

Minutes of the 3rd meeting of ALERC
Friday 23rd October 2009
Quaker Meeting House, 40 Bull Street, Birmingham,
B4 6AF

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Creator	Darwyn Sumner Company Secretary Association of Local Environmental Records Centres cic 122, Link Road, Anstey, Leicestershire LE7 7BX Tel: 0116 212 5075 Email: Darwyn.sumner@ntlworld.com
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Directors

Chair	Adam Rowe Manager, South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre (SEWBReC) 13 St. Andrew's Crescent, Cardiff, CF10 3DB. Tel: 029 2064 1110 Email: adam.rowe@sewbrec.org.uk
Treasurer	Nicky Court 9 Lime Road, Alresford, Hampshire SO24 9LD Tel: 01962 832322 Email: nicky.court@hants.gov.uk
Company Secretary	Darwyn Sumner 122, Link Road, Anstey, Leicestershire LE7 7BX Tel: 0116 212 5075 Email: Darwyn.sumner@ntlworld.com
Director	Mark Wills North & East Yorkshire Ecological Data Centre Tel: 01904 641631 Email: mark.wills@neyedc.co.uk
Director	Tim Corner Bristol Regional Environmental Records Centre (BRERC) Third Floor, Bristol Central Library College Green, Bristol, BS1 5TL Tel: 0117 9349833 Email: tim.corner@brerc.org.uk
Director	Eric Fletcher rECOrd Oakfield House Chester Zoological Gardens Upton, Chester, Cheshire CH2 1LH Tel: 01244 383749 Email: eric@record-lrc.co.uk
Director	Craig Slawson Staffordshire Ecological Record The Wolseley Centre, Wolseley Bridge, Stafford, ST17 0WT Tel: 01889 880100 Email: craig@salticus.org.uk

Association of Local Environmental Records Centres

Meeting of Directors

11.30 am – 3.30pm, Friday 23rd October 2009

Quaker Meeting House, 40 Bull Street, Birmingham, B4 6AF

AGENDA

1. **Apologies**
2. **Notes of last Meeting**
3. **Matters arising – not dealt with on agenda**
4. **Chairman's Report (Adam Rowe)**
5. **Treasurer's Report (Nicky Court)**
 - **Membership update**
 - **Actions for further member recruitment**
 - **Financial report**
 - **Banking, accounting and accountants**
- SHORT LUNCH BREAK (circa 12.30 pm)
6. **Issues for discussion and resolution**
 - a. **Accreditation project and working group**
 - b. **Other working groups**
 - c. **NE Review of LRCs**
 - d. **Establishing priorities and work programme**
 - e. **Logo and corporate identity**
 - f. **Staffing of ALERC**
 - g. **Representation for ALERC on other groups/committees**
 - h. **NBN Statement of Intent**
 - i. **LRC Directors/Trustees and ALERC**
7. **Any Other Business**
 - Geodiversity**
 - LRC database**
 - Individual membership**
 - Website**
 - Forum**
 - Contact@ALERC.org.uk**
 - Letter from Companies House**
8. **Date(s) of next meeting(s)**

Minutes of the 3rd meeting of ALERC

Present: Darwyn Sumner, Mark Wills, Craig Slawson, Adam Rowe, Nicky Court, Tim Corner

The Chairman (Adam Rowe) declared the meeting open at 11.28

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Eric Fletcher

2. Notes of last Meeting

A revised version (formatting being the only change from that already distributed) of the Minutes from the last meeting (before we became a cic) was handed around. Actions were circulated by Mark Wills after the meeting.

3. Matters arising – not dealt with on agenda

Nothing - all items seem to be in this agenda

4. Chairman's Report (Adam Rowe)

Expressed thanks to everyone for everything they've done over the past few months. Adam represented ALERC at Charles Copp's memorial service.

5. Treasurer's Report (Nicky Court)

- **Membership update**
 - **Actions for further member recruitment**

1. **AR to prepare an item for inclusion in the next NBN news**

Geodiversity

Individual membership

- **Financial report**

Applications from 19 LRCs, 2 individuals Steve McWilliam + Alderney (1 individual) = £3,182.50. Leaves another 20 established LRCs to apply. East Midlands are zero. Website list will be maintained, Nicky to contact DS with details. Reasons for delay were discussed, DS indicated that for some LRCs it may take a little while for details to be put to the various management groups for approval.

Donations: Some LRCs a long time ago offered donations to help start up ALERC. These offers have not been repeated, AR considered that we should concentrate on membership at the moment. TC indicated that such offers may in the future be useful for specific ALERC projects.

Income as shown plus Herts plus Alderney ~£3450 Bristol £1035, Web costs need to be clarified (DS), Adobe £300, DS contract = £1500 (get Joyce Sumner to do Invoice), travel from DS £14, today's meeting room £100, Companies House £35 = a total of £3249. Also need itemised list from Darwyn Sumner of time spent since the last meeting.

2. **Action DS**

Suggestions were made that ALERC Directors maintain the contact with the LRCs they have volunteered to deal with in order to ensure that they join.

TC indicated that we needed to make it clear what value LRCs would gain on joining

- **Banking, accounting and accountants**

We have a Bank Account, a community account with no charges.

Accountant: Nicky needs an accountant with whom ALERC can form a relationship in order to deal formally with ALERC accounts. NC has made contact with someone and will have a meeting with them. The software package "MS Accounting" was recommended by this person (and DS had downloaded it and given it a brief appraisal).

3. **[Agreed by all for NC to have the meeting with her selected accountant and use their services for ALERC]**

6. Issues for discussion and resolution

a. Accreditation project and working group

We got approval to go ahead with the proposal made by Richard Alexander. We have an agreement

to set up a working group to steer the project and there is funding for a project officer. We need to involve NBNT personnel, for example Oliver Grafton.

Who wants to be included? Currently we have expressions of interest from Nicky Court, **Tim Corner**, Mark Wills, Darwyn Sumner, **Adam Rowe**, **Mandy Rudd** (? as chair of the working group), **Gary Lewis** (ERCCIS), Mike Oxford of ALGE. The emboldened persons were chosen to form the core of the Working group.

Richard Alexander has proposed that a secondment or LRC tender could result in the recruitment of an officer who could take this project forward (details of NE project are in ALERC forum). The NE monies must be spent by the end of March.

It was proposed that the post be advertised to LRCs with the proviso that the LRC must host the post.

4. [Agreed all]

NE has organised a project meeting and AR will take our discussions to him. Final decision on choice of candidate to be with **Accreditation working group** with an option for the entire ALERC directorship to have a say

5. [Agreed all]

b. Other working groups

• **A. Technical and data management** (Mark, Craig)

DS reported on attempts that had been made by him to bring together individuals who had expressed an interest. Some response had been received but not a lot.

LRC database

Text of the posting on ALERC Director's forum by Darwyn Sumner:

Currently Craig manages the LRC database on a server which acts as a feed to the NBN/NFBR websites

Clearly there should be only one database.

We have several threads to tie together which result in actions for us regarding this database, I'll just summarise and try to bring full details to your attention later:

1. Offer from Cheshire to help implement a map-based LRC search for ALERC website
2. Technical/Communications Working Group
3. Revised LRC details arising from our recent mailings
4. Invitation from Kathryn McAuley to attend NBN Technical Seminar Thursday 19th November 2009 (to Darwyn Sumner at least - I shall be going)
5. Request made by Darwyn Sumner to Trevor to ask if NBN would be prepared to fund a workshop of key individuals with a view to resolving all LRC database issues, this will probably result in a "project"
6. The issue of who would be responsible for the ongoing management of LRC details in the database
7. NBN seem happy to pay us for work on this database, all parties don't mind who receives payment as long as the work is done

6. Action - to feed all incoming extra data to Craig

7. Action - approach NBN about taking over the management of this

• **B. Training and skills** (Tim,)

• **C. Accreditation** (Nicky)

see above

• **D. Communications: Marketing and promotion** (Eric, me)

Website

Place an explanation about the range of different forums and online resources (TC)

8. Action DS

Revise the page about Individual members: "Actively involved in the work of an LRC"

9. Action DS

Request from DS for Directors to read website and make observations to DS about obvious bloomers, changes will be made by DS and pointed out to ALERC directors.

10. Action all

Forum

Conclusion is that this is for ALERC members only so that they can discuss LRC issues. DS has asked Charles Roper for a list of people signed up. It was observed that a number of persons signed up to this forum did not fall into the categories specified in our application form. Please ask CR to remove non-LRC people (with the appropriate amount of notice and politeness - by 1st Jan).

11. Action DS

Reconcile list of NC with that of CR.

12. Action DS & NC

Contact@ALERC.org.uk

Secretary to answer, delegate where appropriate and inform ALERC directors of any that have been dealt with. TC suggested a polite response - Craig says one way to do that is after the button has been pressed, taKE THEM TO A NEW PAGE or generate an automatic response (preferred)

- **E. Business**

Adam

AR suggested that we concentrate our resources on specific working groups which were of currently high importance.

- **c. NE Review of LRCs**

Action AR to circulate to Directors

- **d. Establishing priorities and work programme**

Most issues about priorities have been discussed above, that's our work programme.

Conference - volunteers are AR, MW and NC

13. MW will pursue venue and dates

14. NC to determine topics

15. AR to structure and lead

- **e. Logo and corporate identity**

No luck with friends and family, some response on the website - notably from the advice offered by Charles Roper

AR and MW outlined a web-based scheme in which a specification/brief is set, designers produce samples according to this brief, customers select and the designer gets paid.

16. Action MW

- **f. Staffing of ALERC**

NC indicates that we currently do not have a contract for the work ALERC is requesting from DS, several directors will send samples of such to NC in order that this may be properly implemented.

Action MW + NC

AR indicated that ALERC would always retain the option to staff ALERC with the most appropriate candidate.

- **g. Representation for ALERC on other groups/committees**

AR - NBN Trust, **DS & CS** - NFBR, **NC** - ALGE

- **h. NBN Statement of Intent**

ALERC's statement of intent to NBN.

17. This will be drafted by AR.

We should pay up to NBN.

18. Action NC.

(CS had to leave the meeting at this point 15:15)

i. LRC Directors/Trustees and ALERC

The question is whether Directors and Trustees of LRCs may become members of ALERC. Geoff Radford posed this question based on the wording on the application form. It was not felt that any changes in the wording was warranted.

7. Any Other Business

• **Letter from Companies House.**

Several of us have received a letter from Companies House reminding us to file our company's annual accounts and annual return on time. AR recalls that these forms are likely to arrive in the post before the due date of early December.

19. Action DS - if no form has been received by late November then contact ALERC Directors.

Also we have to register with the Data Protection Act -

20. Action DS

NE Conference: Mobilising Biological Information in England and the UK

Mark Wills' brief report from this conference was circulated to ALERC Directors on 23rd September 2009:

The day was structured into eight 15 minute presentations delivered by a variety of speakers from National agencies/bodies, National schemes and ALERC. In The afternoon we were split into 2 groups to participate in workshop discussions, 1 on Mobilising Data, the other on Implementing Data Flow Models. I went to one workshop, Nicky & Tim to the other

The first formal public presentation by ALERC (well done & thanks Nicky!) was very well received. Our launch date of 1st October has obviously been duly noted by several in NE/NBN/ etc so no getting out of it now!

Overall, a very useful day from the point of view of my LRC and also from an ALERC point of view. There were several comments about it being a very good thing ALERC has 'happened' and a feeling of great hope that ALERC can deliver on what it sets out to achieve. "No pressure then" was another comment heard more than once!

I won't try to relay what each individual speaker talked about, but will try to summarise the 'take home messages' I feel came out of the meeting:

1. There is a need to try and work towards a more standardised flow of data, from recorders, through LRC/NSS to NBN Gateway and on to Pan-European/Global databases/portals.
2. Organisations & individuals need to therefore recognise and agree their own role within the biological data community.
3. Validation/verification should be done as close to the 'source' of the record as possible, and tools should be developed and taken up to aid this.
4. It was recognised that the need for the function of LRCs is written into PPS9 and NERC act 2006. Accreditation was suggested by NE as a way of introducing minimum standards & continued improvements in LRCs and would provide consistency and confidence in data quality for users and would assist in users meeting their biodiversity obligations.
5. The National schemes/societies preferred data to go direct to them, and there was a feeling that they wanted to retain ownership of the data. They view data use from a Trends & changes point of view, not a local decision-making point of view.
6. They also wanted to work with LRCs to mobilise data to the local level but could not negotiate with each LRC separately. They would welcome ALERC to become the voice & negotiating agent between LRCs & NSSs.
7. LRCs pointed out that the same applies in reverse!
8. A standardised universal data exchange agreement was suggested to simplify to process of sharing data.
9. The routes of data flow should be clearly defined and fed to all parts of the system. When people/organisations have confidence that their data will be treated correctly, used in the right way and is not a waste of their

effort they will be more inclined to pass their data on and make it available for a variety of different uses.

Agreed actions from the conference:

10. ALERC – Paper on the pros & cons of different business models of running an LRC.
11. ALERC – A status report on ALERC's development
12. NBN – Draft a universal Data Exchange agreement.

It was felt by ALERC that the above 2 ALERC topics were more appropriate to revisit in conferences or forum.

Proposals were made that the question of additional Directors be dealt with at the conference

8. Date(s) of next meeting(s)

- 21. DS to initiate a Doodle for a period for the month of January 2010**

Chairman