

Minutes of GIRS Advisory Panel Meeting



Microsoft Teams Meeting

21st May 2024 10:00 am

In attendance at Meetpoint Midlands

Alex Green (AG)	alex.green@espug.com
Les Thomas (LT)	kayanel@btinternet.com (Secretary)
Jemima Mitchell (JM)	Jemima.Mitchell@cadentgas.com

In attendance via Teams

Leigh Keegan (LK)	leigh.keegan@sgn.co.uk	(Chairperson)
Paul Leighton (PL)	Paul.Leighton@fulcrum.co.uk	
Maria Kirkness (MK)	Maria.Kirkness@wwutilities.co.uk	
Karl Miller (KM)	karl.miller@lrqa.com	
Peter O'Neill	peter.oneill@cadentgas.com	
Steven McGill (SM)	stevenmcgill@energyassets.co.uk	
Gareth Arnold (GA)	gareth.arnold@indigopipelines.co.uk	
Geoffrey Harle (GH)	GHarle@northerngas.co.uk	
Richard Welsby (RW)	richard.welsby@lastmile-uk.com	
Keith Johnston (KJ)	Keith.Johnston@gtc-uk.co.uk	
Rachel Whitelock (RW)	Rachel.Whitelock@wwutilities.co.uk	
Dean O'Dee (DO)	dean.odee@me.com	
Dave Morgan (DM)	dave.morgan@fincherutilitiesltd.co.uk	

1. Welcome introductions and apologies for absence.

LK welcomed everyone to the 2nd GIRSAP meeting of 2024 and thanked everyone for the good turnout.

Apologies: Apologies had been received from John Fellows and Jemima Mitchell was in attendance on his behalf.

2. Acceptance of previous minutes & matters arising

The previous minutes dated 30th January 2024 were accepted as a true record of events.

2.1 The outstanding Actions from Previous Meeting were discussed as follows

2.1.1 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 delays with approvals and supply issues.

ACTION BY

JM confirmed that informed the panel that were no further supplements to F7 and that everyone needs to comply. It was also reiterated that suppliers had been consulted prior to publication of the new document.

2.1.2 The SCO Procedural Guidance presentation Issued 4th September 2023.

LT reported that during the UIP forum, the consensus was that all seems to be working ok, with no delays now that the system has become embedded.

Requirements for Network Analysis

At GIRSAP, JF confirmed that Network Analysis is not required for non-invasive connections.

LT reported that during the UIP forum, LRQA had asked if anyone was still experiencing any issues and there were no responses.

JF

Contingency Plans

LT reported that at the UIP forum, there was a consensus that if a GT specifies the use of a valve for the contingency plan and the valve could not be located as it has not been maintained and a squeeze-off hole is required, then the network should be paying for that as it was not for a UIP to experience additional costs due to a network owner not maintaining its assets.

A discussion ensued and it was clarified that often a suitable valve may not be available, and the appropriate contingency plan would need to include a squeeze off. Under such circumstances, then it would be for the UIP to take up the costs as it would be part of the connection.

However, there was a consensus that where a valve is specified as being appropriate for the contingency plan and is not available then it would be down to the GT to cover the costs of any additional actions.

Reviewing Managers Questionnaire

JM informed the panel that there had been a limited response from the Reviewing Managers Declaration. And the UIPs are reminded of the need to respond using the link below.

Link - <https://forms.office.com/e/1pkz5eMqk>

Addendum to meeting

LT confirms that the questionnaire takes a couple of minutes to respond as it merely asks are you a member of a professional institution, if so, which one, what level and the date of expiry.

2.1.3 Design Changes due to inaccurate records

LT informed the meeting that Cadent's responses from the last GIRSAP meeting regarding where site conditions are found to be different than planned, were discussed at the UIP Forum.

Project references where specific issues had been experienced were tabled and there was a discussion on communication issues with Cadent. Various Cadent specific issues had been raised including the UIP forum suggestion that it would be a good idea if the Stakeholder Forum was re-introduced and that there were issues with the portal not working.

PO reminded GIRSAP that should there be no response from the 0845 number he could be contacted directly.

He also informed the panel that the portal is an application that is no longer within the management of the design and completions team. This was because the portal was not used by many UIPs.

PO agreed to discuss the portal issues with the application team and remove the shortcut. He reiterated that as the portal relied on core systems that were over 10 years old and there was little desire to update something that is due to be replaced .

3. LRQA Report

3.1 Surveillance visits Report Year to Date 2024

The surveillance visit detailed results are included as an attachment to these minutes. There are 176 active companies listed on the web site three of which are suspended and 45 remain at partial accreditation.

Consequently there are 128 Active GIRS companies 7 of which only hold Design.

3.1.1 Discussion of Findings raised – 2024

- 70 on site Surveillance Visits.
- 8 Recertification visits.
- 11 Partial Assessments.
- 8 Partial to full Assessments

During the surveillance visits the following deficiencies have been identified:

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

The Major deficiencies identified on site during 2024 were described and 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 the arrangements for LRQA stopping a job where actions that were immediately dangerous were discussed. KM reiterated that the job had been paused and the issues remediated, he had also spoken to the Technical Advisor to reinforce the message.

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.

LT informed the meeting that one of the major deficiencies was the result of an escalation due to the same minor deficiency being repeated at the next surveillance visit.

The detailed spreadsheet of the UIPs, the deficiencies and the affected network owner is attached.

4. Review of UIP Forum Minutes 14th May 2024

The minutes had been circulated with the agenda for this meeting. It was noted that attendance remained strong with 43 Attendees.

This had also been an attempt at a hybrid meeting with only 6 attending at Meetpoint midlands.

The key areas of discussion were highlighted as follows:

4.1 Design Changes Due to Inaccurate Records

Discussed in 2.1.2 above.

4.2 Breathing Apparatus Face Fit – Facial Hair

At the UIP forum, Charlotte Berryman presented the meeting with details of the issues Aptus Utilities were having with operatives having the need to have satisfactory BA with positive face-fit tests but refusing to shave beards. She had details of several different options for possible alternate BA and hoods, and the meeting was asked for comment and any advice or experiences.

Options for suitable Breathing Apparatus were provided (see attached) and this prompted a useful discussion within the meeting.

There was a consensus that the GDNs are in a different place to the UIPS in that they have operatives whose role is to undertake emergency repair in gaseous atmospheres. Consequently it was stated that NGN for example have a clean shave policy and if people refuse to shave, they are sent home.

UIPs and iGTS are in a slightly different position in that they do not carry out emergency operations in Gaseous atmospheres. However, KJ reminded the panel of HSG(53) Respiratory Protective Equipment at work (see attached) and that the law requires that

as an employer, you have a legal responsibility to control substances hazardous to health in your workplace, and to prevent and adequately control your employees' exposure to those substances.

The Employee also has a duty to use the equipment provided correctly.

Finally the discussion centred on the terms and conditions of employment and if the UIP wished to enforce a Clean Shave policy then this should be part of the contract. There was a consensus that processes and the "Clean Shave Policy" traditionally applied, rests on procedures and processes decided historically, so it may be appropriate for the UIP to agree and risk assessment model agreed with the Asset Owner and Employer.

Addendum to meeting

Mark Harrison provided the following information from the fire service which may be useful

Can I be a firefighter if I have a beard?

There are health and safety reasons why facial hair below the top lip cannot be accepted. As a Firefighter you will be required to wear a facemask when you are wearing breathing apparatus. To ensure that the facemask forms a seal around the face, it is necessary to keep the face shaven to prevent any dangerous airborne chemicals entering the facemask. Fire services work closely with the manufacturers of the equipment to look for new ways of overcoming the issues with facial hair, however an acceptable alternative that would meet health and safety requirements, has not yet been found.

4.3 UIPs requested to model the existing network at design submission.

At the UIP forum, CP raised an instance where a network had requested the designer to carry out network analysis on the existing upstream network laid previously by another UIP. During discussion there was a clear consensus that the UIP should not be doing this as it is a GT obligation to provide the connection pressure and the UIP may not have all the relevant information.

During discussion the requirements of TD101 were presented section 5.2.5 of which states

"Where required, the upstream GT shall provide information on connection pressures for system extensions and for any services with a pressure drop greater than 2 mbar, together with details of any reinforcement required. The method of connection shall be agreed between the upstream GT, the adopting GT and the UIP."

During discussion there was a consensus that TD101 needs to be complied with as there needs to be a level of independence between the asset owner and the designer

4.4 Safe working with Coil Trailers

The UIP forum asked if more detail and clarification could be provided on the safety zone requirements set out in the recent safety bulletin on the use of coil trailers that had been issued following an incident. KM and DM agreed to take the issue away and try and get more information from the company involved.

Addendum to meeting See Attached

It was confirmed that there is a working party considering the issue and that the GIS is under review as this is seen as an INA Issue.

4.5 Wask Electrofusion saddles for use on PE Bagstop

At the UIP forum, CB raised concerns over failures of Wask electrofusion saddles for use in PE bagstop. She gave details on the issues they had when trying to fuse saddles on site caused by the lack of pressure being exerted by various tooling options. Wask had attended site and carried out their own investigations leading to them producing a new adapter for the clamps. They have also stated that only strap clamps should be used. CB presented a Concern Report produced following the investigation, and also a bulletin from WASK on the new tooling and requirements. Issued previously.

During discussion those that had reviewed the Wask document expressed concern as to why there was a such a response to only one failure and was there a possibility of issues at installation as the photos provided were not conclusive. NGN have agreed to discuss with Wask. LRQA Will refrain from issuing to the wider UIP community until further information is received

GH

4.6 Approval of Design submissions

EEMU raised an issue when a design has been submitted to an iGT where the network had responded in an email stating that the design 'should be fine' and this was to be taken as the design approval.

The discussion centred around the need for formal responses from networks when giving design approvals. Alec Bromiley also re-iterated that this has also been raised as a concern by a design house in a letter to LRQA.

During discussion it was confirmed that the email response was from ESP and the reason for the informality was that at the time, the UIP had not in fact signed the network connections agreement and therefor, no formal approval could be issued. (they have now, and a formal approval has been issued)

4.7 Memorandum of understanding

LRQA advised the group that the current Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) expired at the end of January 2024. KM has updated the MOU and circulated it to the group for signature, comment or amendment as appropriate.

To date only Leigh Keegan has returned the signed agreement.

During discussion, there appeared to be some misunderstanding as to whether the MOU was for signature or Comment. It was confirmed that the document was for signature. KJ stated that he would arrange for J Trounson to sign on behalf of the INA and JF would sign for cadent.

KM to reissue.

KM

5. LRQA Annual Price Increase

In accordance with clause 7.2.9 of the GIRS MOU it is incumbent on LR to seek the GIRSMG acceptance of proposed increases in assessment costs.

The agreed formula that has been in use since 2013 is
 $NR = \text{current fee} \times (0.1 + 0.9 \times (\text{February Current year indices} / \text{February previous year indices}))$

Using the formula an increase of up to 4.07% could be sought.

In the current economic climate, LRQA also refer to the Consumer price index in February which was 3.8% in February.

LRQA are therefore seeking the 3.8% increase as a gesture of good will.

This was agreed

6. AOB

6.1 Cadent weekly whereabouts

JM informed the meeting that they were experiencing issues with the information being provided as weekly whereabouts the dates of the various activities being undertaken is not being provided. During discussion it was conformed that the Connection activities are provided as part of the Start Date Notification/RO/NRO process but the construct activities cannot be separated out as it is difficult to determine the rate of excavation etc.

As an example it was stated that a one-off service could be completed in half a day or be completed over three or four days, dependant on the operational difficulties identified. It was also reiterated that due to travel arrangements, teams can be on site and gone very early in the morning. Finally, DM gave an example where whereabouts had been rejected on three occasions.

During further discussion it was agreed that PO and JM would consider what is being sought and provide some clarity.

PO & JM

6.2 GF Small diameter fittings with screwed attachments and the use of clamps

KM raised an issue where a WIRS assessor had opened a GIRS assessment document and identified that a finding had been raised as a team had screwed down the clamps on the George Fischer fitting and did not use a clamp. The LRQA Assessors were seeking clarification amongst themselves.

It was agreed that as has been discussed previously, the requirement for Gas electrofusion is that the fitting shall be rotated to confirm the correct alignment of the fitting. Consequently the screws shall not be used for Gas electrofusion and all joints shall be clamped.

6.3 Design Variation and procedure the SCO Deviation process

DO reminded the panel of the issue raised in January 2023 where Cadent were asked to consider if the principles of the Major / Minor Design Variation process as applied internally by Cadent under their Engineering Bulletin EB347 could applied for the UIP Community.

Cadent had responded that EB 347 could not be applied, as the internal document has been withdrawn. Cadent were looking at the specific process requirements over the next few months but currently, when records are found to be inaccurate, these are to be managed by the Location team.

Cadent were asked for an update

JM

6.4 Hybrid Meetings V teams meetings

LRQA informed the meeting that they had experienced increased expenditure by arranging the meetings as hybrid meetings in accordance with the requests for face-to-face meetings in January. Due to the poor attendance to the face-to-face meetings, there is no desire by LRQA to repeat the trial.

7. 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	10th September 2024
GIRSAP	24th September 2024