released together

<u>Release Package </u>– It describes the one or more Release Components which are being built, tested and deployed together as one release

<u>Release Deployment</u> – Deployments can be made with all components released in one deployment or a phased release. The deployment can be manual or automated.

1.5   Benefits and Value of Release Management

Other important objectives of Release Management are as follows:

- Ensures faster delivery of changed services at an optimum cost in a consistent process
- Reduces risk by ensuring that only authorised releases are deployed removing the likelihood of illegal copies of software and introduction of viruses or malicious software
- Ensures that the new or changed services can meet the agreed requirements
- Improved use of resources through combined efforts when testing new Releases
- Minimisation of regression testing requirements by offering greater coverage than is possible with small Changes that occur too frequently or too close together
- Ensures proper knowledge transfer to Users, Operations & Support Staff
- Error reduction through the controlled Release to the live environment
- A greater success rate in the Release of hardware and software, therefore an improved quality of service delivered to Post Office
- A complete audit trail of functional Releases to the live environment is maintained

1.6   Triggers

Release Management works closely with Demand and Change Management as a control for deploying new or modified functionality into the production environment. The introduction of Release components originates from a fully approved demand request.

- **Post Office Demand Management**
  - o Ensure each Demand is aligned to Post Office future strategic outcome (excludes Ops Change)
  - o Ensure each Demand ID has an RTQ (where applicable)
  - o Each Demand ID has a respective Operational Change, Prove Plan, Business Case or Project Change Request
  - o Notify key stakeholders to ensure robust delivery planning and execution (POL Test Team, Service Teams, Release Team and Suppliers)

- **Reference Data**
  - o Requests for changes to Reference Data will be routed through a condensed process as less complex and repeatable
  - o Requests will be submitted to the Reference Data Change Advisory Board (CAB) for approval

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- **Defect / Incident PEAK –**
  - A critical fix to a live issue resulting from a failure within the production environment
  - Present in the LIVE system
  - Is, or appears to be, inconsistent with the agreed design or service specification
  - Is a fault that may need fixing

The Release Management process will work with the existing Business Readiness Assurance (BRA) gating process to ensure completeness of awareness and approvals. Additional checks have been integrated into the BRA Gating template for the Release Management process.

1.7 Release Process Inputs

1.7.1 Ideation
- Ideas raised, analysed
- Approved

1.7.2 Product Management
<<Talk to Chris L>>

1.7.3 Service Design and Transition
<<Sangita/Stuart>>

1.8 Process Outputs
Release Management co-ordinates or provides the following outputs:

- Release policy and planning
- Forward Release schedule calendar
- Release acceptance
- Details of Release contents
- Release design, build and configuration
- Extensive testing to predefined and acceptance criteria
- Roll-out planning
- Sign-off of Release for implementation
- Communication through the Release life cycle
- Closure acceptance criteria

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1.9   Governance

The entry point for Release assignment will only be accepted through the Post Office Service Design and Transition process. All requests will be considered approved and prioritised in readiness for the Release assignment.

Throughout the Release lifecycle, stakeholders will be informed of progress through the weekly Release Forum, chaired by Post Office Horizon Release Manager.

Release plans for HNGA will be audited periodically to ensure compliance to the Post Office Release Policy.

Requested changes to HNGA are expected to be delivered in line with the Post Office Release Policy and Process. Individuals who violate the change management policy may be subject to disciplinary action.

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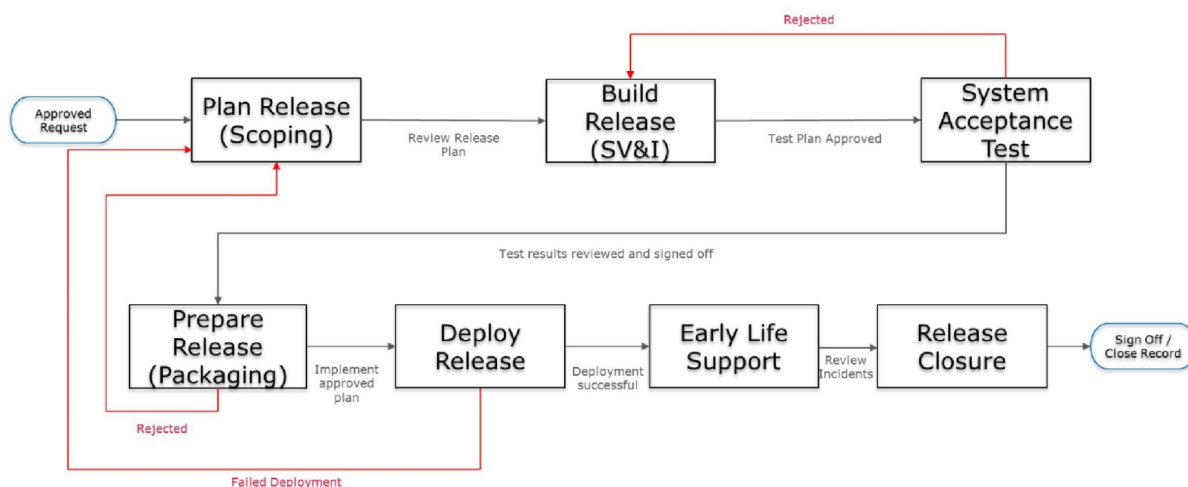## 2 Release Management Overview

Figure 1 Release Management Overview

High level summary of Release Management stages

1. **Plan Release (Scoping)** – Approved requests or defect received via the Post Office Service Design & Transition process following evaluation and prioritisation. All other routes and requests will be considered unauthorised.

2. **Build Release (SV&I)** – Issue all necessary work orders and purchase requests for the development or customisation of the Release components.

3. **System Acceptance Testing** – Verification of the release through Post Office Horizon Test Team. A Release cannot proceed until a Test Exit report has been signed off.

4. **Prepare Release (Packaging)** – In line with the agreed HNGA Release and Compliance Baselines Scheduling ensuring a Release is prepared for the deployment.

5. **Deploy Release** – Deployment of the Release into the live production environment via a Change Record, approved via the Post Office Change Advisory Board (CAB).

6. **Early Life Support** – To resolve any operational issues quickly during an initial period following the Release deployment.

7. **Release Closure** - Formal closure of the Release verifying all activity logs and Configuration Management System (CMS) are up to date.

3 Release Process Summary

The Release Management process will integrate with the existing Post Office Change Excellence Framework following the steps defined by the BRA process. Projects will need the correct Gating approval prior to progressing through the Release lifecycle.

Link to Business Readiness Assurance - Engaging the Business (sharepoint.com)
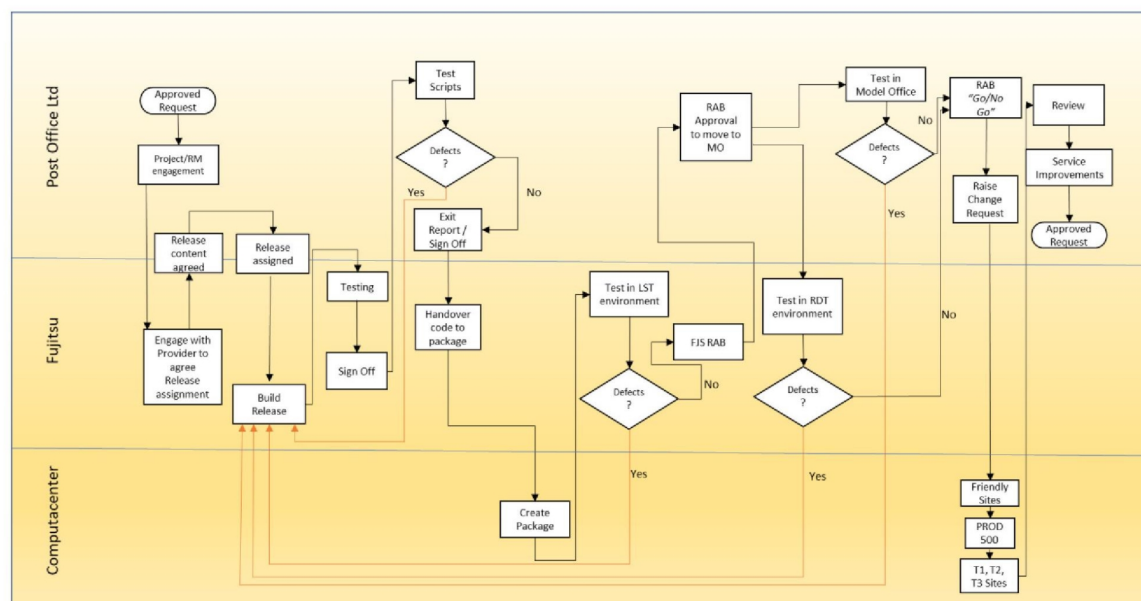
Figure 2 Post Office Release Management Process

3.1 Scoping

On approval by Post Office Service Design and Transition the Post Office Horizon Release Manager engagement with the Project Manager will be initiate to gather data to co-ordinate the planning of the release content.

A deadline is set within the Release calendar for the content gathering of an individual Release, after which additional items cannot be accepted to the committed work order. If project is delayed or the original date unobtainable a future Release will be provided.

Once the timescales are understood agreement is sought from Fujitsu and the assignment confirmed to the Project Manager. This will ensure sufficient capacity, resource and time to complete the work.

Regular meetings will be scheduled to maintain awareness of the project progress and impacts to proposed schedule.

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3.2 Build Release

Fujitsu are responsible for the development of each Horizon component within the release. (Refer to Appendix B for Release responsibilites) An existing process has been agreed as defined in "*Fujitsu Services RMG BU Release Policy*" (see Section 11 - References).

Monitoring of progress is undertaken through weekly meetings and reports with Fujitsu.

Delays to the development may impact the Release assignment resulting moving the component to a future Release.

3.3 Solution Validation and Integration (SV&I)

Fujitsu will own the Unit and System Testing types, but the remaining test phases (e.g. System Acceptance, Regression, UAT, Performance, Security and OAT) will be Post Office owned, as part of the Software Development Lifecycle

Any development or change across the Post Office IT Landscape will need to be tested before moving the code into the production environment.

3.4 Systems Acceptance Testing

All software changes to be implemented into Live must have undergone adequate verification and validation subject to POL testing standards before release.

Any exception to the above must be underwritten by the Change Director and agreed with the Head of Testing.

As a minimum, it is expected that all changes where testing is required have the following Minimum Test Standards (MTS):

- A signed-off Test Plan
- Test cases with expected results
- Traceability to requirements to assess coverage
- Test Results and defects recorded
- Testing risks and issues documented
- A signed-off Test Completion Report

Any remaining defects should be documented and mitigations in place with the signed approval to proceed.

Release Management will ensure the completion of Release testing prior to moving to the next phase.

Regression Testing of a Release is MANDATORY.

3.5 Packaging

Preparation of deployment package is undertaken by the End User Compute (EUC) provider, following the "*POL – EUC BCR – Counter Deployment Design -V2-30*" (see Section 11– References)

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For any new release of HNGA, the individual components that make up the release will first need to be setup. These include:

- HNGA Component Applications
- HNGA Install Task Sequence
- HNGA Pre-Cache Task Sequence
- Configuration Item
- Configuration Baseline
- Baseline collection and sub-collections
- HNGA Task Sequence deployment
- Maintenance Windows

The revised code is transferred to the EUC Provider who will prepare the release for deployment using the agreed tool set. Usually this comprises of a set of scripts and tools created by Provider that is used to generate the personalisation functionality required when deploying Branch Counter machines for Post Office.

All the individual files that make up the Release are packaged into a single MSI bundle before importing into SCCM for distribution to client machines. This is to ensure that individual components cannot be directly modified once they have been uploaded to the SCCM software library. If any changes or updates are needed, a new MSI package is created with a new, unique version number and GUID.

Further details are available in the reference documents *"Post Office Counter Deployment Design";* *"HNGA Release and Compliance Baselines"; "BCR Counter Deployment Design".* (See Section 11 – References).

A readiness assessment for the deployment will be undertaken to check for any issues or risks in the delivery of the Release that may affect the roll-out.

3.6 Live Support Test (LST)

Before a Release is deployed there are several additional layers testing that the must be successfully completed.

The objective of the LST testing is to prove that the new version of HNGA can be deployed to a set of physical devices of all hardware types that have been personalised and are in use, to confirm that the HNGA application functions correctly and then to prove that the same devices can be rolled back successfully to the previous HNGA version.

The Post Office LST environment is in a Fujitsu testing facility at Bracknell, being personalised to test all deployments, including new HNGA releases.

3.7 Refence Data testing (RDT)

Details to be inserted

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3.8   Model Office (MO)

Post Office has 2 simulated branch environments located in Finsbury Dials, London. The Model Office provides a live environment for final proving. Confirmation of successful deployment will be requested prior to commencement of the deployment phase.

3.9   Gating Approval

No Release can be deployed until all criteria as documented with the Release Checklist – Appendix A, have been met. It is the responsibility of the Release Authorisation Board to authorise the deployment to the live production environment.

3.10   Deployment

The deployment of the new Release into the production environment will be undertaken in line with agreed Release Plan following the procedures outlined in the POL-EUC BCR Counter Deployment Design. (Refer to Section - 11 References further information.)

A Change Record will be raised for the deployment and presented to the Post Office CAB for approval. Only approved changes will be actioned into the production environment.

A back out plan must be produced to document the actions to be taken to restore the service should the deployment of the Release fail, either partially or full.

Change Management will ensure backout plans are in place for each Change within the Release, but Release Management has a role to ensure that these operate together to create a Release back out plan.

Horizon deployments will follow the agreed Computacenter process – "*POL – BCR – HNGA Release and Compliance Baselines – v0-21*" (see Section 11 – References)

Failure within deployment will require the Release and Change record to be updated, a Post Implement Review to be conducted and the Release process to commence at the planning stage.

3.10.1   Early Life Support

Following deployment of a Release a period of Early Life Support (ELS) will be provided by transitioning team (i.e. Staff involved in the Release process activities) as agreed within the Release Plan.

The scope includes:

- Operational Support and knowledge transfer – working collaboratively with the operational staff to resolve incidents and issues. Therefore, knowledge transfer will take place.
- Measuring and Improving – service compared to requirements to ensure fit for business.
- Users – where applicable the new components or service are introduced to the users to gain initial feedback. Improvements will be initiated if required

3.11   Release Closure

Closure of the Release will be actioned on completion of the Gate to Close. Any outstanding concerns from a BRA representative will have to be resolved before approval to close can be given by the SPO.

The outcome of release requests should be communicated post implementation by email to Release Management and all relevant stakeholders within 24 hours.

A Release will be considered closed following approval from the Gating to Close. The Project Manager must submit the Request To Close Report to the Portfolio Review Board.

4 Typical Timescales

Based on the average timeframes from previous deployments the following table provides estimated timescales as a guide.

Phase	Typical Timeframe (Working Days)
Scoping	Release inclusion closes 1 month prior to SV&I commencement
Solution Validation and Integration	25
System Acceptance Testing	10
Packaging	10
Live Support Testing	10
Gating - Approvals	5
Reference Data Testing	2
Model Office	2
Deployment – Friendly Site	1
Deployment – Production 500	1
Deployment – Tranche 1	1
Deployment – Tranche 2	1
Deployment – Tranche 3	1

5 Plan Release

The main aim of Release Planning is to provide a set of guidelines regarding what should be included in a Release and how it will be deployed into production. Establishing a standard planning process ensures better communication between Service Transition, Demand, Change and Configuration Management, and all stakeholders impacted by the various changes included within a Release Package.

The plan shall include:

- Summary of Release including
- release owner type of release,
- reason for release,
- changes included in the release
- Risk analysis of Release
- Identification of stakeholders
- Communication plan for customers, stakeholders, internal and external service teams
- Definition of the chain of approval, including approval of Change Management
- Definition of the strategy for deployment
- Determine a time schedule
- Criteria for Release measurement of success and closure

5.1   Release Package

The type and the authorisation level for a release request is established based on an assessment of the following factors:

- The amount and complexity of Change included in each Release Component
- The number of resources and time required to build, test, distribute and deploy the Release Package
- Ease of implementation, including the complexity of interfaces between the proposed Component and the production environment
- The capacity availability to build, test and deploy to the production environment
- Whether the change had been made previously or is a new product/Customer

5.2   Release Type

Type	Definition	Identification
HNGA Quarterly	Contains large areas of new functionality (project driven), of which some may be intervening fixes to Problems.	xy.zz e.g. 72.10, 72.20.... x = Horizon Counter Quarterly Release 7y. = Year (e.g. 202**2**, 202**3**...)

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	Outstanding defects (PEAKS) will be added based on priority and capacity within the Release.	.zz = Quarter (xy.01 first, xy.02 second..)
Data Centre Release	Data Centre services and systems may require updates to be compatible with the Branch Counter Release.	2.xx First digit "2" denotes Data Centre
PED Device	Pin Pad devices can require updates for updates and/or security. These will involve the 3rd Party Provider – Ingenico	9x.xx First digit is "9"
Maintenance Release	Non-counter Confirmed Live Defects will be automatically targeted at a numbered Maintenance Release (existing or new) so a dated route to live is proposed as quickly as possible.	TBC
Security Patching Release	Undertaken monthly to ensure branch devices are protected from latest vulnerabilities. Testing, packaging and deployment is undertaken by the EUC provider.	Month.Year
Reference Data	Contains only amendments or additional Reference Data.	

5.3   Release Sizing

To determine the packaging requirements (capacity, processing etc.) the risk and impact considered.

		Risk		
		High	Medium	Low
Impact	High	Large	Large	Medium
	Medium	Large	Medium	Medium
	Low	Medium	Low	Low

Release Risk

The Risk to the business is considers the complexity, type of change, technology and completeness of testing. There are three risk categories.

High
Remediation plan unavailable, not fully tested or fix forward only
Release validation dependant on user testing
Release to business critical services & CI's or of high IT security relevance

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Deemed to be very complex
Release involves input from multiple support areas and/or partners
Release not tested pre-deployment
First time of release type in live production environment, no previous experience
Medium
Remediation plan available
Release can be validated immediately post implementation or may be dependent on user testing
Release to business critical services & CI's or of medium IT security relevance
Deemed to be of moderate complexity
Release may involve input from multiple support areas and/or partners
Pre-deployment testing possible
Successful implementation of pilot & subsequent phased rollout
Previous experience of release type, expertise moderate/high
Low
Remediation plan known and tested
Release can be validated immediately post implementation
Release to a non-critical component
Non-complex release
Release does not require input or support from other areas/partners
Release tested successfully in an environment that fully replicates the live environment
Significant history of successful implementation

Release Impact

Impact is a measure of how the Release component will affect IT Service, business processes, users and other partners. Releases that impact or require support from more than one partner must be categorised *High*.

There are three impact categories:

High
Causes major impact to service, which may be during working hours
Affects Critical or Essential services, applications or infrastructure
Affects entire business or all branches
Another partner is impacted or required to support the release
Comms required
Medium
Causes impact to service outside working hours
Affects Critical or Essential services, applications or infrastructure
Affects whole departments or parts of the business
May impact another partner or require support
Comms may be required
Low
Causes minimal or no impact to service
No impact or support required from another partner
No comms required or defined comms plan in place

5.4 Release Approval

The standard BRA template will be used to capture the Release Management requirements and associated approvals.

5.5 Unauthorised Release

All unauthorised releases are subject to a formal Post Implementation Review (PIR) having not met the requirements of the Release Management Process. They have been implemented:

- Without being fully approved and scheduled via the Release Management Process
- Without following the agreed and approved process, plans, procedures or actions
- Before the agreed start time
- After the agreed end time

6 Communications

Communications in relation to the Release will be provided as agreed within the Release Plan.

Where communications are required to a branch to inform of downtime or impact on operational duties, the Release should be approved a week in advance to allow for the 5 day lead time for branch notifications, as required by the POL Comms team.

7 Meeting Structure

7.1 Post Office Release Forum

The forum will be responsible for:

- managing future release schedule, including awareness of any conflicts
- review and maintain risks/issues for all Releases

Representation for on-going or future projects to be assign to a Release is required to assist with on-going issues and future scheduling. The forum aims to resolve scheduling conflicts where content capacity of a Release is breached.

7.2 Service Provider Release Forum

Outputs from the Post Office Release Forum will be taken forward to the Service Provider meeting to agree content, scheduling and manage risks/issues.

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The forum provides a base to discuss future work ensuring planning of best fit for upcoming releases.

7.3 Release Authorisation Board (RAB)

The objective of the RAB is to ensure that the all components of the Release package have approved sign-off prior to deployment.

Key consideration factors include:

Development	Completed to the requirement specification with change control sign off for any deviations
Testing	Full system, integration, business acceptance has been agreed with defects resolved or acceptance documented
Deployment	Deployment plan is the same as tested with no defects, back out plans in place, preparation of the environment has been actioned and change requests in place

The board will consider the evidence for each element and provide the "Go / No-Go" for the deployment to live.

8 Policy / Process Reviews

The effectiveness and efficiency of the Release Management process is reviewed continuously as such the process may release at any time.

9 Continual Service Improvement

The Continual Service Improvement (CSI) process is owned by the service performance team. It is the responsibility of Release Management to capture information that feeds into the CSI plan for Release Management. Post-implementation reviews are mandatory for failed Releases where the end-to-end process for that release is reviewed. Lessons learnt & actions are outcomes of this meeting. These improvements feed into continual service improvement.

10 Document Control

Date	Version	Updated By	Details
01-Sept-2021	0.1 Draft	I Humphries	Initial draft
30-Sept-2021	0.2 Draft	I Humphries	2nd Revision – Revision in line with BRA process
19-Nov-2021	0.3 Draft	I Humphries	Amendments to roll-out planning
21-Dec-2021	0.4 Draft	I Humphries	Revised in line with developed processes

11 References

Document	Version/Date	Location
Post Office Counter Deployment Design	V2-30, 6-Jul-2018	POL – EUC BCR – Counter Deployment Design – V V2-30.docx
HNGA Release and Compliance Baselines	24 September 2018, V0-21	POL-BCR – HNGA Release and Compliance Baselines – V0-21.docx
BCR Counter Deployment Design	6 July 2018, V2-30	POL-EUC BCR – Counter Deployment Design – V2-30.docx
Fujitsu Services RMG BU Release Policy	PA/STR/003, 14-Sept-2010	PASTR003.doc
IT Release Management Policy	TBC	TBC

12 Company Details

Post Office Limited and Post Office Management Services Limited are registered in England and Wales. Registered numbers 2154540 and 08459718 respectively. Registered Office: Finsbury Dials, 20 Finsbury Street, London EC2Y 9AQ.

Post Office Management Services Limited is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), FRN 630318. Its Information Commissioners Office registration number is ZA090585.

Post Office Limited is authorised and regulated by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC), REF 12137104. Its Information Commissioners Office registration number is Z4866081.

Appendix A – Release Acceptance Criteria

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Project Name:		Release Stage:	
Planned Start Date:		Planned completion Date:	
Snow Project Ref:			

STATUS KEY	
PENDING: Work still needs to be done.	
N/A: This item cannot logically apply.	
WAIVED: This item could apply, but the stakeholders deem it unimportant.	
DONE: The stakeholders agree that the item has been satisfied.	
FAILED: This item has forced us to abandon this release.	

PLAN	STATUS	PARTY RESPONSIBLE
Requirements and user stories for this release have been agreed upon.		
All issues from the prior release have been identified and added.		
The product owner and other stakeholders agree with the release plans.		
BUILD	**STATUS**	**PARTY RESPONSIBLE**
All needed design work has been completed.		
All needed design work has been reviewed.		
All development work has been completed.		
All development work has been peer reviewed.		
All defects assigned to this release have been fixed.		
All development documentation has been updated.		
All unit test code has been updated.		
The development team is satisfied with this release.		
TESTING	**STATUS**	**PARTY RESPONSIBLE**
The testing plan and test cases have been updated.		
The testing plan has been completely carried out.		
All discovered defects have been logged.		
Any change requests or spec updates due to defects have been addressed.		
All fixed defects have been verified as fixed.		
The Testing team is satisfied with this release.		
PREPARE	**STATUS**	**PARTY RESPONSIBLE**
Packaging handed over to EUC partner		
Packaging of release complete		
Business approval completed		
The User documentation has been updated.		
Communication with the Branchess has been planned and executed.		
Model Office testing was successful, and issues were fixed.		
The impact of any changes on other products / operations has been determined and addressed.		
Support documentation has been updated.		
The tech support and operations teams are satisfied with this release.		
Training materials have been updated.		
Training is satisfied with this release.		
DEPLOYMENT	**STATUS**	**PARTY RESPONSIBLE**
All target devices have been properly tagged for release, and the release configuration is clearly defined.		
Change-control practices have been followed, meaning that the released product does not contain unapproved changes.		
The rollback plan has been prepared.		
Create a backup of the build environment, and place the development environment under change control.		
Depoyment completed as plan		
RELEASE MANAGEMENT	**STATUS**	**PARTY RESPONSIBLE**
Formally announce the release internally.		
Release Plan in place.		
Post release, check in with the project stakeholders for feedback on the release.		

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Appendix B – Release Management Responsibilities

Stage	Responsible
Demand Management	Post Office Ltd
Scoping	Post Office Ltd/Fujitsu
Development	Fujitsu
SV&I	Fujitsu
System Acceptance Testing	Post Office Ltd
Packaging	Computacenter
LST	Fujitsu
Gating	Post Office / Fujitsu (own process)
RDT	Fujitsu
MO	Post Office
Deployment	Computacenter