

## Minutes of GIRS Advisory Panel Meeting



### Microsoft Teams Meeting

20<sup>th</sup> May 2025 10:00 am

#### Attendees

Les Thomas (LT)	leslie.thomas@lrqa.com (Secretary)
Leigh Keegan (LK)	leigh.keegan@sgn.co.uk (Chairperson)
Paul Leighton (PL)	Paul.Leighton@fulcrum.co.uk
Dean O'Dee (DO)	dean.odee@me.com
Keith Johnston (KJ)	Keith.Johnston@gtc-uk.co.uk
Steven McGill (SM)	stevenmcgill@energyassets.co.uk
Alex Green (AG)	alex.green@espug.com
Jemima Mitchell (JM)	Jemima.Mitchell@cadentgas.com
Maria Kirkness (MK)	Maria.Kirkness@wwutilities.co.uk
Geoffrey Harle (GH)	GHarle@northerngas.co.uk
Dave Morgan (DM)	dave.morgan@fincherutilitiesltd.co.uk
Karl Miller (KM)	karl.miller@lrqa.com
Gareth Arnold (GA)	Gareth.arnold@indigopipelines.co.uk
David Lee (DL)	David.Lee@lastmile-uk.com
Bharath Devaiah	Bharath.Devaiah@cadentgas.com
Rachel Whitelock	rachel.whitelock@wwutilities.co.uk

#### 1. Welcome introductions and apologies for absence.

LK welcomed everyone to the 2nd GIRSAP meeting of 2025 and thanked everyone for the good turnout.

There were some new faces and stand in's so a quick introduction of everyone took place.

**Apologies:** Apologies had been received from Peter O'Neil (PO) and Richard Welsby).

#### 2. Acceptance of previous minutes & matters arising

The previous minutes dated 28<sup>th</sup> January 2025 were accepted as a true record of events.

##### 2.1. The outstanding Actions from Previous Meeting were discussed as follows

##### 2.1.1. Safe working with Coil Trailers

The interpretation of the requirements documented in the recently issued briefing note was discussed at a previous UIP Forum, with various opinions on the definition of the Safe Zone, Amber Zone and Yellow Zone presented. GIRSAP had been asked if there was any other information that could be used to disseminate the good practice learning points. The discussion in the January GIRSAP centred on the offer by John Fellows to confirm if he could circulate additional information which might support document understanding.

ACTION BY

Closed

<p>JM informed the panel that there was no additional information available, but during discussion it was confirmed that the working party is still ongoing. GH informed the panel that Steve Vick has developed a retro fit “Coil Control” device specifically engineered for coil trailers, designed to minimise the inherent dangers associated with handling and dispensing coiled pipe within the gas utilities sector. This action is closed.</p> <p><b>2.1.2. Cadent Weekly Whereabouts</b> During the January discussion regarding the content of the information provided in the weekly whereabouts. Ideas such as having a central repository on a SharePoint site were tabled and KM took an action to see if such a SharePoint site was possible.</p> <p>KM Stated that the LRQA team are still evaluating the best way of approaching this action so there is currently no update.</p> <p>Note: For information at the UIP Forum Graham Cocksey raised a concern that having a central repository would mean the site would need to be managed, which could be onerous.</p> <p><b>2.1.3. Design Variation and procedure the SCO Deviation process</b> At the January GIRSAP, JM informed the panel that the Cadent contact list had been issued to the UIPs in December and as requested LRQA provided the contact list used for the UIP forum.</p> <p>JM informed the panel that Cadent are undergoing a further organisational change and that a new contact list would be issued to LRQA for circulation shortly</p> <p><b>2.1.4. EUSR SHEA – CSCS relationships</b> LT reminded the panel of the background to the EUSR CSCS proposal. In December 2024, EUSR shared the planned changes to their EUSR CSCS card schemes, including the removal of the CSCS logo from SHEA cards. They also announced plans for this change to be effective from 1 June 2025.</p> <p>In the January UIP forum, Carole Bishop (CaB) of EUSR gave a detailed description on the forthcoming changes with regards to the issue of Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) cards.</p> <p>In the UIP forum, Carl Blezzard clarified the current position and contributed with examples of correspondence he has had with EUSR over the issue. He also gave a detailed update of the process underway and stated he thought there had been a delay agreed. There had been no such notification to the UIP community, so the confusion remained. CB took an action raise the issue with EUSR.</p> <p>An email has been issued by EUSR stating the CSCS Card Changes deadline has been extended to June 2026.</p> <p>During discussion LK confirmed that having spoken to Trainers at SGN, they were not aware of the impending change and KM gave an update on meetings currently being arranged between LRQA and EUSR. KM to provide an update at the next panel meeting.</p>	<p>KM</p> <p>JM</p> <p>KM</p>
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<p><b>2.1.5. EUSR SHEA – CSCS Qualifications</b></p> <p>LT gave an update regarding EUSR registrations where long term experienced operatives are losing their above 180mm and Distribution qualification as EUSR ratify the information provided.</p> <p>Following prompt regarding a particular operative:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EUSR have located a list of archived units</li> <li>• The spreadsheet contained thousands of units, requiring manipulation of data to isolate relevant entries.</li> <li>• C&amp;G listed units were identified, including secondary references (e.g., GNO 201S or GNO210M), believed to be internal C&amp;G references.</li> <li>• An extensive mapping exercise was conducted using the assessor guide, GNO qualification certificates, and archived units.</li> <li>• As a result, the units provided can now be accepted as the contents of the Level 2 GNO qualification.</li> </ul> <p>The current NCO registrations scheme has the following registration categories for Main layer.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Main Layer up to 180mm</li> <li>• Main Layer 180mm up to 355mm</li> <li>• Main Layer 400mm and above</li> </ul> <p>EUSR have stated that as the contents in the older GNO units state individuals will have been trained and assessed up to 400mm pipe, this does not align to the current NCO gas scheme registration categories. EUSR’s proposed solution is therefore that they need to create a new category of 180mm up to 400mm for the Level 2 GNO qualification only.</p> <p>EUSR have confirmed that this work is already underway and once this has been finalised, we will update the operatives EUSR registrations to reflect the correct registration categories /pipe sizes on the CSCS Blue Skilled Worker card.</p> <p>The issues relating to EUSRs decisions to award Operatives Self Lay, (which is a water term and under the previous descriptions on the EUSR web site did not include the unit Conduct Specified Connections to gas network mains and commissioning), to operatives that have long held the Distribution qualification if they don’t hold Unit 020 ‘Prepare resources and segregate the area for highways works during gas network operations (Mainlaying)’ were also discussed.</p> <p>The discussion prompted the question, who does EUSR report to, as there was a consensus that as network owners have responsible engineers who determine the competence of their operatives, and any changes to qualifications should be ratified by them or at least a body that they have influence over. This is to be raised with EUSR by Karl Miller via Fergus Kaye.</p>	<p>LT/JM</p> <p>Closed</p> <p>KM</p>
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#### **2.1.6. SCO GL6 and SCO 10 and SCO11 review**

During the January GIRSAP and the discussion on the ongoing the review of the of the SCO documentation in an effort to streamline the process to make it easier for all, GH stated that an individual based approval could be difficult and quoted an example of someone holding approval for hot works when the company does not.

Whilst not addressed at the January meeting, PA raised a valid point about how does the reviewing manager role work with a single submission.

KJ clarified the position stating that under the new proposals, there would be a simplification of the forms used to streamline the process, the method of retention of registration information by the network owners may be streamlined, but registration applications would still need to be carried out on behalf of each company. He reiterated the importance of the reviewing manager role and clarified that if a reviewing manager stated an operative was competent, and that person was found not to be so, following an incident, then the reviewing manager could be found culpable.

### **3. LRQA Report**

#### **3.1.1. Surveillance visits Report Year to Date 2025**

The surveillance visit detailed results were included as an attachment to the meeting invite and are summarised as follows:

There are 169 active companies listed on the web site three of which are currently suspended having let their Partial Accreditation Status Lapse. 45 remain at partial accreditation.

#### **3.1.2. Discussion of Findings raised – 2025**

- 81 on site Surveillance Visits
- 15 Design Surveillance Visits (22 total in 2024)
- 5 Recertification visits (16 total in 2024)
- 7 Partial Assessments (15 total in 2024)
- 2 Partial to full Assessments (12 total in 2024)

During the surveillance visits the following deficiencies have been identified:

- 1 Major Deficiency (12 total in 2024)
- 35 Minor Deficiencies (100 in 2024)
- 41 visits with no deficiencies (112 During 2024)
- 4 Comments Made

The Major deficiencies identified on site during 2024 were described and a breakdown of the sections with the highest findings was provided that demonstrated most findings are raised under section 4.2.3 regarding Cards being in date and the appropriate qualifications held. SCO, Streetworks, NCO(G) etc.

<p><b>4. Review of UIP Forum Minutes 6<sup>th</sup> May 2025</b></p> <p>The minutes had been circulated with the agenda for this meeting. It was noted that attendance remained strong with 40 Attendees.</p> <p>The key areas of discussion were highlighted as follows:</p> <p><b>4.1.1. Design Changes Due to Inaccurate Records</b> GIRSAP considers the matter closed and with no further comments from UIPs this action is closed</p> <p><b>4.1.2. Breathing Apparatus Face Fit – Facial Hair</b> It was agreed following a unanimous vote, that a method statement for BA deployment and the completion of a Face Fit test should be added to the method statements required by section 6.2. effective by May 2025.</p> <p>LT apologized to the forum that the revised GIG 2 document has not been hosted yet but will be available with the meeting minutes for implementation by September 2025.</p> <p><b>4.1.3. Safe working with Coil Trailers</b> Discussed in 2.1.1 above</p> <p><b>4.1.4. Cadent Weekly Whereabouts</b> Discussed in 2.1.2 above</p> <p><b>4.1.5. Design Variation and procedure and the SCO Deviation process</b> Discussed in 2.1.3 above</p> <p><b>4.1.6. Cadent Quotations for Mains cut Offs.</b> As required by the UIP Forum, a letter has been issued to OfGEM on behalf of the affected companies with no reference to LRQA or GIRSAP.</p> <p>A meeting with OfGEM was held with Les Thomas Representing CM Utilities Infrastructure Ltd and Dave Morgan Representing Fincher Utilities in attendance on the 19th May 2025 where they expressed an interest in this area. As the Gas Act was developed to encourage competition in connections, it is considered weak in this area.</p> <p><b>4.1.7. Body Vent requirements</b> At the UIP forum, Peter Tootell of Rush Construction asked the forum if anyone had, or knew of, a procedure or specification for installing valve body vents on 7 Bar strategic valves. No attendees had anything, and this led to a discussion on the matter.</p> <p>It was stated as body vents are a screwed connection that a deviation is required for every occasion as the requirement is for welded or flanged joints on 7 Bar installations. The screwed joint contravenes existing requirements.</p>	<p>Closed</p> <p>LT</p>
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During discussion it was agreed that the issue to be taken to GIRSAP to request if the network owners had a standard design the UIPs could use and to request if a blanket deviation could be agreed as this is a known issue.

During discussion it was confirmed that there is no “model design” and that each network owner may have their own requirements. The panel was reminded that with circa 15 active network owners, this means the designer has difficulties in agreeing a deviation for every valve. JM stated that Cadent’s requirements had now been confirmed and that for valves at a depth of 750mm the body vents need not be brought to the surface.

Further discussion included a suggestion that, as these “Strategic” valves would not be installed often it would be prudent to construct a pit where the valve, purge points, pressure points and body vent could be easily exposed. This was not agreed; however the network owners agreed to consider their requirements to establish if a Model design could be prepared that their UIPs could use as a basis for their design submission

PL stated that these proposals were presented to the INA, and they suggested that this did not apply to development sites. LT confirmed that CaB had stated that CSCS Cards are required on any CDM site, which would be many domestic or industrial developments.

KJ expressed concern as his SHEA Gas card state CSCS and with an expiry date of 2027.

KM admitted that there was a panel chaired by Karl Blezzard mapping jobs etc with contributors from the various utilities but that there seems to be confusion with conflicting information.

#### **4.1.8. IGEM/TD/101 Edition 4**

At the UIP forum Louise Boccaccini informed the meeting that TD101 Edition 4 is out for comment with a deadline of 14/5/25. Also, GL6 to be sent out for comment within the next couple of months.

#### **4.1.9. Design Approval Concerns**

At the UIP forum, Sheila Lauchlan highlighted concerns over IGTs rejecting designs linked to mains installations and the installation of PIVs. The discussion centred on the designer, being vulnerable if they propose a design based on their risk assessment then to be asked to remove a safety device and revise their original risk assessment.

The forum was reminded of HSE guidance on CDM which states  
*A designer is an organisation or individual, who (a) prepares or modifies a design for a construction project (including the design of temporary works); or (b) arranges for or instructs someone else to do so.’*

The UIPs feel that HSE guidance implies GTs assume ‘designer’ responsibilities. Therefore, if they want design changes, they should do their own Risk Assessment

Hierarchy of risk and designs for MOBS was also examined as the GT preference is the third level in the hierarchy of risk. The UIP forum requests that GIRSAP clarify requirements such that a consistent approach be adopted.

LT

During discussion the original rejection was explained as the PIV in the location suggested would have isolated a dwelling that was not actually part of the MOB. This has since been resolved. Further discussion confirmed that the Chair of the IGEM/G/5 Panel had been asked for clarification of requirements which had been returned. LT to provide to AG.

#### **4.1.10. IGEM/TD/3 and TD/4 changes to pressure testing requirements being implemented**

LT informed the forum that digital pressure testing allowances have been reviewed in TD3 and TD4.

##### **IGEM/TD/3 Edition 6**

Where the MOP  $\leq$  75 mbar, if the calculated test period is less than 15 minutes (0.25 hours), a 15-minute test with 0.5 mbar maximum pressure loss allowed has to be applied.

Where the MOP  $>$  75 mbar, if the calculated test period is less than 15 minutes (0.25 hours), a 15-minute test with no pressure loss allowed has to be applied.

##### **IGEM/TD4/ Edition 5**

SERVICE MOP	MOP (GAUGE)	TEST PRESSURE (GAUGE)	TEST PERIOD	MAXIMUM PRESSURE LOSS (FLUID (WATER) GAUGE)	MAXIMUM PRESSURE LOSS (ELECTRONIC TESTER)
MOP $\leq$ 75 mbar	75 mbar	100 mbar	5 min	nil	0.2 mbar

*Note 1: Suitable test instruments are fluid (water) gauges and electronic testers accurate to less than 3 mbar*

Group members were alerted to these potential changes.

#### **5. LRQA Annual Rate review**

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 the CPI or the following formula  
 $NR = \text{current fee} (0.1 + 0.9(\text{February Current year indices} / \text{February previous year indices}))$

The rate increase requested for 2025 is 3.7% This was agreed

#### **6. AOB**

##### **6.1.1. Cadent Caveat wording in design approvals**

JM stated that the caveat wording in the Design approvals is changing and the UIPs that the UIPs need to read the wording and to satisfy themselves that they are agreeing to the changes.

#### **6.1.2. Cadent NRO sign off**

JM stated that where Cadent's NRO's, as part of the contingency plan effect more that >5000 customers they now need sign off from a director.

***Addendum to Meeting** Peter O'Neill has contacted LRQA to point out that this will take more time and the UIPs are asked to submit these NROs as early as possible.*

#### **6.1.3. Cadent Re-Organisation**

JM stated that Cadent are undergoing a re-organisation so contacts may be changing roles or exiting the business.

#### **6.1.4. W&WU Engineering update day**

RW stated that W&WU are holding an update day on the 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> June and the UIPs are invited to attend

#### **6.1.5. GD3 - Changes to one off service charging by the GDNs**

LK stated that from April 1<sup>st</sup>, the start date of the next regulatory period for the GDNs the requirement for network owners to provide the first ten metres in the highway free of charge for all new domestic one-off service request, is being removed. The removal of the Domestic Load Connection Allowance (DLCA) means that the UIPs will better be able to compete with the network owners on cost.

During discussion Dave Morgan (UIP representative) reminded the panel that the UIPs are still unlikely to be competitive due to the Section 50 costs.

### **7. Next meeting dates**

LK thanked everyone attending and for participating in what was again a very useful discussion.

The following dates for the 2025 Meetings were agreed

GIRS Forum – 9th September 2025

GIRSAP – 23rd September 2025.