

Minutes of GIRS Advisory Panel Meeting



Microsoft Teams Meeting

30<sup>th</sup> January 2024 10:00 am

**In attendance:**

Alex Green (AG)	alex.green@espug.com
Dave Morgan (DM)	dave.morgan@fincherutilitiesltd.co.uk
John Fellows (JF)	john.fellows22@cadentgas.com
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Geoffrey Harle (GH)	GHarle@northerngas.co.uk
Leigh Keegan (LK)	leigh.keegan@sgn.co.uk (Chairperson)
Keith Johnston (KJ)	Keith.Johnston@gtc-uk.co.uk
Les Thomas (LT)	leslie.thomas@lrqa.com (Secretary)
Maria Kirkness (MK)	Maria.Kirkness@wwutilities.co.uk
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Steven McGill (SM)	stevenmcgill@energyassets.co.uk

**1. Welcome introductions and apologies for absence.**

LK welcomed everyone to the 1st GIRSAP meeting of 2024 and thanked everyone for the good turnout.

**Apologies:** There were no apologies for absence.

**2. Acceptance of previous minutes & matters arising**

The previous minutes dated 26th September 2023 were accepted as a true record of events.

**2.1 Actions from Previous Meeting**

**2.1.1 Bulletins Issued / Info raised Since Last GIRSAP**

**Structure for submitting <7bar Certification File- (IGT & UIP)**

At the September UIP forum, CNG queried the certification structure proposed by Cadent for <7bar compared to the previous process, as it appears Cadent are insisting on a lot more information than was previously required for GIRS registered companies. LK took an action to provide the CONN\_FM139 listing the items required and those not required from GIRS Registered companies.

During discussion, it was confirmed that the document was intended to provide guidance on the structure for compiling quality assurance (QA) records for entry connections and exit connections to Cadent's 2bar ≤7 bar Network and does not generally apply to Low Pressure. Consequently, this is not a request for additional information, it is guidance on how to comply with the existing CAD/PM/G/17 (IGEM/GL/5) procedure.

**ACTION BY**

JF clarified that, should there be an above ground crossing or complex structure then the requirements could be applied on a Low-Pressure network. **This action is closed.**

### **2.1.2 Cadent's internal F7 supplement document**

The September UIP Forum had discussed Cadent's internal F7 supplement document and the updated specification requirements on materials and fittings. The forum was informed that some suppliers do not provide fittings to the new F7 supplement and that the process can result in delays with approvals and supply issues.

JF had agreed to discuss the supplement internally and clarify requirements. **This action is ongoing.**

JF

### **2.1.3 The SCO Procedural Guidance presentation Issued 4th September 2023.**

Following the implementation of Cadent's SCO procedural changes. Four areas of concern were raised in the Forum.

#### **1. Delays in response times outside the NRO notification period**

- a. An example was provided where a UIP had not received the clearance to proceed for an NRO submitted but on day ten received a response with queries regarding updating the NRO and seeking clarification regarding the contingency valve asking, if this was accessible? a further question i.e. 250mm PE is required – are the materials available?
- b. During discussion it was confirmed that there were specific issues regarding the NRO presented with the original submission being via the old system and the resubmission under the new system. The UIP wished to thank the connections team for their efforts in getting the NRO over the line, but the issue identified that there were some internal communication and understanding issues that had to be resolved in relation to UIP and Cadent responsibilities under the new process. As the new process becomes embedded, it was hoped most issues have will be resolved and no further delays should be experienced.

#### **2. Requirements for Network Analysis**

- a. The Briefing note stated that Network Analysis is mandated for LP >6" /180mm, all MP/IP and within 50m of pressure reduction equipment.

The UIPs are seeking clarification as they are receiving conflicting responses. During Discussion. JF confirmed that Network Analysis is not required for non-invasive connections.

#### **3. Requirements for ROs**

- a. Briefing note states that a 63mm Service connection within 50m of a PRI requires an RO. This is outside the requirements of IGEM/GL/6.

JF confirmed that that an RO is not required for Top Tee connections.

#### **4. Contingency Plans**

- a. Where Network Analysis suggests that the contingency is to squeeze off the main. Clarification is sought, over what Cadent are expecting.

During discussion it was confirmed that Cadent are seeking to improve contingency planning to ensure the operational teams are prepared to deliver the contingency plans should the need arise. It was accepted that the new process has resulted in the need for clarification over roles and responsibilities within Cadent and these issues are being resolved.

#### **2.1.4 Wask Mark 1 Base and Spares Obsolescence.**

Previously, the forum raised the issue of the group letter posted on WASK website regarding the MK1 base being made obsolete from 1st September 2023. This would not have been an issue had their alternative base, the Mk 2, not developed a fault forcing its withdrawal from use for MP operations in November 2022.

Cadent were asked to confirm the current status of EB/756 that was due for review on or before 11/11/2023.

JF apologised as there was no update on this, but he would seek clarification.

JF

### **3. LRQA Report**

#### **3.1 Surveillance visits Report 2023 Final**

The surveillance visit detailed results are included as an attachment to these minutes. There are 178 active companies listed on the web site, two of which are duplicated, ten of which are suspended and 47 remain at partial accreditation.

Consequently there are 121 Active GIRS companies 7 of which only hold Design.

During the following discussion there was a consensus that the spike in 2019 and 2020 was likely to reduce as Network owners review requirements for holding GIRS Registration as part of their assurance validation. The move to a de-carbonised energy is also likely to have an impact although this is not being seen currently.

#### **3.1.1 Discussion of Findings raised – 2023**

- 257 on site Surveillance Visits.
- 15 Recertification visits.
- 22 Partial Assessments.
- 22 Partial to full Assessments

During the surveillance visits the following deficiencies have been identified:

- 7 Major Deficiencies (7 in 2023)
- 122 Minor Deficiencies (97 in 2023)
- 104 visits with no deficiencies (37 During 2023)

The GIRS UIP Defect report (see Attached) was presented, and the Major deficiencies identified on site during 2023 were described. A breakdown of the sections with the highest findings was

provided that demonstrated most findings are raised under section 7 of GIG 2 Work Issue and Control and Section 6 Methods of Working.

During discussion it was confirmed that the issues regarding tools and equipment remain constant and there is no apparent trend to demonstrate a deterioration in standards and there are no “stand out” repeat offenders. Consequently, there has been no escalation of a minor deficiency to a major deficiency recorded.

#### **4. Review of UIP Forum Minutes 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2023**

The minutes had been circulated with the agenda for this meeting. It was noted that attendance remained strong with 49 Attendees.

The key areas of discussion were highlighted as follows:

##### **4.1 Design Changes Due to Inaccurate Records**

At the last GIRSAP it was explained that on instances where site conditions were found to be different than planned, the site variation process has to be applied but that Cadent have come to an internal agreement to update their process so that when minor variations are identified, that these can be agreed on site and updated via the completion file system.

Graham Cocksey is seeking clarification – agreed by whom, the UIP and Cadent, or the UIP team and its management?

During discussion it was clarified that where site conditions were found to be different than planned, there are two processes that need to be considered.

1. **Design variations and cost recovery:** Cadent seek evidence of the application of the IGEM/TD/101 variation process and accept that Minor variations can be agreed on site and followed up at the Completion file stage. However, it was clarified that obtaining a clearance to proceed where there is a “Minor Design Change” can still be difficult.

The submission of the Minor variation form as part of the RO was suggested as a possible solution as was an extension of the deviation tables in section 4.9.6 of SCO 4 & 5 to include UIP activities. PO agreed to discuss options with Network Control.

JF stated that a new briefing note is currently been finalised and that Cadent would look to see if a Deviation table can be included.

2. **UIP cost recovery:** It was reiterated that the rule is that retrospective costs will not be approved and that Cadent require a call before the work goes ahead to agree compensation where site conditions were found to be different than planned, and this results in additional cost to the UIP.

During discussion there was a consensus that delays will elevate costs and that a pragmatic approach, when operating out of hours, will always be applied provided there was suitable evidence, and the costs were justifiable and reasonable.

PO

JF reiterated there will always be a challenge if there is no call on the day and that if a connection is being undertaken out of hours, If you let the connections team know, staff can be contactable.

#### **4.2 Safety & Engineering Bulletin No: WWSEB153 Checking of Contingency Valves**

The previous response from GIRSAP was discussed and the minimum requirement is for UIPs is to identify the location of any prescribed contingency valve and safeguard access to the valve on the day of the operation.

Graham Cocksey wanted to remind the panel that occasionally a UIP is unable to find the nominated valve, such as in a carriageway, where there is no sign of the valve due to probable re-surfacing works. In this situation the minimum requirement is to refer back to the GT and ask for an alternative valve to be nominated.

This was agreed.

#### **4.3 Designing Networks when there are properties with no gas supply within 23m of the main**

As we move to decarbonised energy usage, designs are now being required where the main runs outside "all electric" properties, to supply other parts of the site which are being supplied with gas. The Gas Act places a statutory obligation on the Gas Transporter to supply gas to properties within 23 yards of a relevant main. The UIP forum asked GIRSAP to consider the issue and what is required of the UIP community.

During discussion there was a consensus that current arrangements are already in place to deal with this in that the statutory obligation lies with the GT and not the UIP. Consequently, the UIP should respond directly to the developer's request and in the design submission to the GT provide information on the number of properties within 23m of the mains with no gas supply. The GT can consider the issue and if required could request the UIP to increase pipe sizes at the GTs Cost

#### **4.4 NGN Briefing Note NGN-SEB395 Issued**

It was explained that the NGN briefing note regarding new contact details was presented at the forum and a copy is to be issued with the minutes.

### **5. AOB**

#### **5.1 Assessors acting as Technical Advisors chair of the UIP Forum Etc.**

LRQA had received correspondence from a group of Technical Advisors who had expressed concerns regarding a potential Conflict of Interest due to an Independent Technical Advisor being employed by LRQA to undertake GIRS assessments. In addition, the Assessor was acting on behalf of LRQA to assist Cadent with the implementation of their revised SCO processes to the UIP community. The LRQA Sector Manager (KM) replaced the Assessor on the Cadent panel and an email had been sent to the complainant assuring them that the professionalism and integrity of the Assessor would not allow a compromise or Conflict of Interest.

While the LRQA response has not been formally challenged, it is understood that further calls have taken place between the complainant and at least one Network which has led to LRQA seeking GIRSAP opinion on the use of Subcontractors for GIRS activities.

As a Technical Advisor and LRQA Assessor LT left the meeting. During the subsequent discussion the panel made suggestions on how the GIRS regime could be reinforced which included a tender process for Technical Advisors to offer their assessment services to LRQA, however the overriding view of the GIRSAP was that they had no concerns around the current arrangements with Subcontracted Assessors.

## 5.2 Memorandum of understanding

KM advised the group that the current Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) expires at the end of January 2024. KM will update the MOU and circulate it to the group for comment or amendment as appropriate. A short discussion took place regarding the role of the Independent Networks Association INA, the voting rights of its members and their attendance at the GIRS advisory panel. Keith Johnston attends both INA and GIRSAP and is able to act as a conduit between the two groups. It is understood that there is an INA meeting in early February where the Advisory Panel meeting will be discussed and potential GIRSAP attendees identified from the INA group.

## 6. Date of Next Meeting

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

**The following dates for 2024 meetings have been agreed:**

GIRS UIP Forum	14th May, & 10th September 2024
GIRSAP	21st May, and 24th September 2024