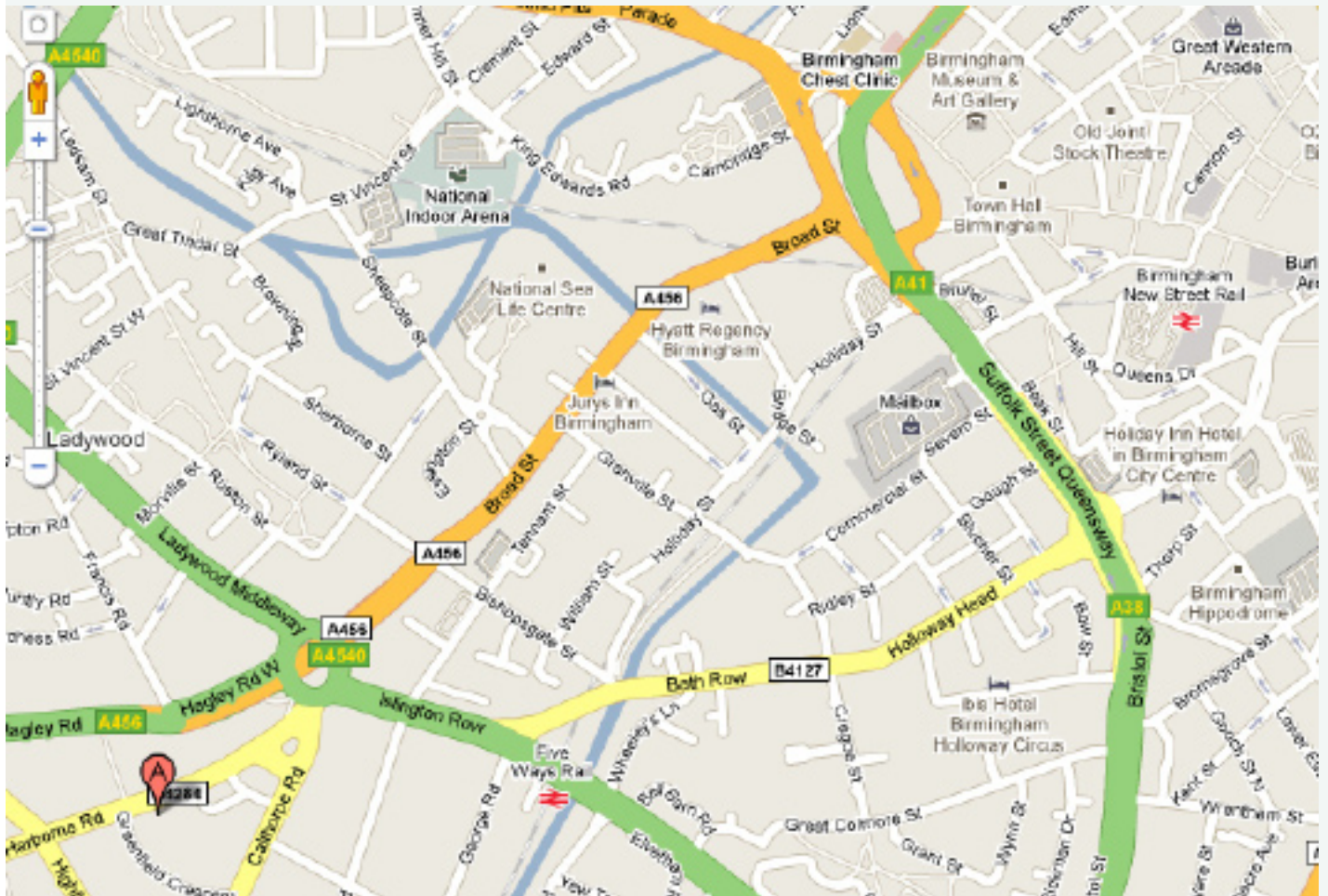


## **Minutes of the 9<sup>th</sup> meeting of ALERC Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2011: 10:30a.m. to 4:00p.m. Offices of EcoRecord 28 Harborne Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham. B15 3AA**

5 minutes walk from Fiveways Railway Station (trains from New street to Fiveways leave every 10 mins and take 3 minutes)



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# Association of Local Environmental Records Centres

## Meeting of Directors

10:30a.m. to 4:00p.m. Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2011, Offices of EcoRecord

28 Harborne Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham. B15 3AA

## AGENDA

Items in red are prioritised by the Chairman

1. **Apologies**
2. **Minutes of 8<sup>th</sup> Meeting**
3. **Matters arising – not dealt with on agenda**
4. **Officers Reports**

e.g. Financial report, Membership update, Banking, accounting and accountants, correspondence and ALERC Forum:

- LRC charging <http://forum.lrcs.org.uk/viewtopic.php?id=348>
- Quango abolition - proposed letter (see Annex) to James Paice MP by Tom of Record (Cheshire) <http://forum.lrcs.org.uk/viewtopic.php?id=335>

SHORT LUNCH BREAK (circa 12.30 pm)

### 5. **Issues for discussion and resolution**

- **Obtaining data from consultants** with a reference to the IEEM suggestion of establishing a working group.
- Biodiversity Offsets and positioning LRCs. (Charles Roper)

#### a. **Accreditation**

**Accreditation:** Bill Butcher has been invited to the meeting from 13:00 hrs

Please note that there has been an ALERC discussion by email (entitled Preparations for Accreditation ...) you really need to have read these and have copies available at the meeting

- 1. **Appointment of Accreditation Assessors**
- 2. **Establishment of Accreditation Committee**
- 3. **Application decision timetable**
- 4. **Application format**

Accreditation Guidance website publication, Accreditation process (end of topic at 15:00 hrs)

#### b. **ALERC Conference**

- 2011

#### c. **Establishing priorities and work programme**

#### d. **Working groups**

##### A. **Technical & data management**

##### B. **Training & skills**

##### C. **Accreditation**

##### D. **Communication: Marketing and promotion**

##### E. **Business**

#### e. **NBN**

#### f. **Company work**

- DPA
- Recruiting Scottish representation on the Board of Directors

### 6. **Any Other Business**

Meeting & Workshop of Natural England's approach to Development Planning 26 Jan 2011

### 7. **Date(s) of next meeting(s)**



# Minutes of the 9<sup>th</sup> meeting of ALERC

Present (Doodled): Craig Slawson, Gary Lewis, Eric Fletcher, Adam Rowe, Nicky Court, Aisling Carrick, Mark Wills, Bill Butcher (guest)

The Chairman (Adam Rowe) declared the meeting open at 11:??

## 1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Eric Fletcher, Tim Corner, Darwyn Sumner

## 2. Minutes of 8<sup>th</sup> Meeting

Minutes from the 8th meeting were distributed

Action points.

- . 1. DS to investigate disposal of LRC data assets (re Asset locks and Business Continuity Plans of LRCs)
- . DS to formally approach potential Asset lock bodies on ALERC's behalf
- . 2. GL to inform Trevor James about our revised conference plan
- . GL has informed Trevor James Re: ALERC conference
- . 3. All to debate conference topic on ALERC Forums
- . To be discussed in this meeting under 5a
- . 4. Action ALL by 12th November "Directors to propose ideas for how to spend the money to best assist LRCs - money to be spent on hiring someone to do the work."
- . Carried forward to next meeting
- . 5. Action - all to look into Skype as a means of improving communications
- . Carried forward to next meeting
- . 6. ALERC talk at the NFBR Conference: Action GL
- . GL is confirmed to talk at NFBR conference, as is CR.
- . 7. DS to speed up with website
- . To be discussed in this meeting under 5e
- . 8. Provide a link on the first page of the website to the ALERC Forum
- . To be discussed in this meeting under 5e
- . 9. DS to initiate a Doodle for January 2011

Discharged

## 3. Matters arising – not dealt with on agenda

CR to progress periodic update bulletin "The Swan's legs". All to contribute ideas and any articles or news to CR.

1. All

## 4. Officers Report

### a. Treasurer's report.

ALERC membership list was circulated

2. NC to continue chasing LRCs who have not paid for 2010-2011

3. NC to email John Cornell of Cambs & Peterborough LRC for membership fees for 2010-2011

GL reported that Patrick Milne-Holme will liaise with Scottish LRCs Re: membership on behalf of ALERC  
 Financial report was circulated.

NC to liaise with DS regarding what payments are owed to DS for work done. It was also agreed that the Company Secretary role should be formalised with a job description and contract.

4. DS & NC

## 5. Issues for discussion & resolution

### a. ALERC conference 2011

Round-table discussion on conference timing & theme.

- . MW to approach BVSC in Birmingham Re: dates & costs for conference on 3rd/4th Thursday in September 2011.  
 MW will provisionally book and advertise date & Theme via forum.

- Theme of conference & specific talks to be discussed via directors e-group. NC to email her list of ideas around theme of "LRCs' role in the 'Big Society'"

Theme & topics to be developed further at the next directors meeting

**b. IEEM/sharing consultants data**

There are several pieces of work currently ongoing in relation to this. These were raised and discussed. AR raised the need to pull these bits of work together.

AC outlined the COFNOD idea for an online data upload portal for ecological consultants. All agreed we should be aiming for full data upload rather than a document upload facility.

- AC to liaise with EF Re: forming a working group on this subject. CR keen to be part of working group, AC or EF to lead, working group to include Paula Lightfoot, Mandy Rudd, Roy Tapping

**c. Accreditation**

A round table discussion took place before Bill Butcher joined the meeting.

Bill Butcher joined the meeting at 1pm.

**Meeting notes**

There was a general discussion between ALERC directors and Bill Butcher about the Accreditation process, the trial process and the setting up of the process going forwards:

It was made clear to BB that ALERC has not formally adopted the Accreditation criteria. They have been approved by the Steering group to go forward into a trial involving 2 LRCs. ALERC would then develop the criteria into a working process following feedback from the trial.

BB expressed surprise at this and felt that the criteria had been agreed and had been communicating this to the trial LRCs.

Directors felt the process had been very fast and that ALERC had struggled to keep up. If ALERC take on the accreditation process then the accreditation of an LRC will not be pushed through in 2 ½ months as the trials have been.

BB Accreditation is increasing the profile of LRCs and ALERC amongst bodies such as Defra and LRCs are being mentioned in discussions such as the current Biodiversity Offsetting discussions.

BB Gave an update on the project:

- The aim is to get the 2 trial LRCs through accreditation by March. Both LRCs think accreditation will be a good thing for their LRC.
- The guidance documentation is currently being developed via a Wiki and is intended to be used by LRCs seeking accreditation and by Mentors and Assesors
- The project will seek to identify barriers to accreditation using a survey being produced via surveymonkey. Following this a mitigation strategy will be developed.
- Costs of implementation and any proposed changes will be part of the final report.
- The guidance consultation finished on 21/1/2011 and this will then go out the Accreditation working group and to NE.

The meeting went through the questions Bill Butcher wanted to discuss, as per AR email & revised agenda:

1. Appointment of assessors. The accreditation committee is a semi-permanent group, assessors for an individual LRC will be appointed on a case by case basis. The mentor's role is to filter LRCs and advise them when they are ready to apply for accreditation. Meetings between assessors and LRCs likely to be by email/teleconference. Richard Alexander of NE will cover 50% T&S for assessors, ALERC agreed to cover the remaining 50%. GL was proposed to act as assessor for the two trial LRCs, BB agreed to this. BB's view is that any experienced LRC staff could be an assessor.

2. Establishment of Accreditation Committee. For the trial LRCs the accreditation committee will be comprised of the ALERC board of directors, excluding and mentors/assessors.

3. Application decision timetable. For the trial LRCs, applications are to be complete and submitted by 22/02/2011. 3 weeks are then allocated for assessment by GL, broken down into 1 week for assessment, 1 week for the LRC to provide additional material, 1 week for the assessor to complete assessment in,light of new material. The assessment committee will then meet in the W/C 14/3/2011.

4. Application format. BB sees applications taking the form of one zipped file being emailed to the assessor, containing all supporting documents such as .doc, .xls, .pdf, links to website.

5. Accreditation guidance publication. BB recommends publishing a fixed version & having a dynamic version which will be edited via a wiki. The fixed version will then be edited & updated periodically via the accreditation committee. Directors agreed to this.

6. Accreditation process. AR noted that cost is a driving factor and queried how the costs will be covered. ALERC needs to focus on what the running costs are ongoing accreditation process. BB the survey and the end of the trial will be asking questions about the costs involved. The meeting discussed what the minimum amount a mentor could be paid 'internally' between LRCs was, and whether mentors could work on a quid pro quo basis. Assessors should be paid more fully.

- Next ALERC Directors meeting to serve as 1st meeting of Accreditation Assessment Panel, next meeting to fit with Accreditation Project timescale.

#### **d. Biodiversity offsetting & positioning LRCs**

BB remained in the meeting for this item. BB gave an outline of the biodiversity offsetting concept. He has written a couple of articles in 'In Practice' (Sept & Dec issues) including one about the metrics of Biodiversity Offsetting.

LRCs have been mentioned in discussions relating to the registering & monitoring of Offsetting sites.

5. **CR to send email to all LRCs regarding ALERC response to Biodiversity offsetting documents.**

6. **MW to start ALERC response, pending wider consultation.**

#### **e. Website**

7. **DS to send login credentials to CR to enable website holding page to be put up**

#### **f. NBN**

Discussion on a statement of intent for NBN was carried forward to next meeting.

### **6. Any Other Business**

Following discussion Re: ALERC paying consultants to write responses to consultations, this topic to be on the agenda for next meeting.

Adam Rowe announced he was stepping down from position of Chair of ALERC directors board and from the board of Directors. The ALERC directors wish to thank Adam for his hard work and enthusiasm in setting up and establishing ALERC, and to wish him well. AR will also resign his post as NBN Trustee.

Gary Lewis was proposed by Teresa Frost to take over the role of chair, seconded by Aisling Carrick. GL agreed to take over for the remainder of 2011.

Kent BRC has responded to NBN Trusts 10 year plan,

8. **Kent BRC to post this on the forum.**

GL to contact GIGL to see if they can send a representative of ALERC to the 'NE's approach to development planning on 26th January.

9. **Action GL**

### **7. Date(s) of next meeting(s)**

Next meeting to be scheduled for 9/10 March to allow for Accreditation panel to meet and for 'away day' to include informal session the evening before.

10. **MW to check room availability.**

11. **DS to initiate a Doodle for March**

**Chairman**

## Annex 1

(Tom of RECORD)

**This is a proposed letter by Tom, he placed it on the ALERC Forum for our comment/approval/editing. I have informed him that it will receive our attention. (DS)**

Response to the Westminster Hall debate on Natural England, 26th October 2010, from the Association of Local Environmental Record Centres.

18th November 2010

Dear Mr Paice,

The current zeal for rationalising “Quangos” and “arm’s length bodies” has left many of the 3rd third sector organisations who deal with them, and are supported by them, concerned for the future. Much of the nation’s biodiversity conservation aims, and even its international obligations, are reliant from on input by third sector organisations; organisations who rely to a greater or lesser degree on Quangos such as Natural England.

The Association of Local Environmental Records Centres represents one such section of the conservation Third Sector third sector. Local environmental record centres (LRCs) hold species and habitat data for localities across the UK, usually based around local authority or county boundaries. The role of LRCs within the conservation movement is to collect and distribute species and habitat records data and to coordinate wildlife data gathering as create a one stop shop for ecological data. The role of LRCs within the conservation movement is to coordinate the collection and distribution of species and habitat data; acting as ‘one stop shops’ that link thou

LRCs have a long standing relationship with Natural England, who we regard as one of our most important partnership organisations. Therefore, I was most interested to learn of the debate on Natural England at Westminster Hall on 26th October. Having read and digested the debate, there were a few things that struck a chord with me and that I felt ought to be raised with you personally.

You mentioned that NE will “continue to carryout a range of important functions” and that those will include “to enhance the environment and biodiversity to improve quality of life”. LRCs have up until now played an important role in helping NE achieve these functions by providing species, habitat and site data which plays an important role in local, regional and national decision making and planning. I feel strongly that if NE is function successfully in the future, in the way you outlined in your speech, then it’s relationship with LRCs must be allowed to continue and even grow. The resources that NE commits to LRCs currently is of paramount importance in allowing LRCs to fulfil their remit and ultimately to provide NE (and many other clients such as local planners and statutory bodies) with the data they need to make well informed decisions on biodiversity.

It is also important to realise that the relationship between NE and LRCs is not simply one of data provision. Many LRCs are NGOs and as such are in regular contact with other NGOs, Third Sector organisations and individual volunteers. These groups and individuals are the backbone of conservation and biodiversity activity in Britain, and LRCs are able to support them in their efforts and harness their experience and expertise in order to provide vital and accurate information back to NE. In short LRCs act as a vital interface between NE and local conservationists, without which a paucity of reliable wildlife information would exist.

Finally, you mentioned in you speech that NE needs to “better engage with and support the important contributions made by civil society bodies, local communities, businesses, farmers and so on.” I believe that in order to achieve this, LRCs must play a pivotal role for the reasons outlined in the paragraph above. Their contribution must be recognised by the amount of resources NE is willing to commit to them, and although this amount is small in relation to the overall NE spend, it is huge in terms of the annual turnover of an LRC, and even huger when one considers how much voluntary work LRCs are able coordinate as a result of their NE contribution.

I would implore you to keep the value of LRCs in the forefront of your mind as you consider the future of Natural England.

Yours sincerely,

Director of ALERC