

Minutes of GIRS Advisory Panel Meeting

Microsoft Teams Meeting



27th January 2026 10:00 am

Attendees

Les Thomas (LT)	leslie.thomas@lrqa.com (Secretary)
Leigh Keegan (LK)	leigh.keegan@sgn.co.uk (Chairperson)
Gareth Arnold (GA)	gareth.arnold@indigonetworks.co.uk
Richard Welsby (RWe)	Richard.welsby@lastmile-uk.com
Paul Leighton (PL)	Paul.Leighton@fulcrum.co.uk
Geoffrey Harle (GH)	GHarle@northerngas.co.uk
Rachel Whitelock (RWh)	rachel.whitelock@wwutilities.co.uk
Jemima Mitchell (JM)	Jemima.mitchell@cadentgas.co.uk
Paul Chan (PC)	paulchan@energyassets.co.uk
Alex Green (AG)	Alex.Green@espug.com
Dave Morgan (DM)	dave.morgan@fincherutilitiesltd.co.uk
Karl Miller (KM)	Karl.Miller@lrqa.com
Andrew Fitzgerald (AF)	Andrew.Fitzgerald@wwutilities.co.uk
Peter O'Neill (PO)	peter.oneil@cadentgas.com

1. Welcome introductions and apologies for absence.

LK welcomed everyone to the 1st GIRSAP meeting of 2026 and thanked everyone for the good turnout.

Apologies: Apologies had been received from Keith Johnston and Dean O'Dee

2. Acceptance of previous minutes & matters arising

The previous minutes dated 23rd September 2025 were accepted as a true record of events.

2.1. The outstanding Actions from Previous Meeting were discussed as follows

2.1.1. Cadent Weekly Whereabouts

During a previous GIRSAP there was discussion regarding the content of the information provided in the weekly whereabouts. Ideas such as having a central repository on a SharePoint site were tabled and KM took an action to see if such a SharePoint site was possible.

KM informed the UIP forum that LRQA had not progressed the SharePoint site to date, as the company is concentrating on updating the IT platform used to host the GIRS, WIRS and NERS registers that is becoming outdated. There is no further update.

ACTION BY

KM

2.1.2. EUSR SHEA – CSCS Qualifications

LT reiterated the addendum note he had added to the last GIRSAP meeting regarding EUSR removing NCO registration and team leaders losing their above 180mm and Distribution qualification as EUSR ratify the information provided.

LT received an Email from Daniel McNulty of EUSR dated 23.09.2025 which stated

In January 2025 we introduce changes to our NCO Gas and Water registration schemes to meet with our CSCS license agreement.

Subsequently, we have identified that there are a number of people, working in the industry that achieved their qualifications over 15 years ago. Our challenge has been how to meet our CSCS licence requirements and at the same time not to stop people working and holding the registration categories they have held for many years. As a result we have implemented a new process to review cases on an individual-by-individual basis every week so ensure that any issues are resolved.

LT raised an issue where during a recent LRQA surveillance visit he had noticed that the Team Leader, Andy Kear's, competency cards were due for renewal in March 2026. LT had informed the operative that he would need to start the re-registration process early as, due to the fact that his original qualification was obtained in 2003, he may have difficulty as this was pre City and Guilds involvement.

Going through the re-registration process, EUSR refused to award NCO(G) at any diameter as they have stated Andy must have City and Guilds. Angela Fry has offered him an experienced worker card with 18 months to renew his NVQ. He has looked at this, and it is going to cost circa £4500, additionally he would need to undertake a three week course so would be unable to work for that period.

LT has evidence to demonstrate that his cards have run continuously as follows:-

- GD1, 2, 3, 4, 5 ELR 2003 – 2008
- EUSR GNO team leader 2008 – 2011
- EUSR NCO (G) Multi Layered Pipe Large Mains, Multi Layered Pipe Medium mains, Multi Layered Pipe Small mains, Service layer, Mains Layer 400 and above (Distribution) 2011 to 2016
- EUSR NCO (G) Mains Layer 400 and above (Distribution) NCO Service Layer (Distribution) 2016 to 2021, SCO 1,21 & 5 trained.
- EUSR NCO (G) Service Layer and Mains Layer 400 and above (Distribution) 2021 to 2026

Current card expires 22 March 2026

Andy has evidence of continuous working and MM1&MM2 forms available. He has no original Certificates. GIRSAP was asked to comment.

GH began by commenting on the ridiculousness of the situation when an experienced operative with continuous cards and evidence of continued working can be refused the NCO (G) registration when clearly EUSR has continuous evidence of his registrations. He explained

that the STC process has a sign off by a reviewing manager (TA) that confirms the individual's competence. So provided the operative has been actively working and has continuous registration then they should be awarded the registration. He reiterated the need to retain workers with such experience to inform and advise the more inexperienced operatives. AG reminded the panel of the principle of who is accountable, and EUSR applying such a stance that does not reflect the needs of the network owners is "The tail wagging the dog". LT reminded the panel that GIG 2 requires that any operative hold the appropriate NCO (G) qualifications. It was agreed that LK, KM and LT would discuss this further as they have a meeting later to review the SKEB's being promoted by EUSR as part of the changes. 2.1.3 EUSR SHEA – CSCS relationships At the UIP forum it was reiterated that this is not an EUSR issue, but that the competency arrangements to access construction sites are being driven by the wider construction industry. NCO qualifications are not an issue as these are recognised Construction Skills Council, the issue arises for those roles that do not have a readily identifiable qualification. (E.g. Auditors, inspectors etc.) There was a useful discussion and both Heather Phippen and Carl Blezzard confirmed that EUSR are working quickly to address the issue and roles outside of the NCO regime are to be agreed shortly, hopefully in a meeting on the 20th January 2026. CB stated for example that for supervisory roles, SHEA Gas and the Managing gas safely qualification, will be sufficient to gain a valid CSCS number. This is to be discussed further with LK, KM and LT as they review the SKEB's being promoted by EUSR as part of the changes 2.1.4 Body Vent Requirements During the May GIRSAP it was agreed that LT would arrange a meeting between Peter Tootell and Bharath Devaiah at Cadent to develop a standard design for tabling at GIRSAP. Peter Tootell confirmed that as requested, he had sent an example design to Bharath but had not received a response. In advance of this meeting, he had written once again but received a bounce back from the email. GIRSAP were requested to confirm the new contact details for this issue. During discussion it was agreed that Peter should send his draft design to each of the GDN representatives on GIRSAP. LT to furnish Peter with email addresses	LK/KM/LT LT
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2.1.5 The right of a GT to complain to LRQA where a UIP is not meeting their obligations in GIG2 and how that complaint should be received/actioned

LT informed the meeting that he had raised the possibility that in advance of a recertification assessment, LRQA can request information to obtain objective evidence relating to Completion file performance from GTs as part of the three yearly recertification process. This had been met with support from the UIPs.

PO reminded the panel that they are introducing a 3 tier charging methodology where the standard costs can be reduced by 30% for consistently good performers but there would be an increased cost of 30% for poor performers. He reiterated that this was for overall performance and not just completion file returns, it included on site audit performance design rejections etc.

He also reiterated that considerable work load in reducing the backlog that was ongoing which was why such occasions that a substantial completion letter from 2014 may have been issued recently. Hence the comment from Dean O'Dee, at the UIP forum, whilst not expected, did not reflect that the backlog is being addressed.

Finally the discussion centred on the rejection process and the need for the GDNs to call to resolve minor issues, whereas in fact rejections are always raised, even if one character is indiscernible. PO agreed to discuss with Claire Wilcox the specifics of the issue raised and reiterated that Cadent are developing a system where information can be inferred, and if the UIPs receive rejections where the information could have been inferred, they should let him know so that their systems can be improved.

RW reiterated that LRQA requesting UIP performance information prior to recertification would be useful and highlighted some illegal connections that have been identified and that are being worked through.

It was agreed that LRQA would look at adding something in to appendix A.1.6 of the Gas industry guidance document to identify that discussions with the Adopting Network Owners would become part of the recertification assessment process.

2.1.6 SCO10

At the UIP Forum the UIPs have identified a number of issues when using the Network Matching Matrix (NMM) form that have been experienced by the UIPs:-

- You cannot sign the form
- The length of time taken for the Network Owner to process the forms
- Freezing panes to see top of the form would be a big help.
- Expanding the cells so that you can see all the content that has been entered. Some cells work; others don't
- Facility to spell check the submission. Its currently blocked from working.

During discussion it was agreed that it would be beneficial that some of these are items that could be improved but that signature of the form can be done by saving to PDF and signing that.

The UIP forum also identified that there seems to be confusion as to when the form is used, and that some GDNS appear to require an annual declaration by the reviewing manager to confirm that the existing SCO data remains valid, and that the NMM form is only required for new entrants, or where roles, competencies are changed whereas other GDNS seem to require the NMM form to be updated annually.

GIRSAP were requested to confirm requirements.

GH informed the panel that the new SCO 10 process is designed that the NMM form is used for new entrants or the upgrade of registrations and that the letter (page 38) of the new SCO 10 process should be completed annually to confirm if the current registrations remain valid.

Addendum to Meeting

In an Email dated 28/01/2026 the SGN Network controller has also confirmed that “Regarding use of the new SCO/10 application form. SGN will only require this new form to be used for any new applicant to get on the SCO Register under a GIRS registered company or for someone already registered and wants to be upgraded, i.e. to include LP NRO’s if only on for LP RO’s.

SGN will not look for someone already GIRS registered on the SCO Register prior to 01/01/26 to submit a new updated SCO/10 form during a request for an SCO Annual Review to take place or to remain on the SCO Register.”

There was a discussion on the use for column P, the Number of operations submitted as evidence. It was reiterated that this column is for new entrants or for changes to existing registrations and that the number should reflect the number of mentored ROs or NROs that have been submitted as part of the application.

2.1.7 Uploading of Emergency Cover Drawings to SGN

LT informed the meeting that the UIPs confirmed that since they do not provide this information to SGN, this has not been identified as an issue.

3. LRQA Report

3.1.1. Surveillance visits Annual Report for Year Ending 2025

The surveillance visit detailed results were included as an attachment to the meeting invite and are summarised as follows:

There are 161 active companies listed on the web site, four of which are currently suspended having let their Partial Accreditation Status Lapse. 42 remain at partial accreditation.

3.1.2. Discussion of Findings raised – 2025

- 207 on site Surveillance Visits
 - 20 Design Surveillance Visits
 - 15 Recertification visits (16 total in 2024)
- } (225 total in 2024)

- 15 Partial Assessments (15 total in 2024)
- 7 Partial to full Assessments (12 total in 2024)

During the surveillance visits the following deficiencies have been identified:

- 8 Major Deficiency (12 total in 2024)
- 99 Minor Deficiencies (100 in 2024)
- 147 visits with no deficiencies (112 During 2024)

The Major deficiencies identified on site during 2025 were described and a breakdown of the sections with the highest findings was provided that demonstrated most findings are raised under section 7. This included the requirements to have two sets of Breathing apparatus available and in calibration.

4. Review of UIP Forum Minutes dated 13th January 2026

4.1. Cadent Weekly Whereabouts

Discussed in 2a.1 above

4.2 Cadent Quotes for Mains Cut-Offs

No update expected from OfGEM, but Disconnection workshops are ongoing. The purpose of the workshop was to agree how the Gas Act needs to be updated in relation to service cut offs in order to ensure competition in the disconnection market.

KM

KM informed the meeting that this is very early in the deliberations as OfGEM are seeking to develop a framework for the arrangements to deliver significant numbers of domestic service cut offs.

Andy Holland's comments to the UIP forum were noted where he explained that Section 50 licences for those other than statutory undertakers are for new connections only, In Nottingham and East Midlands, the local authorities prohibit UIPs and Self Lay companies from carrying out service alterations and disconnections. Therefore, unless the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991 (NRSWA) is also amended, there will be no competition from the UIPs.

KM to update GIRSAP of the outcome of future workshops

4.3 Body Vent Requirements

Discussed in 2a.3 above

4.4 The right of a GT to complain to LRQA where a UIP is not meeting their obligations in GIG2 and how that complaint should be received/actioned

Discussed in 2a.4 above

4.6 SCO10

Discussed in 2a.5 above

4.7 Introduction of the Streetworks Material Classification and Sampling

At the UIP forum, Paul Mason asked the forum for their understanding of the new protocol and its implications to the UIP. Carl Blezzaed gave an overview of the Street Works UK Material Classification Protocol which has three key stages.

1. Desktop Risk Assessment
 - a) This stage identifies any known or likely contamination risks before anyone breaks ground validate the process.
2. Site Assessment
 - a) This is the primary classification method under the new protocol
 - b) Inspecting each layer of excavated material separately
 - c) Using PAK spray and litmus paper (recommended but not mandatory)
 - d) Answering a structured set of risk questions
 - e) Classifying each material layer as Red (potentially contaminated) or Green (low risk)
3. Sampling (Verification Testing)
 - a) These samples do not change the classification on the day — they are used to audit and validate the process

The UIP are asking GIRSAP what the Gas Transporter's expectations are.

AG gave a brief outline of the protocol and explained that the obligation lies with the licence holder. Consequently, the obligations lie with the statutory undertaker if they allow the UIP to construct under their licence or whoever holds the Section 50 licence.

The expectation is that the desk top assessment and site assessment will need to be by the UIP, however as the sampling rate is based on historic data, where a UIP is acting under licence, they will need to discuss with the GT the level of sampling required and arrangements.

Obviously if the UIP holds the Section 50 licence, the obligation will lie with them, and consequently, the GDNS should remain unaffected.

AG stated there are a number of companies that provide advice on the new protocol and agreed to send contact details for some of which he is aware for circulation with these minutes.

5. AOB

5.1. What is the Panels view of the ongoing decline of the new connections market

PO raised the question relating to the current down turn in the new connections market. It was explained that the Future Homes Standard is now law but is in the transition stage and becomes fully integrated by December 2026. Under the Future homes standard Gas services to new homes will only remain in very limited circumstances:

- Non-domestic buildings not covered by the FHS
- Mixed-use developments where commercial units still use gas
- Large heat networks that use gas CHP (though this is being phased out too)
- Industrial processes requiring gas

The discussion centred on load requests being received by the iGTs and SGN for the supply of gas to large developments recently which suggests a possible recovery in the gas markets. It was identified that with the Government to increase housing construction, then the Gas seems to be requested when the costs of the electric point of connection POC is high, or where the developer is told they cannot obtain the supply until 2030 etc.

Should there be a slow downturn of gas projects, this is going to result in a de-skilling of the workforce and impact the ability of companies to retain full accreditation.

It was agreed that LK, KM and LT would start a GIRS Risk Register in readiness for the May/ June Forum and GIRSAP for presenting to the panel as there is a potential for the UIPs to find the workload on low volume highly complex projects in the future.

6. Next meeting dates

LK thanked everyone attending and for participating in what was again a very useful discussion.

LT asked if he could change the May and September dates for the 2026 and the following meeting dates were agreed

GIRS UIP	19th May, 15th September
GIRSAP	2 nd June, 6 th October