

Minutes of the 74th NERSAP Meeting

Microsoft Teams 10am 29th July 2025

Attendees:

Paul Wragg (PW)	PowerOn	paul.wragg@poweron-uk.co.uk
Paul Costelloe (PC)	LRQA	paul.costelloe@lrqa.com
Karl Miller (KM)	LRQA	karl.miller@lrqa.com
Mel Swift (MS)	GTC	mel.swift@gtc-uk.co.uk
Mick Beeby (MB)	Last Mile	mick.beeby@lastmile-uk.com
Matthew Crittenden (MC)	UKPN	matthew.crittenden@ukpowernetworks.co.uk
Ephie Chalakateva (EC)	NGED	ephie.chalakateva@nationalgrid.com
Paul Thomas (PT)	SPEN	paul.thomas@spenergynetworks.co.uk
Tracey Taylor (TT)	ENWL	tracey.taylor@enwl.co.uk
Dave Ellis (DE)	LRQA	dave.ellis@lrqa.com
Bob Fearnley (BF)	Leep	bfearnley@leeputilities.co.uk
James Barker (JB)	UCCG	jbarker@etl.ltd
Mark Elliott (ME)	NPg	mark.elliott@northernpowergrid.com
David Jones (DJ)	HEA	david@joneslighting.co.uk
Jevan Laxen (JL)	SSEN	jevan.laxen@sse.com
Charles Qian (CQ)	ESP	charles.qian@espug.com
Jonathan Jones (JJ)	Fulcrum	jonathan.jones@fulcrum.co.uk
Luay Elia (LE)	MUA	luayelia@muagroup.co.uk
Ryan Salmon (RS)	Last Mile	ryan.salmon@lastmile-uk.com

Apologies:

Apologies had been received from:

Symon Gray (SG)	IDCSL	symongray@idcsl.co.uk
Keith Montague (KMo)	UKPD	keithmontague@matrixgroup.co.uk
Simon Watton (SW)	Fulcrum	simon.watton@fulcrum.co.uk
William Cass (WC)	EA	willcass@energyassets.co.uk

1. Introductions

Introductions were made and new attendees welcomed. JJ was deputising for SW for this meeting on behalf of Fulcrum.

2. Apologies

Apologies were received from those identified above.

3. Review & Acceptance of Minutes & Actions from NERSAP Meeting of 25th March 2025

The minutes of the previous NERSAP meeting, held on 25th March 2025, were accepted as a true record of that meeting. It was agreed to review matters discussed under (4) below as the subjects were similar.

4. Review of Minutes & Actions from NERS ICP Forum of 11th July 2025

4.1 SPEN Express Safety Bulletin

PC invited MS to give a recap on this for those who did not attend the NERS Forum on 11th July 2025. This involved the back-energisation of a substation transformer from a temporarily connected generator. This was discussed at the INA Technical Group also. PT confirmed that precautions need to be taken in future to prevent recurrence. MS confirmed that the outstanding safety briefing obligations had been completed and closed.

4.2 Content of NERS Requirements Document v10

PC had invited comments from the ICP community on v10 and any suggested areas that needed addition/revision/deletion for the future version v11. PC advised that an internal LRQA NERS team meeting was planned for 1st October 2025 following which he would brief the NERS Forum and NERSAP on ideas for change in v11. PC invited comments from this meeting also.

4.3 HSE Position on Live Working

PC advised that this was linked to another discussion regarding the ENA document SHE01 and MS confirmed that an error had been identified in this and that the minor change required was to be signed off by ENA next week. MS advised that he had spoken to the HSE and had been informed that the ENA document has been reviewed and comments on it would be published shortly. No further changes are anticipated.

4.4 EUSR 'Right Card' Scheme

PC advised that LRQA's understanding is that the CSCS logo will no longer appear on SHEA cards after 30th June 2026. LRQA Have concerns about this proposal and had advised EUSR that a 'checklist' approach to determining an operative's 'fitness' to hold a relevant CSCS card would not be satisfactory due to the many routes to competence and the many anticipated variations to any checklist that EUSR may produce. MS has also raised this in his own organisation, as it appears that the EUSR proposals would be unsatisfactory in their current form.

4.5 Level 2 Apprenticeships

MS advised that the Institute for Apprenticeships & Technical Education (IfATE) had agreed to take this forward and that GTC supported by colleagues in the industry would be developing this so that it could be used as a benchmark for CSCS cards. MS confirmed that EUSR are part of the discussion.

4.6 Fire Suppression in Cupboards

BF had confirmed a discussion was ongoing with BSI, but that BSI had made an incorrect assumption that distribution supplies are protected by RCDs. Discussions are ongoing with BSI and ENA. There is concern about inadvertent operation of water fire suppression systems. MS confirmed that GTC and Energy Assets have a meeting with BSI soon. MS advised that a fire suppression system does not have to be water and that the risk of electrocution has to be balanced with the risk to life due to smoke and flame. PT advised that oxygen starvation fire suppression solutions brought their own risks to personnel.

4.7 Review of Design Competency Document

PC confirmed that a colleague at EUSR was seeking a 'Word' version of their document so that it can be edited when a Working Group convenes to review it. Once this is received PC will seek to find a mutually convenient date for all volunteers for this Working Group to meet. TT asked if there were any further volunteers for this Working Group and MS advised that someone would be available from GTC and MC commented that a UKPN representative would be put forward. CQ advised that an ESP representative would also be nominated. PT offered to seek a SPEN volunteer. PC agreed to send a link to the document to be reviewed with the minutes of this meeting.

4.8 LRQA Surveillance Visit Data

PC advised that a question had previously been raised about the disproportionate number of LRQA surveillance visits on DNO assets when most new connections (80%?) were on IDNO networks. It was identified that surveillance visits to see, for example

lighting column transfers, did not count a new connections but were nevertheless bona fide scopes of work for LRQA surveillance visits, and there are many ICPs carrying out street lighting activities which are, in the case of existing column replacements allocated as a DNO adoptable asset. PC agreed to identify the number of Highway Electrical Equipment surveillance visits in the totals presented, and also the number of ICPs that have Highway Electrical equipment scopes in their accreditations.

TT asked how surveillance visits were programmed and wondered if it was the data LRQA were receiving which was skewing the number of DNO visits. PC described the process for arranging surveillance visits. CQ asked if the visits were a certain frequency and PC responded saying the SV programme was agreed with an ICP upon achievement of 'full' accreditation.

JL asked about 'random' or unannounced surveillance visits and PC advised that there would be commercial consequences of unannounced visits and a higher risk of work being cancelled without LRQA being aware of such cancellation. To be able to carry out unannounced visits there would need to be a change in the NERS Requirements document. KM advised that unannounced audit visits (non-NERS) were carried out under another contract with an IDNO and the rate of the LRQA auditor seeing operatives carrying out work is approximately 60%.

4.9 NERS Staffing by LRQA

PC commented that there are eight NERS assessors (not all full-time) servicing circa 500 clients and new assessors are sought, particularly in Scotland, but also in the south-east of England.

4.10 Near Misses – Shallow Cables

JB was asked by the Highway Electrical Association's Safety Committee to raise awareness of the prevalence of shallow cables and data is showing an increasing number of cable strikes for this reason.

4.11 Internal Meter Positions

Discussion had taken place on the prevalence of internally mounted meters and the emphasis placed on the ICP to manage their client's expectations by producing some basic developer requirements. The problem is that the IDNO's were learning about the issues at a late stage of construction mainly due to the ICP not controlling the developer's actions at an early stage. Consensus was that the ICP design organisation should be liaising with the developer at an early stage to confirm requirements.

5. Update on NERSAP Strategy Working Group

PC advised that the meeting planned for 26th June 2025 had been cancelled due to low number of attendees accepting the invitation. PC would look to arrange a new date.

6. Update on Management of Design Competency Document Review

Discussed in 4.7 above.

7. Letter from INA re Substation Earthing Competency

PC advised that LRQA had received a letter from the INA to which LRQA had responded. It is anticipated that this will be discussed further when INA have considered LRQA's response and given their permission to share the letter's content.

8. Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)

PC advised that ME had recently been asked to complete a data collection form on behalf of NPg. PC advised that TT had been sent a copy of the MoU incorporating ENWL's suggested changes which were previously accepted by NERSAP, for signature and once that was signed, he would send it to the other NERSAP members for signature. It is likely that Clause 15 of the MoU providing for a rethink of the DNO/IDNO ratios now that there are considerably more members of NERSAP, may have to be instigated but that this should not prevent NERSAP members from signing the MoU. PC advised that in the response to INA mentioned in (7) above, LRQA had encouraged more INA members to attend NERSAP.

9. EUSR 'Right-Card' Scheme

PC advised that LRQA had met with EUSR on 22nd July 2025 to explain the NERS, WIRS and GIRS schemes and to highlight that there were already competency management systems in place with the ICPs, DNOs and IDNOs and that some collaboration would be beneficial. The Utility Services Representative Organisations (USRO) panel met on 23rd July 2025 and LRQA have a further meeting planned for 26th August 2025 at EUSR's Solihull office to explore such collaboration.

MB commented that there are well developed competency management systems, including those in NERS accredited organisations, that EUSR should accept. KM responded that an EUSR administrator with a checklist is a situation that we should seek to avoid, and that he and PC were doing their best to advise EUSR.

MS advised that the proposal was being challenged by the ENA because they do not believe that EUSR/CSCS can make the necessary competency determinations on behalf of the industry and that he would attempt to find out what the current stance on this is.

10. LRQA Report

PC presented the data relating to surveillance visits carried out. The Major Deficiencies were discussed. CQ asked about how the deficiency concerning lack of NERS passports was closed out and PC responded that the passports were found, and it was not a case of there being no passport in existence, just that they were not available and hence a Major Deficiency.

On the Major Deficiency concerning lack of gas plans MS asked if the National Underground Asset Register (NUAR) was being utilised in addition to Linesearch and suggested that this may be beneficial to include in v11 of the NERS Requirements. MB commented that NUAR is not yet a mandatory requirement but expected it to be so soon.

PC reported that there are 485 ICPs with at least 10 awaiting assessment and that realistically there are now 500+ ICPs.

EC asked if there was a limit on the number of times an ICP can be suspended and KM replied that there is no limit but that ICPs can be terminated indefinitely for severe safety breaches and for non-payment of LRQA invoices where legal action is instigated.

TT asked how long an ICP can remain suspended and what the process is for re-accreditation. PC replied that suspension can be until issues are resolved. TT asked if other Network Operators had processes for preventing suspended ICPs from accessing their networks. EC replied that NGED would revoke network access agreements.

EC asked if there was guidance on what constituted a Major or Minor Deficiency, and DE responded that this was described in section 1.3 of the NERS Requirements document.

11. AOB

EC advised that while ICPs sometimes commence construction at their own risk pending design approval or without a design at all, it would help if the NERS Requirements made it clear that work cannot commence without design approval or at least a design submitted. PC agreed to look at this for v11 of the NERS Requirements document. EC asked for details of the process for changing the NERS Requirements document and PC explained that the

ICPs were asked for their comments with a view to shaping the future of the document and that NERSAP give the final sign-off for a new version.

KM commented that the slide presented with all IDNOs could be rationalised to show only those where visits had taken place.

TT advised that she had sought feedback from colleagues about substation earthing and asked if assessment of design covered substation earthing and other requirements such as G5 harmonic studies. PC responded that this could probably be more fully covered when INA give permission to circulate their concerns on this subject. This could also be covered in the working group being set up to review design competence.

MC advised that UKPN have very high failure rate (approx. 40%) on asset inspections and EC agreed that NGED also have the same high rates. NGED are currently assembling data in this respect. MB advised that Last Mile are experiencing earthing issues and CT shorting links being left in place when proposed networks are due to be energised. MC advised that there seems to be a lack of knowledge on earthing. CQ advised that ESP are having similar difficulties in getting ICPs back to carry out remedial work. PC advised that deficiency reports from Network Operators to LRQA might assist with focussing LRQA surveillance visit activity. JB supported comments regarding less than competent electricians who are used on domestic installation, now being allowed to work on highway electrical equipment. MS confirmed that in his experience there were problems with people not having the requisite competence and experience and that this would likely be debated at future meetings. BF advised that he was referring ICPs to the incumbent DNO standards for earthing.

JL, MC, TT and EC agreed to have a separate conversation about the audit failure rate.

DE asked for further details of what records were accessible via Linesearch and MB explained that IDNOs provide Linesearch with a list of all assets in a given area. Last Mile would comply with legislation when it comes into force concerning the National Underground Asset Register.

JL asked about some civils issues that had been raised and asked if there was a view as to whether civils structures such as substations should be brought under the NERS Requirements. KM commented that as long as LRQA have competent people recruited it is something that LRQA could take on. MB asked why substation installation scopes did not include the civils elements. PC responded that substation installation is included in NERS and elements such as substation construction are not currently included. CQ supported JL's point and queried what civil works in NERS involved and PC replied that when civil works were introduced it was meant as excavation and back-filling for cable laying. Some possible

clarification in scope descriptors may be required. MS confirmed that civils elements should be included. DE queried whether civil works would require LRQA to certify the soundness of construction and MB replied that no certification would be required in the same way as certification for other NERS installation works such as cable jointing is also not carried out by LRQA.

BF commented that asking LRQA to assess civil construction works would be a wide-ranging activity which would vary considerably on a national basis and that LRQA would need suitably qualified personnel.

CQ asked if civil works should be included in the Governance of Network Design Competency and the meeting agreed that it should be considered.

PW asked that civil works for substation construction be considered in a future version of the NERS Requirements and in the revision of the Governance of Design Competence document.

MS advised that he had come across versions of the NRSWA 'red book' in Polish and Romanian but that there was no official version of NRSWA in any other language than English and was concerned that such versions in other languages may not be accurate. PC was willing to have a comparison done if LRQA colleagues in other countries were willing to help.

PC and PW thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting.

PC advised the dates for the remaining 2025 meetings as:

NERS Provider Forum 11th November

NERSAP 25th November