



Minutes of the NERS Provider Forum

Microsoft Teams Meeting on 7th November 2023 10:00am

Attendees:

Paul Costelloe	Julie Tyrrell	Jamie Berry	Alison Silva
Mel Swift	Neil Briody	Jake Pariente	Michael Waller
Paul Wragg	Garry Turner	James Burnett	Bill Jones
Karl Miller	Vicki Dunn	Paul Banyard	Andy Bunten
Martyn Crocker	Richard Thomas	Steve Neighbour	Michael Devine
Dave Morgan	Paul Higgins	David Tong	James Donnelly
Gareth Pritchard	Mark McGovern	Steve Mander	Bill Robertson
Graham Commons	Jason Everall	Rupinder Heer	Fraser Baxter
Clare Roberts	Andy Billings	Rebecca Lewis	David Butler
Huw Crocombe	Richard Connaughton	Craig Lloyd	Brian Cutler
Russell Barker	Charmaine Boddington	Jenny Salt	Matthew Hodkin
Mark Bryant	Jason Everall	Andrew Stewart	Bob McGill
Ben Feltham	Martyn Park-Carpenter	David Richards	Frank Williamson
Paul Thomas	Steve Johnson	Jason Critchley	
Andy Barnes	Simon Burnett	Bruce Totten	
Steve Harvey	Sinead Nelligan	Craig Smith	
Keith Montague	Paul Ingram	Peter Salmon	
Deborah Keedy	Mick Coleman	Ian Stoneham	
Phillip Henderson	Neil Rudge	Gary Madgwick	
Mike Gambe	William Ward	Adrian Foster	
Brian McSheffery	Andrew McAllister-Brown	Elena Gorman	
Zoe Close	Darryl New	Stephen Borthwick	
Iain Hamilton	Seb Neto	Rob Bailey	
Jeff Reynolds	Kyle Morgan	Chay Rees	
Steve Owen	David Delia	James Barker	
Gavin McKechnie	Willie Bryce	Stewart Herron	
Lanre Abe	Chris Rogers	Neil Crawford	
Dan Hartup	Chris Clark	Narinder Rayit	

1. Introductions

Paul Costelloe (PC) of LRQA thanked everyone for their attendance and reiterated that due to the number of attendees, formal introductions were foregone. The agenda was reviewed and the arrangements for this Teams Meeting were described. PC advised that the meeting was being recorded on Microsoft Teams for the purposes of accurately capturing discussions for the meeting minutes.

2. Apologies

As this was a Teams meeting and there were no restrictions to numbers, over 400 invitations had been sent and there had been 77 original acceptances plus 25 tentative acceptances and 26 declined. With 96 attending on the day, due to the nature of the open invitation, only attendees are identified in the minutes.

3. Acceptance of Previous Minutes

The minutes were accepted as a true record of the meeting.

4. Review of Minutes & Actions from NERS Providers Forum Meeting of 4th July 2023

4.1 Version 9 of the NERS requirements document.

PC advised that v9 was published 1st March 2023 and that ICPs should now be complying with that version. Currently v10 is being drafted and PC invited comments on anything that the ICP community felt needed clarifying, amending or deleting in that version.

4.2 Section 50 Notices

There is an outstanding issue regarding Local Authorities NRSWA 1991 requirements making Section 50 applications overly onerous. Mel Swift (MS) of BUUK advised that the DoT were going to allow the local authorities to apply Section 50 as they see fit and that this item should be closed.

4.3 Communications (Access to Infrastructure) Regulations 2016

MS advised that there was renewed interest from SSE on this and is seeking to arrange a further meeting to move this forward when diaries permit.

4.4 Energy Networks Association (ENA) Competency Group

MS advised that there is an ongoing conversation with ENA and HSE about refresher training for individuals working in the electricity industry and that the draft document for SAPs working for employers who are members of the Energy Networks Association is nearing completion and it is assumed that this will be publicly available once signed-off.

The EUS Competency Accord is a scheme originated by Energy & Utility Skills which aims to implement a standard of competence for those working in the electricity industry, is a separate issue and whilst some DNOs are using it there are others that do not intend to use it.

MS acknowledged that PC and Karl Miller (KM) had met with HSE and had used the opportunity to raise awareness of these ongoing 'competency' initiatives, and confirmed that to his understanding the HSE were still moving this forward,

Graham Commons (GC) of Balfour Beatty stated that it was regrettable that more parties could not agree to move forward with the Competency Accord and asked MS if refresher courses would be at 3 yearly intervals. MS responded that he thought it would be less frequent than 3 years.

4.5 Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)

PC again advised that LRQA had not yet received signed copies from all Network Operators who are members of NERSAP and who were sent it for signature. This will be an agenda item at the next NERSAP meeting.

4.6 Certificates of Competence

PC has previously raised the issue of Certificates of Competence showing competencies for scopes of work outside of the respective employer's NERS accreditation where the ICP does work on 'non-contestable' activities and so where NERS accreditation is not required. The general consensus amongst those who commented was that the risk of an employee being scheduled to do work under NERS for which the employing ICP was not accredited, was outweighed by the inconvenience of having to issue separate certificates for contestable and non-contestable activities. This was discussed further at the NERSAP meeting on 28th February 2023 where the consensus was that the NERS requirements should be adhered to (i.e. competencies applicable to non-accredited scopes should not appear on the same CoC as those applicable to accredited scopes).

There were differing views on this and GC commented that his company (Balfour Beatty) were issuing separate certificates, MS further advised that his company would not be issuing separate competence certificates since their systems would not cater for this, and that he thought we should change the NERS requirements accordingly. Any potential changes will be sanctioned by NERSAP.

4.7 AOB – Working with IDNOs

Huw Crocombe (HC) of Total Utility Connections had previously commented that his company experiences some difficulty in working with some IDNO's and the real issue seems to be the authorisation process to work on the networks. HC advised the meeting that following LRQA's letter to the Independent Networks Association (INA) describing his concerns, an assurance had been given by INA that its members were, in fact observing the CiC Code of Practice and furthermore that it was a condition of their respective licenses from OFGEM. PC thanked MS for his assistance in opening LRQA dialogue with INA and advised that INA had been co-operative in advising contact details for their members so that each IDNO could be invited to NERSAP.

MS advised that INA were committed to ensuring compliance with the CiC CoP and would be willing to assist further if necessary.

5. Review of Minutes & Actions from NERSAP Meeting of 18th July 2023

A brief overview of the various topics documented in the minutes was provided and the actions discussed below.

5.1 Notifications of Major Deficiencies to Respective Network Operator

PC stated that all LRQA assessors had been asked to notify the respective NERSAP representative at the time of finding major deficiencies.

5.2 Access to Infrastructure Regulations

PC gave an overview of these regulations for the benefit of those not at previous ICP Provider Forum meetings. MS confirmed that because of current workload SSE had struggled to commit to a date for continuing to progress this. It was suggested that there is still an appetite for LRQA devising a scheme and that SSE would be ready in early 2024.

5.3 Project Management Apprenticeship

Paul Thomas (PT) of Scottish Power Energy Networks had shared details of a Project Management Apprenticeship and confirmed that he was happy to share this with the wider ICP community. This is circulated to attendees with these minutes.

On the subject of Project Management PC confirmed that the direction of travel with the NERS Requirements document was that ICPs with Construction scopes would not be allowed to sub-contract work unless they had also been assessed for Project Management scopes. LRQA had produced a 'Schedule of Responsibilities' document which would make compliance much easier, and this is attached with these minutes, and should be incorporated into the respective ICPs document management system as their own document. GC supported this and advised that LRQA's work on this had been very useful.

5.4 ICP Pre-Inspection Prior to Handover

Martyn Crocker (MC) of UKPN advised that an analysis of UKPN's audit performance data relating to handover of constructed assets showed that 30-40% of ICPs were failing due to poor project management performance and that they appeared to be relying too heavily on UKPN to identify snagging items. The key to resolving this lies in ensuring that up-front conversation confirming that the ICP were better prepared for the audit, particularly where days or weeks had passed since the ICP last saw the assets to be handed over. PT confirmed that SPEN were encountering similar problems.

5.5 Design Requirements for Highway Electrical Equipment

The ENWL representative at NERSAP had enquired about the agreed words relating to this not appearing in v9 of the NERS Requirements and PC agreed to look into this but thought that it had been agreed that these words were not necessary.

5.6 'As-Laid' Not Being Returned in a Timely Manner

Clare Roberts (CR) of Northern Powergrid had previously raised this and PC asked for comments. PT confirmed that SPEN were encountering similar problems with this also. MS confirmed as an IDNO that GTC were encountering similar problems. This is to be discussed at NERSAP.

6. Update on NERSAP Working Groups

PC confirmed that the Competency Working Group had merged into the Strategy Working Group and that a meeting took place on 20th March 2023 where the direction had been set. The next meeting is 15th December and PC agreed to circulate anything significant arising from that meeting to ICPs rather than wait until the next ICP Forum in March 2024.

7. NERS Report

PC gave a presentation showing the Surveillance Visit activity and deficiencies noted, in the period since the last meeting (i.e. July, August, September and October 2023) advising that the previous system used for data reporting had been dispensed with in favour of iAuditor from which the presented data was drawn. PC stated that the new system allowed for reporting up to as late as the end of October 2023 even though this was only a few days ago, because less data extraction/manipulation was required compared to the previous system.

GC stated that the presented data was much easier to understand than what was being presented a year ago, and congratulated LRQA on this. It was agreed to circulate the presented data to attendees with the minutes of this meeting.

8. Any Other Business (AOB)

8.1 Project Management Scopes

Garry Turner (GT) of HVSS asked about situations where clients are arranging design activities and then asking other ICPs to carry out construction and whether there is a need for those clients to have NERS Project Management scopes. PC confirmed that this is indeed the case where it concerns contestable connections work. PC agreed to circulate the LRQA produced 'Schedule of Responsibilities' which is aimed at ICPs requiring Project Management scopes. Gavin McKechnie (GMK) of Volker Highways asked if ICPs would need to request Project Management scopes and PC advised that this would be picked up at renewal and because LRQA had been reiterating this requirement at renewal for at least 2 years, there shouldn't be too many ICPs who are unaware of this now.

8.2 Perceived 'Policy Changes' Within Northern Powergrid

Jeff Reynolds (JR) of Envevo raised the issue about rejection of designs on the basis of 'policy changes' and gave an example of a briefing note relating to a policy change which was issued by NPg some time after a design had been rejected on the basis of this policy change. CR stated the briefing note was a reminder as the policy exists but due to the level of EVCP and the nature of their location, it was prudent to offer this reminder. JR also mentioned that there was an issue relating to TR7 substation housings when designs had already been approved. CR stated that they were more than happy to have a meeting with Envevo to resolve these issues. JR stated that policies which are referred to by NPg need to be available.

GT asked CR if TR7s were ok to use since they have a stock of them. GT stated HVSS has an email to confirm they can be used on NPg sites.

Iain Hamilton (IH) of Envevo stated that his company had received design rejections where TR7s were proposed for use despite having previously been approved by NPg and other DNOs.

CR agreed to investigate the above two issues i.e. TR7 and policy information.

Jake Pariente (JP) of SWAT Utilities asked if he could safely specify TR7s as well as a 3-part pre-cast substation base from Bancrete. CR agreed to take this issue away for an answer and in the meantime the mailbox cinc.connections@northernpowergrid.com can be used to request an invite for future NPg CinC seminars.

9. Dates of Next Meetings

Dates for 2023 Meetings

- NERS Provider Forum None
- NERSAP 21st November

Proposed Dates for 2024 Meetings (to be ratified by NERSAP 21st Nov)

- NERS Provider Forum 12th March, 16th July, 12th November
- NERSAP 26th March, 30th July, 26th November