

Minutes of 25th Directors Meeting - 10.45am Wednesday 12th February 2015
Offices of Ecorecord, 16 Greenfield Crescent, Edgbaston, Birmingham

Present: Nicky Court (Chair), Simon Wood (Mins), Mark Wills, Eric Fletcher, Ian Egerton, Teresa Frost, Steve Hannah, Martin Horlock, Mark Pollitt, Adam Rowe, Mandy Rudd, Craig Slawson, Tom Hunt

Actions carried forward from previous meetings

Meeting	Action	Action item <i>Full description of carried action</i>	Status <i>This column updated as a result of this meeting</i>	Who
22	3	Associate membership of Wildlife link to be progressed	Carried forward/awaiting annual report	NC
22	4	LRC webmap needs to be updated periodically with ideal scenario to have all LRCs data in same database. Roy Tapping has been asked to quote to make database searchable, accessible and updatable. Any contract will need to be tightly written to avoid any conflict. TH to progress	Carried forward	TH
22	5	ALERC to produce an Annual Report in a simple format. EF to pass example report to TH	Carried forward/template presented at meeting 25	EF/TH
22	11	TH to investigate inviting NBNT CEO John Sawyer and/or Rachel Stroud to next ALERC Directors meeting	Invite to Meeting 26	TH
22	14	TH to approach Mike Oxford to gauge ALGE opinion on BCT project re usefulness to LAs	Carried forward	TH
22	16	NC to establish DCLG contact re possible new Defra Guidance on LWS and 'introduce' ALERC	Carried forward	NC
22	19	Look to increase Conference fee for non-ALERC members	Carried forward	TH/EF
22	21	Offsetting project: request for information on chosen areas and for progress reports	See 24:3	TH
24	1	Conference Working Group to revisit conference and to check charges for LRCs who exceed their permitted allowance for events. Also to investigate why some LRCs do not attend	Carried forward	MW
24	2	To attempt to obtain a clear answer from Bill Butcher to the question of access to the Offsetting Project	MR noted negotiations underway for Phase 2	TH
24	3	Circulate AGM Minutes in a format editable by MS Word for additions and elaborations by other contributors	Carried forward	DS
24	4	Initiate a debate on the ALERC forum on a strapline for ALERC and to consult with members on the use of LERCs rather than LRCs	Carried forward	IE
24	5	Take "rebranding" ideas and suggested changes to the definition from this meeting back to the Forum discussion	Carried forward	MR

		group expressing the recommendations of the board.		
24	6	Update the Working Groups page on website to reflect this change in working group structure	Carried forward	MW
24	7	Circulate details of updated Accreditation criteria when complete	Completed	MW
24	8	Lead Working Group in formulating a revised structure to the Accreditation process	Completed	TH
24	9	Consult members on suggested revised methodologies for Accreditation	Carried forward	TH
24	11	Select the next Chair in time for takeover at the next AGM, this selection scheduled for the next ALERC meeting (#25)	Carried forward	All Directors
24	12	Develop ALERC 5 year plan & vision	Carried forward	IE / TH
24	13	Investigate payment by card for ALERC membership / conference fees	See Additional note on Minutes of Meeting 25 below	TH
24	14	Circulate the full ANC report (as submitted to NBNT)	Completed	TH
24	15	Conference working group to take the comments on noise at the venue and sound Re: use of microphones and discuss the former with the venue.	Carried forward	MW
24	16	Circulate the ANC work plan with the ANC steering group via dropbox.	Completed	TH
24	17	ANC steering group to work on the Esmee Fairburn application form, MH & TH to lead.	On Agenda Meeting 25	TH / MH
24	18	Coordinate messages on the topic of Ecobuild and related branding/publicity between Directors.	On Agenda Meeting 25	IE
24	19	Coordinate messages on the topic of Ecobuild and related "branding/publicity" on ALERC Forum	On Agenda Meeting 25	IE
24	20	Write an Invitation to Tender for the design and production of the ALERC Ecobuild stand. To be circulated to LRCs who are invited to bid for the work	On Agenda Meeting 25	IE
24	21	To co-ordinate with MW to establish methods in the production of Minutes.	Completed	DS/ MW
24	22	Pursue the Herefordshire issue via email and other Means and offer support and help where appropriate.	See Additional note on Minutes of Meeting 25 below	TH
24	23	Find out more from the Development Officer of Herefordshire Wildlife Trust (Phil Burton) who now sits on his Board.	See Additional note on Minutes of Meeting 25 below	AR
24	24	Contact Oliver Grafton concerning the current MoA content	See Additional note on Minutes of Meeting 25 below	TH
24	25	Add the telephone number of the meeting venue to future agendas.	Completed	DS

Actions from this (25th) meeting

Action #	Action item	Who
1	Draft note to Company Secretary DS with reference to minutes	NC / MW
2	Draft paper detailing requirements and costs to allow online card payments for ALERC membership and conference fees	TH / MW
3	AR to speak to Herefordshire WT's Phil Burton	AR
4	Accreditation Criteria re-amend to mention statutory obligations and remove all mention of BAP	TH / MW
5	Add note on forum that ambition is to make Accreditation tied to ALERC Membership and put additional note on 2015-6 Membership form asking for estimate of when Accreditation is being planned by each Member	TH
6	Website refresh front page and remove "blobby" UK LERC map	MW

7	Circulate draft ALERC 5 year plan	IE
8	Pull together summary document of comments to proposed change from LRC to LERC	TH
9	Position Statement on working with DEFRA and BMSS present to DEFRA as a letter response from ALERC additional comments to TH by 20 th Feb	TH
10	Produce brief guidance on use of email titles	MW
11	Amend the use of Not for Profit in Esmee Fairbairn Foundation application	TH
12	Cost up specific examples of Technical Assistance with Andy Foy	TH
13	Comments on Esmee Fairbairn application to TH for finalisation on 27 th Feb	All Directors
14	Speak to Lindsay Whitley at Chester Zoo who has experience of Esmee Fairbairn applications and would give assistance if required	TH
15	Send any available Urban Biodiversity images to IE for Ecobuild event	All Directors
16	Advertise TH presentation at Ecobuild event on ALERC website	TH
17	Draft response refusing Essex Field Club ALERC membership status	NC
18	NBN Strategy pull together broad comments received by 20 th Feb and submit by deadline as overarching ALERC response	NC
19	Business Development group to finalise LERC definition and agree use of the term with members/board	MR
20	Add Terms of Ref, Membership summary and Main Achievements in correct formats when paragraphs submitted as part of the Annual Report	TH
21	Add standing Agenda point to all future meetings to monitor work undertaken for ALERC	DS
22	Draft basic template for monitoring work undertaken for ALERC	MR
23	Identify Director to update work plan and monitor work being done on behalf of ALERC	MW/NC
24	Pull together brief testimonial to nominate Bill Butcher for Hon NBNT Membership	AR
25	POST Note bullet points of issues to MH by mid-day Thu 12 th Feb	All Directors

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Tim Corner and Darwyn Sumner

2. Minutes of previous meetings and outstanding actions

Minutes of previous meeting had been circulated.

- Discussion was had round the table with reference to further issues with the last set of minutes in particular a number of missing sections e.g. no note of 5 year strategy, plus the initial set of actions were incomplete hence the revised set (MW/NC) so no need to circulate both. It was agreed this was not satisfactory and NC would work with MW to draft a letter to DS raising the issues and the importance that these problems are resolved to the satisfaction of the Board of Directors. It was also noted that proposed additional costs for producing the minutes in the correct format was too high.

Action 1: NC & MW to draft letter to Company Secretary DS.

Additional discussion to Action Points listed in table above

- 24:13 Card payments for ALERC Membership/Conference Fees. TH reasonably certain on current content management version it cannot be done. Next level of content management system required and there will be a cost per transaction

Action 2: MW & TH to produce paper detailing requirements and costs.

- 24:22 No new update on Herefordshire BRC TH to keep watching brief and give assistance as appropriate following on from the initial assistance given with SW.
- 24:23 Find out more on HBRC issue from CEO of Herefordshire Wildlife Trust, AR noted it is not the current CEO who sits on SEWBREC Board

Action 3: AR to speak to Herefordshire WT's Phil Burton

- 24:24 Oliver Grafton will circulate MoA Draft 2 soon but no date as yet. Best case scenario is 25% cut in funding
- IE noted Environment Agency have bid for same level of funding as 2014-15

3. Matters arising from Working Groups

3.a Accreditation Group – update to Accreditation Criteria

- MW has put documents on website with track changes, MW noted nothing controversial in the changes except for the removal of the 20 days statutory timeframe. MW & TH will re-amend to meet statutory obligations and remove mention of BAP.

Action 4: TH & MW Accreditation Criteria re-amend to mention Statutory obligations and remove all mention of BAP.

- TH suggested there needs to be structure and review of descriptions around the criteria with review every November. Include list of benefits of accreditation together with individual testimony and if there are any other issues Directors can contact TH or Gary Lewis.
- NC raised the CPD issue, minimum hours is difficult to measure, a log would need to be kept as for CIEEM membership which is worth looking at to get some overall more generalise wording.
- TH noted Doncaster will join ALERC soon and book to undertake Accreditation. Those booked for Accreditation 2015: NBIS (July 2015), GiGL (September 2015). Others around the table showed interest for their organisations from 2015 onwards.
- Question was raised whether our ambition is to make Accreditation tied to ALERC Membership.

ALERC Board decided that it is ambition to tie Membership to Accreditation

- NC queried the requirement to fulfil all 20 of the points to achieve Accreditation, MW noted that all LERCs who had accredited after the pilots had passed all 20 criteria.

Action 5: TH Add note on forum that ambition is to make Accreditation tied to ALERC Membership and put additional note on 2015-6 Membership form asking for estimate of when Accreditation is being planned by each Member

3.b Website Working Group – update to front page

- MW noted there is currently no picture or strapline on front page but will refresh such.
- The Group currently consists of MW, TH, Elaine and TF (as observer) but it was noted that more were needed. IE hoped someone from SWLRC's will join the group.

Action 6: MW Website refresh front page and remove “blobby” UK LERC map.

3.c ALERC Strategy Group – update on progress

- IE is ready to circulate Strategy document with consultation to go to ALERC Members.
- It was noted that the National Co-ordinator post is pivotal to success so membership fees must go up to reflect the need to keep the post and contribute towards its costs

Action 7: IE Circulate ALERC Strategy with comments returned as soon as possible.

3.d Business Group

- TH raised switch from LRC to LERC, a summary document of comments received to date is needed.
- MR suggested a position statement of 1 side A4 stating what we do is necessary and ties into the strategy work of IE.

Action 8: TH Pull together summary document of commens to proposed change from LRC to LERC

- NC proposed position statement of working with BMSS and DEFRA also needs drafting and this can be presented as a letter response to influence the next draft

Action 9: TH to draft Position Statement on working with DEFRA and BMSS present to DEFRA as letter response from ALERC additional comments to TH by 20th Feb

4. Officers Reports

4.a Chair

- NC briefly touched on some recent activity such as the MOA meeting with Oli, and was grateful for the contributions from the Directors to the work of ALERC.

- NC raised next ALERC Chair issue, MR and MH both noted they were interested but were unable to commit currently. A definite offer would be needed by the next meeting. IE noted that Chair would need to be fully supported by all the Directors and suggested the need to add titles into ALERC Directors Email Group to highlight important information requiring action eg “Response Required” or “For Information” and apply firm deadlines for responses.

Action 10: MW Produce brief guidance on use of email titles

4.b Treasurer

- EF noted in summary that ALERC had spent more money than accrued, with respect to the ANC post this spend was expected but the additional cost from the Company Secretary was not a fully budgeted cost.
- EF noted that Public Liability Insurance is needed for the Ecobuild event
- NC requested future financial updates be altered to show full cost of all items of income and expenditure to date. EF will provide breakdown of costs in full in future reports.
- NC noted that we need to know how much ALERC can contribute towards potential Esmee Fairbairn funded Project.
- New Memberships were noted to have outnumbered dropped Memberships and TH has full list.

5. PRESENTATION BY KATHERINE BOUGHEY

- The presentation given by Katherine Boughey of the Bat Conservation Trust attached and notes on the discussion added to these minutes once received.

4.c ALERC National Coordinator

- TH work plan already circulated
- It was noted that funding for post is available until end of June 2015 currently
- IE informed ALERC Board of DBRC-NBN Gateway experiment of turning off public access for a given amount of time to monitor effects on consultants using data via Gateway. IE has removed public access to commercially sensitive data for 2 months to monitor if there is any change in number of commercial enquiries above the expected median.
- TH noted working with WorcBRC to assess the demand for an LRC enquiry product aimed at smaller householder planning applications, pilot being undertaken to quantify if there will be an effect on the number of commercial enquiries received by the LRC as a result. Working with a representative of CIEEM within the pilot. At the other end of the commercial enquiry scale it is felt that charges to large developments don't necessarily reflect the costs proportionally. Others reported they had undertaken similar exercises to reduce fees for householder applications: AR & NC noted figures had gone up.
- Esmee Fairbairn Foundation (EFF) Application and Project Plan: section on organisation details was raised by NC and discussed. The need to demonstrate a sustainable footing to EFF was noted by TH and he needs to understand specifically what is required without overlapping with other projects such as the BCT. NC questioned the Not for Profit use and agreed TH would amend

Action 11: TH Amend the use of Not for Profit in Esmee Fairbairn Foundation application

- MR enquired if there is ability to pay for technical expertise as part of the bid, TH noted currently not part of application but could be added. TH noted however he would struggle to answer any additional follow up questions from EFF requiring examples of those (LRCs) needing technical assistance. TH suggested we may be better applying for core Nat Coordinator costs within the bid as EFF would potentially pay for these?

Action 12: TH Cost up specific examples of Technical Assistance with Andy Foy

- In the section of application requiring “2 thing most proud of and why” NC suggested removing biodiversity offsetting as it was currently unknown as to whether this would result in LRCs providing a new service. NC also suggested need to weave Accreditation into the bid as an achievement emphasising requirement to raise standards & best practice, and increase the number of days and add technical support from Andy Foy. If we are asking for 90% of total project costs the in-kind contribution could be increased. IE noted

EFF responded quickly to BCT Project. EF noted Chester Zoo have EFF application experience and suggested an officer who could assist if needed.

Action 13: Comments on Esmee Fairbairn application to TH for finalisation on 27th Feb

Action 14: TH Speak to Lindsay Whitley at Chester Zoo who has experience of Esmee Fairbairn applications and would give assistance if required

6. Ecobuild

- IE suggested at least 3 people needed per day of event to cover properly.
- ALERC time committed:
 - IE 2 days
 - TC 1 day (last day of event)
 - TH 3 days
 - MR noted 1 GiGL officer will attend
 - MH 1 day
 - Gary Lewis
- Equipment needed: Powerpoint on Laptop and Large Screen
- IE requires additional images of urban biodiversity to enable representation of the diversity of works undertaken at LRCs. The text is prepared for the display. It was noted that others are advertising talks being given so ALERC should do likewise for TH presentation.

Action 15: All send any available Urban Biodiversity images to IE

Action 16: Advertise TH presentation at Ecobuild event on ALERC website

7. Essex Field Club (EFC)

- NC informed the Board of the current rules regarding ALERC Membership and as it stands the EFC do not meet the ALERC accreditation standard on a number of criteria.

Action 17: NC Draft response refusing Essex Field Club ALERC membership status as a medium sized LRC

8. NBN Strategy refresh

- NC suggested an ALERC letter as response raising key concerns
- IE noted NBN are promoting the need to reduce the number of “data centres” and MH asked if there was any evidence this would reduce costs as no evidence was given. IE noted further this is contrary to the stated aim to have complete network covering UK.
- NC and EF noted the network of volunteers that come with LRCs currently and that as it stands some LRCs have difficulty in providing full assistance needed by local recording groups.
- ALERC Response:
 - All agreed the document still does not have clarity of language in differentiating between use of NBNTrust/NBNGateway/NBNNetwork and would want to see removal of the vague use of term “NBN”.
 - IE mentioned there was no reference to professional element that assists with the data collation, and the document infers biodiversity data is provided and made available at no cost.
 - MR Page 7 Key issue “not open with data”, this is not the case as what LRCs are trying to achieve is poorly funded so the issue is not to do with being guarded about the data.
 - TF expressed surprise at Strategic Aim 3 not using term Wildlife Data but using Wildlife, suggesting remit is huge.
 - TF mentioned that the Strategy was placed on website as public document and not given to NBN Trust Board before publication.
- TH noted if we are fundamentally disagree with the direction DEFRA are pushing NBN we (ALERC Board) should raise our concerns now.
- NC will pull together comments for ALERC response but ALERC Members should be encouraged to provide their own comments directly to NBN.

Action 18: NC pull together broad comments received

9. ALERC DEFRA Statement

- NC raised this topic as a statement on ALERCs relationship with the Defra family is still needed but it required the finalisation of the LERC definition by the Business Development Group and approval of term LERC by members/board. The Business development Group are to finalise the definitions with further input from the Board where necessary.

Action 19: MR - Business Development group to finalise LERC definition

10. ALERC Annual Report

- Required for Annual Return ready for July 2015
- CIC Report needs requires populating an achievements section. MR noted additional pages can be attached to the online submission form.
- Final draft of Annual Report will be presented at June Directors meeting.
- MR asked if reporting can be lifted from the minutes of working group meetings? TH noted he only needs a small paragraph but would need to be structured in identical way. TH will format sections from appropriate working group notes.

Action 20: TH Add Terms of Ref, Membership summary and Main Achievements in correct formats when paragraphs submitted

- IE noted there would be no need to continue with ALERC Strategy Group once document completed and adopted.
- MR suggested need for standing Agenda point to all future meetings to monitor work undertaken for ALERC and can provide a basic template
- MW We already have the ALERC work plan – this could be amended to monitor work being done. However we need a Director to lead on this, since Aisling has stepped down.

Action 21: DS Add standing Agenda point to all future meetings to monitor work undertaken for ALERC

Action 22: MR Look at basic template for monitoring work undertaken for ALERC, based on ALERC work plan

Action 23: MW/NC Identify an ALERC director to lead on updating the Work Plan/Monitoring document

11. NBNT Honorary member nomination

- The submission for deadline has past but there was discussion on whether we can provide late submission
- AR made a suggestion and all agreed they would be a worthy nominee

Action 24: AR Pull together brief testimonial for nomination for Hon NBNT Membership

- MW noted email from Gary Lewis saying he is available to return as ALERC Director should he be required

12. POST Note

- It was generally noted there are errors and the document has muddled issues.
- Comments are needed very soon (Thu 12th Feb)
- Suggested comments for submission:
Prioritise typographical errors
Does not reference remarks that criticise LRCs
- MH will include any comments sent to him by Thu 12th Feb in his submission.

Action 25: All Directors POST Note bullet points of issues

13.AOB

- MP gave Scotland Update:
In Nov 14 TH, TC et al met at Conference to stimulate interest in Scotland Biodiversity with outcome 3 more LAs without LRCs are now in talks to move things forward.
No main lead in Scotland eg SNH not active in pushing LRCs coverage.
There are a number of recording groups but large parts (eg Perthshire) are not covered.
- SBIF Conference April 16th in Perth: Dan Chapman (CEH) presenting.
- TH Bill Butcher has contacted him about a new project that could provide £4-5K to TH post:
Modelling access to Greenspace Ecosystem Services in Greater Manchester but TH would like to push for other areas eg Birmingham or Newcastle.
MH noted Norwich is set to increase in size by ¼ over next so would be a good place to use ALERCs involvement would be worth £4-5K over project timescale of 1year+
MR noted BB wouldn't be involving LRCs in the work if ALERC hadn't been in place to act as liaison.
- IE informed Board Plymouth University had developed an app "Rate My View" which NE seem keen to work with to develop Ecosystem Services – IE unsure what this is inferring from NE when they are currently cutting down to statutory obligation work only.
- EF noted Oli Grafton had asked Kent University to undertake some modelling on Great Crested Newts involving county of Worcestershire. SW had heard nothing of this although hold the county dataset for GCNs.
- EF noted RODIS mobile app is now available free to download and use.
- MW noted LNP enquiry is launching, was generally agreed LNPs have achieved very little if anything across the country as a whole.
- Date of Next Meeting c.June 2015 – Doodle Poll to be circulated with minutes of this meeting.