

Minutes of GIRS Providers Forum



LRQA Tuesday 14th January 2025

Venue: Microsoft Teams

Attendees:

Name	Name	Name
Admin , (rwtflowstopping)	Derek Muckle	Nick Van-Ackeren
Andy Bunten	Eric Dodd	Paul Mason
Andy Dornan	Grant Young	Peter Burnage
Andy Ginn	Philip Henderson	Peter Tootell
Andy Holland	Hollie Richardson	Ken Rauer
Alec Bromiley (AB)	Peter Humphries	read.ai meeting notes
Benjamin Lois	Ian Wilson	Robert Beavis
Carole Bishop (CaB)	Jaydene Outen	Rupinder Sandhu
Charlotte Berryman (ChB)	Joe Howells	Sarah Parker
Claire Pape (CP)	Keith Montague	Shaw, Alan
John Cooper	Louise Boccaccini (LB)	Simon brown
Jerry Cowling	Mark Davey	Simon Spencer
Daniel Scott	Mark Harrison (MH)	Steph Marvin
Danny Dunstan	Martin Peters	Stephen Maggs
Dave Morgan	Martin Swift	Steve Richards
Dave Wilkins	Karl Miller (KM)	Les Thomas (LT)
Dean O'Dee (DO)	Murray Richards	Tony Latter

Apologies / attendees at recent meetings:

The meeting request was issued to over two hundred potential attendees. Numerous apologies were received but have not been listed due to the numbers involved.

Minutes of Meeting

1. Welcome and Introductions

The chair welcomed the new and regularly attending UIP representatives to the UIP Forum. He continued by providing an overview of the agenda for the day, as there were 51 in attendance it was prudent to forgo the traditional introductions.

2. Review and acceptance of Previous Minutes Dated 10th September 2024

The minutes were accepted as a true record of events.

a) Matters Arising from previous meeting.

The main matters arising were discussed as follows:

2.a.1 Design Changes Due to Inaccurate Records

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 and there was a consensus that the portal was useful. Cadent had responded that the Portal was unlikely to be retained so were asked to confirm if the portal is being removed and if so, are the reduced rates to be retained?

At GIRSAP John Fellows (JF) explained that the charging rates are being reviewed as part of the periodic review and a single charging rate was likely to be applied shortly. JF agreed to investigate further.

No further information has been forthcoming as yet, but LB informed the meeting that Cadent are still charging portal rates for those companies that used to use the portal. She also reiterated that prices have increased around 50% and that Cadent claim they gave due notification of price increases.

There was a consensus that the price increases at circa 50% appear excessive and KM took an action to discuss with John Fellows

2.a.2 Breathing Apparatus Face Fit – Facial Hair

At the last UIP Forum it was agreed that all UIPs should have a method statement that describes the Deployment of Breathing Apparatus and the completion of a “Face Fit Test” and that GIRSAP would be consulted on whether a Deployment and Use of BA method statement should be part of the mandatory Method Statements in Section 6.1 of GIG 2 required for all UIPs holding an operational scope. LT Apologised as this was not discussed with GIRSAP and took an action to ensure it is an agenda item in the next GIRSAP Meeting.

LT took the opportunity to remind the UIPs of the use of BA when working on LPG distribution networks as LPG is heavier than air therefore there is a need to ensure the air intake is not to be positioned at ground level where pooling of LPG may occur.

The forum was consulted and there were no objections to making a BA method statement a mandatory document as part of 6.1 of GIG 2.

2.a.3 Safe working with Coil Trailers

The requirements documented in the recently issued briefing note raised at last UIP Forum, were discussed at GIRSAP and the various opinions on the definition of the Safe Zone, Amber Zone and Yellow Zone described.

Clearly the fact that there were different opinions as to what each zone represents and that there were no measurements for the width of the amber or yellow zones meant the briefing note was not sufficient to disseminate the good practice learning points.

LRQA were asked to discuss with the originator of the briefing note to request clarification on the zones and dimensions, but it was clarified the Dave Morgan had forwarded the information for dissemination via LRQA as it had been received from HS2 and was an issue for the UIP community.

JF informed GIRSAP that he had some information which might support the document understanding and would confirm if he was able to circulate. LT confirmed that no additional information has been received to date. LT asked the forum if anyone else had seen additional information and it was confirmed that no further info had been received by anyone else on the call.

2.a.4 Cadent Weekly Whereabouts

At GIRSAP JF clarified that cadent were only seeking whereabouts in line with the requirements of TD101. He continued by stating he did not think Cadent were rejecting weekly whereabouts as it is a notification process and not an approval process. DM confirmed rejections had been received and quoted examples such as when easement letters were still being negotiated.

Jemima Mitchell (JM) had suggested there was some miscommunication on the whereabouts and there may be a “Crossover Process” Issue. JM/JF to take offline. LRQA have received no further update.

During discussion it was confirmed that there are no current issues reported by the group, however, LB asked if Cadent could confirm whereabouts requirements and where they should be sent.

2.a.5 Design Variation and procedure and the SCO Deviation process

At GIRSAP JF clarified that where the design changes resulted in the same connection type, then this can be agreed that the UIPs can use the Complex.box to notify Cadent via the Technical query process.

During discussion, it was confirmed that the Technical Query process and the Complex.box has never been issued to the UIPs.

JF/JM to chase up the current contact document. LRQA have not received the current contact document, and it was confirmed that this was not issued at, or subsequent to the November Cadent / UIP forum.

2.a.6 Cadent Quotes for Mains Cut-Offs

At the last GIRSAP, JF agreed to take the issue away to see if a resolution can be obtained prior to an OFGEM submission, as there was an understanding that when quotations are issued by the “diversion team”, they may include contingencies over and above that considered for mains isolations. No response has been received to date

GIRSAP has reminded the UIP Forum that any submission to OFGEM, should the need arise, should come from the client (or the UIP) and not from GIRSAP or LRQA. During discussion it was agreed that LT (On behalf of his client, with no reference to LRQA or GIRSAP) would draft a letter that would be signed by the various TAs and or UIPs as appropriate as a formal complaint to OFGEM. During discussion it was also agreed to focus the letter on the specific area of service / Mains disconnections. The TAs were requested to provide suitable examples to support the complaint.

2.a.7 SCO registration with Wales & West Utilities

LT reminded the forum of the issue regarding the difficulties being experienced with W&WU network approval for the annual review of registrations and the changes following the recent W&WU change in SCO personnel. He continued by informing the meeting that W&WU understand the frustrations and reiterated that this is a work in progress, and it is hoped that the new SCO10 will be published, by the end of Q1 2025.

LT continued by informing the meeting that during a recent meeting with W&WU, it was confirmed they are working with other network owners to develop a consistent approach to SCO registration of individuals who work with various UIPs.

DO confirmed that he had also spoken with W&W, and with Cadent who are looking at revising the 1PQ and MM1 MM2 forms.

2.a.8 Surveillance Visit Reports Including Partial, Full and Re-certifications

Following the request of the TAs to be included in the communications when Partial, Full and Re-certifications reports are issued, LT confirmed that an email has been sent to the Utilities Team to copy the TA in Partial, Full and Re-certification reports when they are issued. The Reports have been tweaked to include the TA email address on the front page of the reports.

KM also took an action to discuss replicating the process of sending Surveillance Visit, Partial, Full and Re-certification reports to the WIRS TAs for consistency.

2.a.9 AVK Fire rated Fig 555 Valves

LB informed the Forum that the new fire rated valves are only available up to 150mm and DO informed the forum to check any valves supplied before commencing a job as the issue identified recently on fig 555 valves, where the top bolts could not be installed correctly due to being impeded by valve body, (AVK Have stated that this was an overpainting issue) are replicated on the Fire safe Valves.

There were no further matters arising.

3. REVIEW OF GIRSAP MINUTES MAY 2024

3.1 Reviewing Manager's Questionnaire

The UIP forum had commented that the completion of the form was simple, but once complete, the survey just ended with a statement Your response was submitted. Which feels incomplete.

At GIRSAP it was stated that the Cadent were just gathering information, so the response is appropriate. The Issue is therefore closed.

3.2 Design Changes due to Inaccurate Records

Discussed in 2.a.1 Above

3.3 Safe Working with Coil Trailers

Discussed in 2.a.3 above

3.4 Cadent Weekly Whereabouts

Discussed in 2.a.4 above

3.5 Wask Electrofusion saddles for use on PE Bagstops

ChB confirmed that despite the information provided by WASK regarding the fittings, no additional tooling has been issued despite repeated requests. LT confirmed that he had reviewed the data sheet on the Web (See attached), Which states "Saddles are supplied suitable for site jointing by electro fusion method using an approved GIS/PL2-5 top loading clamp tool".

Consequently, there does not appear to be an industry requirement for the UIPs to change their existing procedures and method statements when using these fittings.

3.6 Design Variation and procedure the SCO Deviation process

The issue was raised at the TD101 panel review group, regarding the process for major/minor variations and the process for their management.

It was confirmed there is no update as there has been no further meeting of the TD101 panel.

3.7 Bulletins Issued / Info raised Since Last GIRSAP – Fire Rated Gate Valves

During discussion at GIRSAP it was confirmed that it is for the individual GTs and IGTs to publish their own bulletins but that there is a Technical Panel that has been working on products for use in MOBs.

JF and Leigh Keegan (LK) agreed to confirm with their Policy section of their requirements, but there was tacit agreement that now there is a firesafe valve available, it was prudent that these should be used for all valves installed inside an occupied building whether commercial or domestic.

No information has been provided to LRQA but there was a consensus that as the valves are available, they should be used on Internal Commercial Services as well as MOBs under G5.

3.8 Cadent Quotations for Mains cut Offs.

Discussed in 2.a.6 Above

3.9 SCO registration with Wales & West Utilities

Discussed in 2.a.7 Above

3.10 TD101 Network Extensions to existing CSEPS

At GIRSAP Paul Leighton (PL) sought clarification on behalf of the TD101 panel who are seeking clarification on a section of the process dealing with load increases or load decreases to established existing CSEP's.

The UIPs are reminded that at GIRSAP, it was agreed that the amendment to any existing CSEP following the addition of a nested CSEP is the primary iGT responsibility as any variation to the CSEP will require an amendment to the Emergency Service Provision for that CSEP etc. The contractual relationship for the primary CSEP is also with the first iGT and not the downstream iGT.

3.11 SGN's review of AV1

For information LK informed GIRSAP that SGN are beginning to look at replacing their T/PM/AV/1 (Dated 2004) and that other DN's may be involved.

3.12 Cadent are updating NP14

For information JF informed GIRSAP that Cadent have reviewed and will be publishing a new T/SP/NP/14 - Specification for the design system extensions, connections and services to below 7 bar Cadent systems, document which should also improve the communication lines and areas of misunderstanding.

4. LRQA Report 2024

The full LRQA Report is attached but is summarised as follows.

Company Info

168 Companies Listed on the Web site (-7)

5 New Companies

Companies that have been removed from the register
Belac Ltd., Enso Utilities Ltd., FJ Infrastructure Services Ltd., KOR Energy Ltd., Linbrooke Services Ltd., Mercian Utilities Ltd, OCU Services Ltd and OCU Utility Services Ltd. Scottish and Southern Energy Utilities Services Ltd listed in addition to SSE Energy Solutions - (a trading name of SSE Utility Solutions Ltd Company reference 6894120), Tyson Utilities Ltd.

3 Company's accreditation is Suspended /Expire

Generally, these are companies that have left their Partial Accreditation Status Lapse
Radius Utilities Ltd. (Not to be mistaken for Radius Subterra Ltd.)

Gasco Ltd

Skanska

In 2024 LRQA have completed

225 on site Surveillance Visits (257 total in 2023)

16 Recertification visits (15 total in 2023)

15 Partial Assessments (22 total in 2023)

12 Partial to full Assessments (22 total in 2023)

Deficiencies Identified

12 Major Deficiencies (7 total in 2023)

100 Minor Deficiencies (122 in 2023)

112 visits with no deficiencies (104 During 2023)

3 Comments Made

The twelve Major deficiencies identified (the four new Highlighted in Yellow) during this year's surveillance visits were identified as:

- Multiple issues found with missing or out-of-date plant and equipment.
- No underground plans available. Escalation - Last visit this was a minor but still no plans whilst digging.
- No evidence was available that the work being carried out by the provider had been notified to the Adopting Network Owner of the work being undertaken.
- Branch Saddle on MP main tested at 1.5 bar instead of 3 bar.
- There was no evidence that the subcontractors have been inducted into the company management procedures.
- The team had not completed a Site-specific risk assessment at the time of the assessment.
- Team started work on pipework that was subject to a 3-bar test.
- Multiple issues found with key items of equipment required for the RO found to be missing with other items out-of-date.
- Inadequate separation distances, black bends cut, MP services shallow
- Multiple deficiencies with equipment including BA expired 18/4/24
- BA sets both expired 18/4/24 and are still on vehicle evidencing failure of technical audit procedures
- Meter boxes not adequately secured, no doors fitted, boxes broken, groundworker laid pipe left with open ends.

During discussion LRQA reiterated that the number of equipment defects is still one of the main issues and useful discussion on methods that are available to manage the calibration records ensued.

AB reminded the forum of the need to ensure that in order to deliver a continuous purge of multiple legs. There needs to be sufficient metallic purge stacks as moving purge stacks between purge ends results in operatives rushing between purge locations which is not satisfactory.

5. Bulletins Issued / Info raised Since Last GIRSAP

- Cadent's iGT & UIP Ref Group meeting Invite Nov 29th
- Notification of Increases of Charges Issued 27/10/2024 (Attached)
- Notification of Ofgem Call for Input on the domestic gas disconnections framework

6. AOB

a) EUSR SHEA – CSCS relationships

Carol Bishop (CaB) of EUSR gave a detailed description on the forthcoming changes with regards to the issue of Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) cards.

In summary, CSCS registration is job related and consequently, NCO(G) (W), Mainlaying, Service laying, and Assistant will continue to hold CSCS status. Whereas SHEA (Gas, Water and Power) being a safety passport, whilst being part of the qualification required to obtain the CSCS registration, are not job related and consequently are not CSCS job roles. The changes are being mandated as an outcome of the Grenfell Enquiry, and there are 38 CSCS partners involved to ensure the right cards for the job roles, and the applicable qualifications to obtain those cards are in place.

CSCS cards are being mapped to ensure the correct construction roles and qualifications are available for operative, supervisors, managers, and auditors. A panel is in place that is assisting in the mapping process, however, LB offered to assist also.

Discussion centred on need for NVQ qualifications in order to apply for the cards and the availability, of an experienced worker route where an experienced worker can obtain a card, allowing 18 months to gain the necessary NVQ qualification. The forum raised the concern that numerous older managers and operatives are unlikely to want to undertake such an endeavour and could choose to retire, further reducing an already diminishing workforce largely due to age.

CaB confirmed that for experienced workers there is no need to undergo training in order to obtain the qualification as it is possible to take the tests in isolation.

b) NCO(G) qualifications and renewals

MH raised the issue that whilst renewing his qualifications, he is being informed that he has to renew his certificates and that the certificates he currently holds will only afford him NCO(G) Self lay up to 180. (He currently holds NCO(G) Distribution, up to 355mm as well as 400mm and above).

CaB stated that the network owners would have to state they are happy for non-qualified personnel to work on their network to allow those without the appropriate NVQ qualification. However, LT reminded the meeting that the statement that the operatives were "Not Qualified" is an extrapolation too far as there can be no suggestion that someone who has worked under existing NCO(G) qualifications 400mm and above for the last ten or fifteen years is no longer competent as the certificates issued at the time of the original application are no longer understood.

It was reiterated that the GD 1-5 certificates, as well as the early NVQ qualification did not include limiting diameters on the certificates and that when the early certificated stated INSTALL ENGINEERING PRODUCTS OR ASSETS (MAINLAYING) this covers all diameters and connections as the original training programmes were over a much longer period than those run at present.

EUSR are also reminded that the Distribution and Self lay qualification was derived from the Water Industry as making a connection to the existing network was not, and is still not,

a competitive activity. This was incorrectly applied to Gas industry circa 10 to 15 years ago, it was incorrectly applied as making connections to the existing gas network is and always has been a competitive activity.

LT also reminded EUSR of the agreement made during the EUSR Distribution Self Lay discussions held between 2018 and 2019 where it was reiterated that if an NCO(G) qualification was allowed to lapse then the certificates would need to be used, and previous qualifications may not be replicated, whereas where an NCO(G) qualification was renewed prior to expiry of existing qualifications, the existing qualifications would be retained.

The UIP forum requests that as part of the job and qualification mapping process, the panel gain a thorough understanding of the certificates issued currently and in the past before existing qualifications are severely downgraded due to the wording on an old certificate that had been previously acceptable.

c) Ofgem Call for Input on the domestic gas disconnections framework.

Ofgem have published a *“Call for Input on the domestic gas disconnections framework”*. Ofgem are aware of reports from domestic consumers and consumer advocates that the current process for households to exercise their choice to disconnect their gas supply is costly and a potential barrier to transitioning away from gas. They are also aware of reports that the current regulatory framework is complex and difficult to navigate, with a lack of clear guidance available for consumers on how the process works.

OfGEM are reviewing the regulatory arrangements that govern the disconnection process for domestic and small business consumers to make sure it remains fit for purpose as the gas system continues to evolve. A PDF on the consultation is included with these minutes and the Hyperlink is included here:

[Exercising consumer choice: a review of the gas disconnections framework | Ofgem](#)

d) The correct use of black bends.

MH requested clarification on the correct use of black bends. He commented that a black bend for 32mm pipe is 621mm depth from the collar to the base of the bend, and the minimum service depth requirement is 375mm. This means that in private land, a black bend could have some 200mm exposed below the collar and the service would still comply with IGEM/TD/4. There was a consensus that the TD4 requirements should be met but providers should be aware of individual network requirements.

GIRSAP will be asked to comment.

e) Steel pipe coating

CP raised an issue where the network owner has required an enclosed steel bridge crossing to be coated as per PA10 (Maintenance Painting at Works and Site for Above Ground Pipeline and Plant Installations) and not CW6 (The external protection of steel line pipe and fittings using fusion bonded powder and other coating systems - requirements and methods of test for coating materials and factory applied coatings), with Joints and holidays to CW5 (Field applied external coatings for buried pipework and systems).

The pipe in question is to be enclosed in a purpose made duct. As the company was proposing to use LT pipe, they have been told they would need to grit blast the coating off, to apply a PA10 coating. (or use API 5L non coated pipe).

CP reiterated that the question has been raised to gain an understanding if other UIPs had experience of this? No other UIPs on the call had experienced this and there was a consensus that L2 pipe coated to CW6 would be a solution many would propose.

GIRSAP are asked if they would be willing to comment on the reasons behind adopting a PA10 method of coating as opposed to a factory applied coating to assist in the UIP's understanding of requirements.

7. Next Meeting Details

The agreed dates for 2025 meetings are:

GIRS Forum – 6th May 2025, 9th September 2025

GIRSAP – 28th Jan 2025, 20th May 2025, 23rd September 2025.