

Minutes of GIRS Advisory Panel Meeting



Microsoft Teams Meeting

24th January 2023 10:00 am

In attendance:

Les Thomas (LT)	kayanel@btinternet.com (Secretary)
Leigh Keegan (LK)	leigh.keegan@sgn.co.uk (Chairperson)
Dave Morgan (DM)	dave.morgan@fincherutilitiesltd.co.uk
Geoffrey Harle (GH)	GHarle@northerngas.co.uk
John Fellows (JF)	john.fellows22@cadentgas.com
Dean O'Dee (DO)	dean.odee@me.com
Keith Johnston (KJ)	Keith.Johnston@gtc-uk.co.uk
Paul Leighton (PL)	Paul.Leighton@fulcrum.co.uk
Peter O'Neil (PO)	Peter.ONeill@cadentgas.com
Karl Miller (KM)	karl.miller@lrqa.com
Alex Green (AG)	alex.green@espug.com
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Steven McGill (SM)	stevenmcgill@energyassets.co.uk
Carl Day (CD)	carl.day@wwutilities.com

1. Welcome introductions and apologies for absence.

LK welcomed everyone to the 1st GIRSAP meeting of 2023.

Apologies: Apologies had been received from Gareth Arnold of Indigo Pipelines Ltd.

2. Acceptance of previous minutes

The previous minutes dated 27th September 2022 were accepted as a true record of events.

3. Matters Arising

3.1 LRQA Reporting Developments

GIG 2 has been updated and includes the clarification that all Major and Minor Deficiencies identified during the reporting period are reported to GIRSAP on a provider-by-provider basis at the appropriate advisory panel meeting.

The first of these will be reported in the May GIRSAP

The changes to GIG 2 Rev 5.4.2 published in November 2022 were highlighted as follows.

Rev 5.4.2 November 2022

1. 1.1 Definition of Flowstopping added.
2. 1.1 Definition of the reporting period added.
3. 1.4 Wording added to reflect new reporting regime.
4. 3.3 Wording amended to clarify that Mains Disconnections are not a contestable activity.

ACTION BY

5. 3.5 Wording amended to clarify the Service disconnections defined as non-routine in IGEM/GL/6 require CNRB Scope.
6. 3.6 Iris Stop replaced with Flow Stopping.
7. 4.2.4 Clarification of EUSR Category registration required.
8. Throughout the document, commas have been added and spaces removed.

3.2 Design Changes Due to Inaccurate Records

During the last GIRSAP, 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 Deviations from Routine or Non-Routine Operation Procedures for Gas Distribution Low and Medium Pressure Networks, could be applied to the UIPs so that if site conditions were found that improved the network (larger diameters etc.) connections could continue provided the new connection type followed the standard tables.

During discussion it was confirmed that Cadent had not been able to give a response as the issue was across departments and straddles several processes. During discussion it was identified that those UIPs operating as a Cadent service provider and as a UIP in their own right were aware of EB347 and were seeking to work to the same rules.

It was confirmed that the other Transporters still request a telephone call to ensure that when a pipe of larger diameter than that recorded is located, that the GT can confirm there is not another network owners pipe in the vicinity that matches the pipe located, but that when this has been confirmed, a verbal acceptance is given.

JF and PO agreed that such a process should be achievable and would take the issue away to confirm.

JF / PO

3.2.1 Design Changes Due to Inaccurate Records Examples of delays

During the last GIRSAP JF had requested if there were any specific examples where delays had resulted in excessive costs to the UIP. This was tabled at the GIRS UIP Forum, but no examples have been forthcoming to date.

Charlotte Berryman of Aptus provided some positive feedback for Cadent with regards to this subject both Adam Smith and Nicola Evans that have helped Aptus out enormously getting CSEP applications re approved in very quick time.

3.3 Frialen Electrofusion couplers

GH gave an update and it was explained that NGN have stopped purchasing the Frialen large diameter Fittings due to the issues surrounding tolerances.

It was explained that there is often the requirement to use physical force applied by hammers and that you need to scrape Profuse pipe to get the couplers to fit. The gas requirement is that the fitting needs to be able to rotate prior to fusing.

BSI has been asked to investigate how the Kitemark can be awarded when the tolerances are obviously incorrect but a response is not expected in the near future. During discussion it was stated that when a fitting does not exactly comply with the standard, a risk assessment can be prepared to facilitate the award of the kitemark.

4. LRQA Report

4.1 Surveillance visits Annual Report 2022

The surveillance visit detailed results are included as an attachment to these minutes.

There are 183 active companies listed on the web site, seven of which are suspended and 45 of which remain at partial accreditation.

Consequently there are 131 Active GIRS companies with 5 of these only holding design.

4.1.1 Discussion of Findings raised - 2022

- 196 on site Surveillance Visits.
- 31 Recertification visits.
- 18 Partial Assessments.
- 12 Partial to full Assessments

During the surveillance visits the following deficiencies have been identified:

- 6 Major Deficiencies (4 in 2021)
- 87 Minor Deficiencies (160 in 2021)
- 58 visits with no deficiencies (106 During 2021)

The latest Major deficiencies identified on site were described as follows:

- 125mm PE mains laid day before surveillance visit had been left in track with several open ends. Team manager agreed to check for blockages and seal all open ends before any further works commenced.
- Developer had excavated track across the front of the house. This did not follow a predictable route and was not perpendicular to the gas main. When raised by LRQA Assessor the matter was discussed with the site agent who agreed to re-excavate the track in line with the design proposal drawing. No pipe was laid in the original track.

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*. The inspection questions with the most failures and the surveillance visits with highest percentage of deficiencies per items checked since the last GIRSAP were also reported.

5. Review of UIP Forum Minutes 10th January 2023

The minutes had been circulated with the agenda for this meeting.

The key areas of discussion were highlighted as follows:

5.1 IGEM TD4 Update

TD4 panel has completed the review and the draft has been issued to the GTDC for final approval for publication. It has been approved and was planned to be published in early December, however some health issues have caused a delay.

5.2 LRQA Portal for the management of corrective actions

During the UIP forum the development of a portal to enable UIPs to transfer corrective action information to LRQA was discussed. It was apparent that there was no appetite for this facility to close out deficiencies as the current method of email and or confirmation of actions at the subsequent SV was sufficient.

The need for a portal to supply the GTs with information discussed and LRQA tabled a Spread sheet extract (See attached) that is proposed for the current year. Clearly the GTs need to be able to demonstrate how they ensure UIPs are operating safely on their network and there was a general consensus that the report tabled gave good information on the companies, the affected network owners and the issues identified.

There was also a consensus that the report issued in advance of the triannual GIRS meetings was sufficient and obviates the need for a portal.

LRQA agreed to issue the report prior to the may meetings.

LRQA

5.3 Design Of Risers and Manifolds

At the UIP Forum, Steve Richards of Gas design had asked if it would be acceptable to use a 50% efficiency factor as a method to replace the equivalent length of fittings. It was reiterated that as IGEM/G/5 is explicit in its requirements, and is a 'shall', to do something different could result in challenges the UIP should the design fail.

The forum identified that the lengths in NP/14, on the old Mears Calculator and in UP/2 were not consistent.

As each Network owner has recently reviewed NP14 to ensure they align and the original equivalent lengths would have been identified in agreement with ERS there was a unanimous agreement that the equivalent lengths quoted in NP14 are the only values to be applied as they have been derived based on Distribution Network materials. As such it was not considered prudent to ask IGEM to carry out a review.

5.4 Radius Branch Saddles under development. *(For Information)*

Radius Subterra have a Minimus branch saddle that is suitable for use on 213mm swaged pipe inserted in 8" and 9" metallic mains.

David Macdonald of Radius Subterra gave a presentation on the range of fittings available from Radius Subterra. In particular, the range of PE Equal Tees were demonstrated and the fact that Tees can be made "To Order" emphasised.

Currently Radius have 90X90, 125X125, 180X180 and 250X250 Tees that are kitemarked. The benefits of the Tees was explained.

5.5 Cadent Request GIRS AE/CP STC review approvals

Rob Gregory, Cadent Network Controller, has contacted LRQA regarding the competence assurance process for the registration of GIRS Authorising Engineers and Competent Persons. Rob Gregory suggests that all STC submissions made to Cadent are supported by an approval signature from the companies technical reviewing manager.

He has asked if LRQA could raise this at the next GIRS technical forum and obtain feedback on the proposal. Additionally, adding this as a requirement in GIG2.

The Current GIRS competency framework was described as follows.

- GIG 2 already requires the Technical Advisor to oversee the competency process and this process is reviewed by LRQA and the Technical Advisor's Competency is sent to all GTS annually.
- The Technical Advisor fulfils this role by either assessing the competence of all staff and operatives or by assessing the competency of others (Line Managers etc) to assess competency.
- This is then recorded on the competence assessment and rigour of the process is checked as part of the quarterly Technical Advisor Audits.

The Issue of having a Company director to sign off the MM1 & MM2 and the associated PQQ forms where a Technical Advisor is an Authorising Engineer and/or CP, and the line manager signing off the MM1 & MM2 forms when not formerly competent to do so was also discussed.

There was a consensus that for smaller UIPs that "hire in" a Technical Advisor as a contracted resource, there would be issues if the current arrangements were changed. The danger that the number of Registered Incorporated / Chartered Engineers also being registered as AEs is diminishing was something that also has to be a consideration.

There was a consensus that the Technical Advisor and those being deemed competent by the Technical Advisor acting as the UIP reviewing manager was well established. However there was a grey area with the situation where the Technical Advisor also acts as an AE & CP that needs to be clarified.

During discussion it was agreed that the Incorporated Engineer that signs off Technical Advisor competency assessment was best placed to sign off the MM1, MM2 and PQQ forms and that a suitable form of words to clarify this would be prepared for consideration by GIRSAP.

LRQA

5.6 The Recent Cadent Pressure Testing Briefing Note

The UIP Forum once again raised the recent workshop and briefing note issued by Cadent on mains testing and test certificates and reiterated that inconsistency across the networks remains an issue, this was supported by others who say this specific issue relates to Cadent only.

Recording of ground temperature spikes remains an issue. However, the clarification on when this is required has been provided by Cadent who state that tests up to 2 hours are considered short tests and those over 2 hours were considered long and required temperature gauges and the data recording.

The UIP Forum sought GIRSAP's thoughts on this.

JF reiterated Cadent's stance that all they require is that pressure test gauges must comply with GIS-TE- P6.3 JF also stated that a new Briefing note is being prepared that will clarify the definition of a long duration test etc.

During discussion it was stated that the new connections team had received a new set of rules for validation that reduced the number of rejections and that they were working through the legacy rejections. SGN and NGN were requested to comment on the process and both stated that to date there was no change to their processes currently but would await the Cadent Briefing notes.

JF

LT asked JF if he would issue the briefing notes to LRQA so that they could circulate . This was agreed.

5.7 INA Pressure Testing Refresher Training Letter

The issues raised by the UIP forum were discussed item by item and KJ stated that he was preparing a formal response that will be circulated via LRQA once completed.

KJ reiterated that the refresher assessment was not meant to be training but that it was expected that all would sit the questions and any failures would highlight the need for further training. During discussion it was agreed that there are two skill sets relating to on site safety and the calculation of test duration and allowable pressure drop.

There was also a consensus amongst those that had carried out the refresher that all candidates were passing the safety questions but that the calculation of test durations and allowable pressure drop were where the failures occur.

It was clarified that this was not an issue, the INA expectation is that where this is identified, the UIP will implement a process that ensures those able to calculate allowable pressure drop and correct for temperature variance etc. are involved before the pipework is commissioned. It was also reiterated that the question sets are those issued in 2012 so everyone should have sat them previously.

It was clarified that the January 31st timescale was arbitrary and that as long as a program is in place there is no issue. Also, it was not a requirement to issue completed competency assessments to the INA on or before that date.

The INA expectation is that when requested, the UIP should be able to demonstrate competence and sending examples of the refresher training when requested will form part of that.

Finally there was also consensus that if a UIP did not comply with the INA requirement it would be incumbent on the UIP to defend their stance with the IGT, who would then act accordingly.

LRQA

There was a further consensus that as the HSE are aware of the request, any issues identified after a failure to comply could result in a negligence challenge.

This being the case LRQA asked if they could issue the documents via their contact lists as some UIPs do not have Connection Agreements with INA Members. This was agreed.

6. AOB

6.1 LRQA Assessors

LT informed the panel that Mike Erskine had recently joined LRQA as a Contracted Assessor in the South East

6.2 Cadent Internal Construction Audit App

JF informed the panel that Cadent have developed a Construction Audit App to support their completion file activities. They will be seeking input from the UIP forum and would like to put together a workshop to look at what should be in a construction type audit.

6.3 Hydrogen Challenge group

JF informed the meeting that he is part of the Hydrogen Challenge group and with 2026 as the defining date, the group is seeking to determine what a connection looks like in 10 years' time.

6.4 Insulation Joints on Risers and Manifolds

During discussion it was reiterated that there remains no formal design solution regarding a E17 compliant insulation joint.

During discussion it was agreed that the only solution was to use the Deviation process supported by a risk assessment. If an Insulation Joint is installed that is not suitably fire rated, then a TCO immediately upstream that would isolate the supply in the event of a fire may be acceptable where flanged fittings are available that would allow a suitable repair method should such a situation arise.

KJ

Equally where a PE cellar entry is the only viable solution, what would be the risks for the particular installation being considered, proximity to other apparatus, ground conditions etc.

KJ stated that a three-part risk assessment was in place within GTC that may be of use during the Deviation approval process and this would be circulated.

6.5 LRQA Scoring system.

As has been discussed previously KM reiterated that he had spent much time deliberating how LRQA could devise a scoring system such as a trip advisor type approach but had failed to come up with any process that withstood any robust scrutiny.

During discussion the fears relating to abuse of the system and the level of rigour required to maintain such a system were stressed. There was consensus that it is not an LRQA obligation to rank an organisation and that to do so could be deemed anti-competitive. With the new reporting system demonstrated previously, LRQA would be providing the asset owners with evidence of workmanship which is what this panel require. It was agreed that the idea should not be pursued further.

7. Date of Next Meeting

LK thanked everyone attending and for participating in what was again a very useful discussion and reiterated that communication is key and is supported by this panel.

GIRS UIP Forum	9th May, & 12th Sept 2023
GIRSAP	23rd May, and 26th September 2023