

Minutes of the 69th NERSAP Meeting

Microsoft Teams on 21st November 2023

Attendees:

Martyn Crocker (MC)	UKPN	martyn.crocker@ukpowernetworks.co.uk
Paul Costelloe (PC)	LRQA	paul.costelloe@lrqa.com (Secretary)
Nigel Evans (NE)	LRQA	nigel.evans@lrqa.com
Karl Miller (KM)	LRQA	karl.miller@lrqa.com
Clare Roberts (CRo)	NPG	clare.roberts@northernpowergrid.com
Paul Wragg (PW)	PowerOn	paul.wragg@poweron-uk.co.uk
Simon Burnett (SB)	MES	simon.burnett2@morrisones.com
Paul Leary (PL)	Matrix	paulleary@matrixgroup.co.uk
Paul Thomas (PT)	SPEN	paul.thomas@spenergynetworks.co.uk
Tracey Taylor (TT)	ENWL	tracey.taylor@enwl.co.uk
Chris Roe (CR)	UCCG-EoN	chris.roe@eonenergy.com
Kelly McLaughlin (KMCL)	NGED	kmclaughlin@nationalgrid.co.uk
William Cass (WC)	Last Mile	William.cass@lastmile-uk.com
Luay Elia (LE)	MUA	luayelia@muagroup.co.uk
Colin Jamieson (CJ)	IDCSL	colin.jamieson@idcsl.co.uk

Apologies:

Apologies had been received from:

Symon Gray	EAN	symongray@energyassets.co.uk
Gareth Pritchard	HEA	gareth.pritchard@thehea.org.uk
Mel Swift	GTC	mel.swift@gtc-uk.co.uk
Mick Beeby	Last Mile	mick.beeby@lastmile-uk.com
Andy Green	Eclipse	andy.green@eclipsepower.co.uk
Kyle Smith	NGED	ksmith3@nationalgrid.co.uk

1. Introductions

Introductions were made and new attendees welcomed. Several potential new attendees who had accepted an invitation to this meeting did not attend.

2. Apologies

Apologies were received from those identified above.

3. Election of Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson

Martyn Crocker (MC), as the previous Deputy Chairperson, was proposed by PC as the new Chairperson without objection from the other members of the meeting. PC further proposed that Paul Wragg (PW) or Chris Roe (CR) take up the position of Deputy Chairperson. PW was nominated as Deputy Chairperson on the proviso that the MoU would be amended via an addendum to allow

for an ICP representative to be installed as Deputy Chairperson and eventually Chairperson. This proposal was unopposed.

4. Acceptance of Previous Minutes

The minutes of the previous NERSAP meeting held on 18th July 2023 were accepted as a true record of that meeting.

5. Review of Minutes & Actions from NERS Providers Forum of 7th Nov. 2023

Matters arising and discussion points are detailed below:

5.1. Issue of v9 of NERS Requirements

PC advised that v9 had been issued and that the main change had been the removal of the scope descriptor 'unmetered' in favour of Highway Electrical Equipment. PC explained that the NERS website still showed the term 'unmetered' in some cases where ICPs had been assessed against a previous version of the NERS Requirements and that this was being changed as ICPs underwent their 3 yearly renewals.

5.2. Section 50 Notices

MC confirmed that the DoT were leaving the local authorities to deal with the Section 50 in the same way as they presently do.

5.3. Access to Infrastructure Scheme

PC advised that he had aligned some potential dates in his diary with some potential dates in Mel Swift's diary, but no date had been settled upon yet. Meanwhile these dates were under pressure from other areas, so time is pressing on getting something organised with the other interested parties.

5.4. ENA Competency Working Group

PW confirmed that his understanding is that the working group is reaching agreement soon on standardising the frequency of refresher training.

5.5. Certificate of Competence/Authorisations for Non-NERS Accredited Scopes

PC stated that the consensus with ICPs and Network Operators is that the risk of someone being set to work on an activity for which the employing NERS organisation doesn't hold accreditation is outweighed by the inconvenience of having separate COC's/Authorisations for 'NERS work' and 'non-NERS' work. CR questioned that it should be up to the Authorising Officer to only authorise a person for work which that company holds NERS accreditation for. MC commented that it had been discussed at length before and it was important that the formatting of a competency certificate clearly showed authorisations for contestable and non-contestable elements of work. CR agreed that this would have to be very clear in order to avoid any potential confusion. PT commented that they would normally expect 2 separate certificates. SB commented that if the NERS Requirements were to be followed as things stand, then a different competence certificate would be required

for each Network Operator and so the system that his organisation had adopted was to have one certificate of competence and that it is his responsibility to ensure an operative is not set to work on anything which his organisation is not accredited for. PW commented that we need a thorough understanding of how this can be best managed and that the Strategy Working Group should consider this carefully.

5.6. IDNO Compliance with CiC CoP

This had been raised at the NERS ICP Forum and PC confirmed that the Independent Networks Association had responded to his letter by confirming that all IDNOs were complying with the Competition in Connections Code of Practice (CiC CoP) and that it was in fact a condition of their respective licenses that they do so.

5.7. Design Requirements for Highway Electrical Equipment

PC recalled that TT had, following the last NERSAP meeting, questioned why the agreed set of words concerning this had not appeared in V9 of the NERS Requirements. It was agreed that these words were not needed subsequently but this agreement had not been previously minuted in the Feb 23 NERSAP minutes.

5.8. Timeliness of 'As-Laid' Submissions

CRo stated that this issue had been mentioned at the recent NERS Forum meeting on 7th November and that it was causing NPg some concerns. It is hoped that following the raising of this, things will improve. PL commented on behalf of the INA that the lack of information or a lack of quality in that information impacts the network operators' ability to operate safe systems of work and compliance with HS(G)47 and requested that LRQA implement additional checks on completion paperwork. PC stated that whilst handover processes are something that form part of the NERS Requirements against which ICPs are assessed, this did not take account of the timeliness and quality of submissions for every job since LRQA's visits were merely 'spot-checks'. KM commented that in the gas industry there is a focus on timeliness and quality of as-laid submissions, and that the network operators were suggesting that connection providers would not be able to work for them under connections agreements if improvements had not been forthcoming. Improvements had been noticed but there was still more to do. PT stated that SPEN were doing some work on this in chasing up ICPs, but it was quite labour intensive, and they hoped to not have to start imposing sanctions on the worst performing ICPs. MC commented that regular catch-up meetings with ICPs were held so that ICPs knew what was outstanding, and that when this was mentioned at the NERS ICP Forum there was no resistance to the request that paperwork was submitted in a timely manner, that quality should be good and that inspections should be well-prepared for.

5.9. Sub-Contracting of Work – Requirement for Project Management Scopes

PC re-iterated that in the next version of the NERS Requirements, it would be made clearer that if work is to be sub-contracted, then the organisation contracting such work would need to have NERS PM scopes for that work. A 'Schedule of Responsibilities' had been produced by LRQA which defined the NERS requirements and ways in which compliance could be demonstrated. This had been well received by ICPs with PM scopes.

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

The minutes of the NERSAP meeting of 18th July 2023 had been issued prior to this meeting. Matters arising are detailed below:

6.1. Working Group Meetings

PC advised that although it was an agenda item for this meeting, there was a further WG meeting planned for 13th December.

TT asked if she could be added to the membership of the Strategy Working Group, and it was agreed to send an invite to the 13th December meeting.

6.2. Notification to NERSAP Members when an ICP Ceases Trading

PC advised that LRQA advise NERSAP members when they become aware of an ICP who has ceased trading once LRQA have been able to verify such information with Companies House. Whilst it is a NERS Requirement that LRQA are notified by an ICP if they cease trading, this is not always the ICP's priority in such circumstances and hence LRQA are not always notified. PC asked for information from anyone who becomes aware that an ICP has ceased trading so that they can verify it before advising the rest of the NERSAP members. CRo stated that NPg would always check with Companies House before any action was taken, wherever the source of the information that an ICP had ceased trading.

7. Update on NERSAP Working Groups

It was previously agreed that the existing Strategy and Competency Working Groups would be combined into one group called the NERS Strategy Working Group.

A Working Group Meeting took place on 20th March 2023 and the minutes of this meeting were circulated with the agenda for this NERSAP meeting for reference.

Existing membership now includes:

Martyn Crocker – UKPN
Paul Wragg – PowerOn
Gareth Pritchard – HEA
Simon Burnett – Morrisons
Graham Commons – Balfour Beatty
Mel Swift – GTC
Karl Miller – LRQA
Dave Ellis – LRQA
Clare Roberts – NPG
Paul Costelloe – LRQA
Tracey Taylor - ENWL

The next meeting of the NERS Strategy Working Group is 13th December 2023 at 10:00hrs.

8. Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)

PC stated that this has been circulated on 10th June 2022, 5th July 2022, 16th November 2022 and 6th Feb 2023 with further reminders since the last NERSAP meeting but only five signed responses have been received to date. TT stated that the reason ENWL had not signed because ENWL have a query regarding section 12 which states that changes to the NERS Requirements will be by unanimous

agreement of the voting members of NERSAP. The meeting generally agreed that via an Addendum this could be changed from ‘unanimous ‘ to ‘majority’.

SSE were not represented at this meeting so their reasons for not signing to date could not be discussed.

KM and MC stated that they had not been aware of any objections to the MoU since it was first circulated in June 2022 until now when ENWL raised the point about unanimity. TT agreed to email PC outlining the query so that it could be considered at the WG meeting.

Action: TT to outline query relating to unanimity for consideration at the WG meeting on 13 th December.	Open:
Action: PC to produce an Addendum which changes to ‘unanimous’ principle to ‘majority’	Open:
Action: ENWL and SSE to sign MoU once Addendum in action above is produced.	Open:

9. LRQA Report

PC presented the data showing the activity on the NERS scheme noting that the highest number of visits by LRQA took place in the UKPN, NGED, ENWL areas.

The presented slides will be circulated with these minutes to NERSAP members. This now shows detail of deficiencies noted.

Following the previous NERSAP meeting where it was requested that on the slide showing the Frequent Deficiency Area, the Major Deficiencies were identified in the appropriate Deficiency Item, this was now shown as requested.

The performance covers Surveillance Visits only, it had been requested that other visits are included in the statistics. KM commented that new ICPs are very likely to have more deficiencies as they develop their procedures and processes and that this could skew the performance figures while their experience and hence compliance grows.

MC commented that we need to be discussing how the deficiencies figures can be improved since the subject of passports for example has been top of the list for some time now. This is especially disappointing since LRQA’s visits are pre arranged.

NE gave an overview of his full accreditation visit where 2 Major Deficiencies were identified and hence the ICP concerned did not attain ‘full’ accreditation.

PC asked KMcl if NGED had received details of the Major Deficiencies found in NGED area at the time of finding but no response was received.

PC stated that by the end of 2023 the number of ICPs who are NERS accredited would be circa 400.

10. AOB

TT asked if at least once per year, NERSAP considered paragraph 4.8 (point two) of the CiC CoP which details a requirement to assess the areas where accreditation is not available. PC agreed to add this to the July 2024 agenda. MC referred to the CiC Cop panel and that part of their responsibility is to highlight those areas that haven't been opened up to competition and it is the responsibility of both the CiC Cop working group and NERSAP and its subsidiary Working Groups. PC commented that changes/amendments to the NERS Requirements is an ongoing exercise throughout each year. KM commented that we can demonstrate that potential revisions to the NERS Requirements are discussed regularly, including internal LRQA team meetings.

WC commented that, although the specific issue on the requirements for operational scopes had been answered by LRQA in an LRQA Last Mile meeting recently, there were still some notes in the requirements document which gave scope for misinterpretation and that these should be removed or made specific and permanent. The meeting was in general agreement that operational scopes would be required by an ICP whether the system had been adopted or not. PC referred to a note which had been added to the NERS Requirements stating that it was important that co-operation and communication regarding the IDNO/DNO interface requirements were understood, and this includes requirements for holding specific NERS scopes.

WC asked if there was any data available apart from the LRQA website, that detailed scopes held by ICPs. PC stated that this had been asked for before by another IDNO but had been advised that the website was the only available source. KM agreed to look into this again.

Action: KM to investigate the availability of data in its raw form (e.g. a spreadsheet or CSV file) that could be used by databases or similar systems of others.	Open:
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MC placed on record via the minutes the NERSAP's gratitude to Mel Swift for his Chairmanship over the last three years and that the group looked forward to his continued participation in meetings. The meeting was unanimous in their gratitude to Mel.

PC presented the proposed dates for the meetings in 2024 as:

NERS Provider Forum 12th March, 16th July, 12th November

NERSAP 26th March, 30th July, 26th November