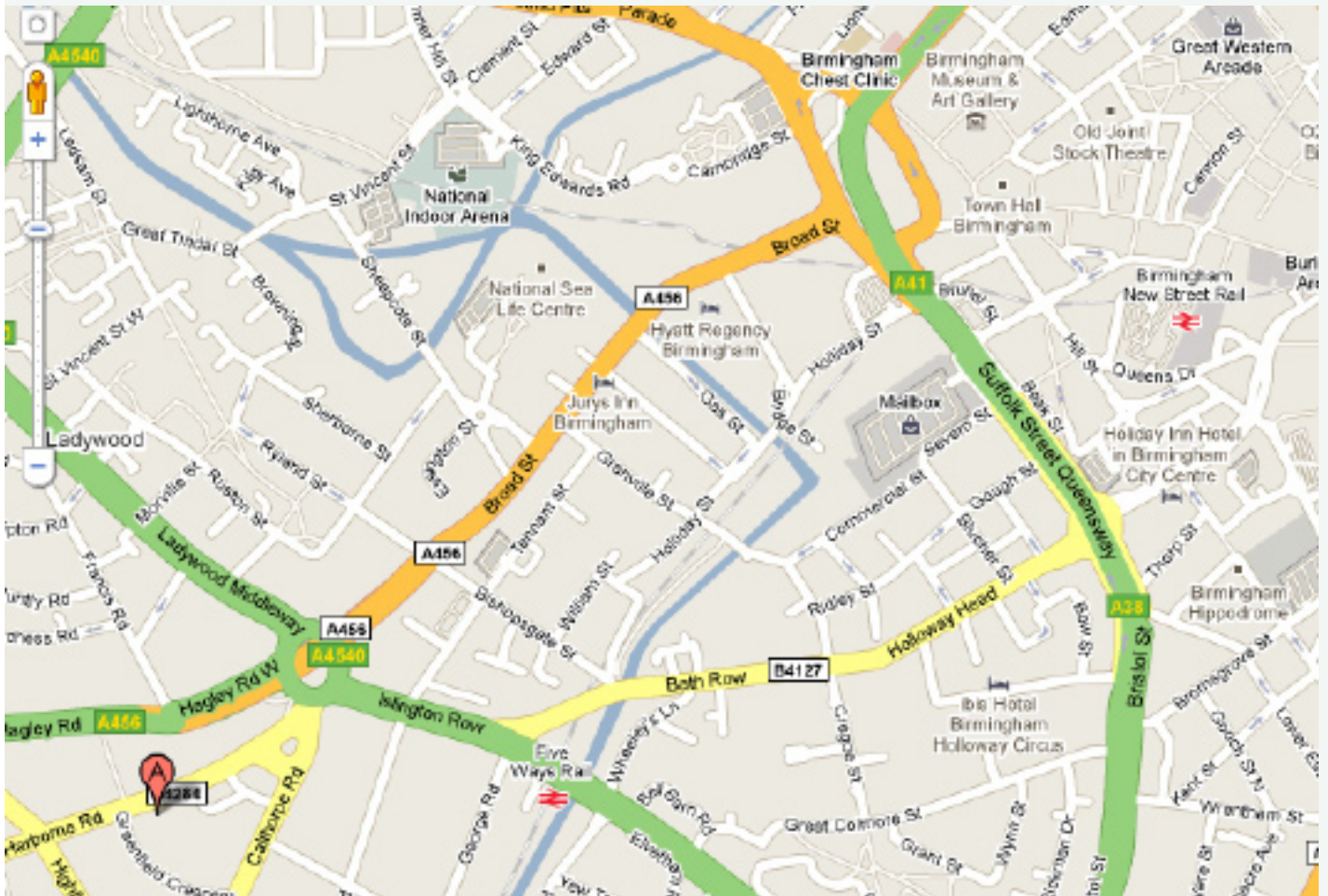


Minutes of the 10th meeting of ALERC Thursday 10th March 2011: 10:00a.m. to 4:00p.m. Offices of EcoRecord 28 Harborne Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham. B15 3AA

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

10:00a.m. to 4:00p.m. Thursday 10th March 2011, Offices of EcoRecord

28 Harborne Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham. B15 3AA

A slightly earlier start was made possible by some Directors having stayed overnight in Birmingham, the purpose of this stay was to discuss issues concerning Accreditation.

AGENDA

Items in red are prioritised by the Chairman

- 1. Apologies**
- 2. Minutes of 9th Meeting**
- 3. Matters arising – not dealt with on agenda**
- 4. Officers Reports**
 - 1. Chairman 2. Treasurer
- 5. Issues for discussion and resolution**
 - a. Accreditation Pilot**
 - 3. Lincolnshire Application 4. Cambridgeshire Application
 - 5. Assessment process - Gary Lewis observations
 - 6. Accreditation costs
 - b. NBN Trustees**
 - Feedback from NBN Trustees meeting on 22 Feb 2011:
 - 7. Paula Lightfoot paper
 - c. Sharing Consultant Data**
 - 8. IEEM working group proposal
 - d. ALERC Conference**
 - 9. 2011
 - e. Website**
 - 10. Website
 - f. Biodiversity offsetting**
 - 11. Biodiversity Offsetting consultation
 - g. Establishing priorities and work programme**
 - 12. Use of ALERC funds
 - 13. ALERC Statement of Intent
 - 14. Priorities - discussion
 - h. Working groups**
 - A. Technical & data management**
 - B. Training & skills**
 - C. Accreditation**
 - D. Communication: Marketing and promotion**
 - E. Business**
 - i. Company work**
- 6. Any Other Business**
- 7. Date(s) of next meeting(s)**

Minutes of the 10th meeting of ALERC

Present: Darwyn Sumner, Craig Slawson, Gary Lewis, Tim Corner, Nicky Court, Aisling Carrick, Mark Wills, Charles Roper, Teresa Frost

The Chairman (Gary Lewis) declared the meeting open at 10:00

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Eric Fletcher, Darwyn Sumner apologised for lateness and Gary Lewis had to leave early.

2. Minutes of 9th Meeting

Mark Wills had previously distributed Minutes from the 9th meeting.

3. Matters arising – not dealt with on agenda

4. Officers Reports

[1] The Chairman indicated that it would be necessary for him to leave early to attend an ERCCIS Steering Group meeting late in the afternoon. Accordingly he presented his items (below) and the Treasurer's report [2] was deferred until later in the meeting

5. Issues for discussion & resolution

a. Accreditation Pilot

Gary Lewis presented an outline of progress with this pilot in which he had been the assessor for accreditation in the two LRCs involved ([3] Lincolnshire & [4] Cambridgeshire)

One major idea to emerge is the suggestion that it might be possible to develop a template, covering the majority of Accreditation requirements, which could be embedded into an LRC's Annual Report. This template could be developed using Best Practise obtained from a range of other LRCs

[5] GL considered that the Accreditation Assessment Process developed by Bill Butcher was too easy. There was a requirement only to produce evidence for the day that assessment was being carried out, the process needs to be one of continuous monitoring. Robust, sustainable and auditable processes need to be in place. In respect of the Guidance (B.B.) it was noted that the documents were being revised at the same time that the LRCs were being assessed, this was felt to be an unsatisfactory and frustrating process. Whilst it was noted that there had been some friction during this Pilot, Aisling pointed out that this had been a testing phase.

The following actions, recommendations and observations were made:

1. It was not sustainable without further resources

1. Outcomes from the Pilot will be taken to Richard Alexander for an exchange of views

2. "Accreditation should be backed up by a published and accepted standard" (quote from the Lincolnshire LRC Steering Group Chairman) - this was an observation relayed from a member of the legal profession who had made comparison with similar schemes from other professional organisations [6]

3. Whilst Bill Butcher suggested the European Foundation for Quality Management (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/EFQM_Excellence_Model) as a basis for such a standard, GL observed that it was more "product" based.

2. GL will speak to a solicitor. [6]

4. A Development Officer (ALERC) is clearly needed [6]

3. A list of duties needs to be drawn up - Action ALL

5. The timescale for the Pilot was "mad"

4. GL and Tim Corner will be taking ALERC views (and Mandy Rudd of GIGL) to the next Accreditation Meeting.

b. NBNT Trustees

GL had attended the meeting last month (22nd February). He is currently co-opted to the Board of Trustees, following the resignation from ALERC Chair of Adam Rowe.

Some papers were presented at that meeting:

1. "Mapping ..." : how Defra think they are going to be funding in the future. Several models were put forward for **LRC funding** - these were presented as a theoretical exercise within this DRAFT document.

After some discussion regarding the LRC-related funds which had come from Defra over the past few years

it was pointed out (NC) that the money would have been far better spent by distributing it to LRCs directly. There is a prospect of HLF monies becoming available again. Tim pointed out that many grants etc. were based in many cases on how LRCs were perceived locally - and that this perception varied considerably across the country.

2. [7] Paula Lightfoot's paper (**The Role of Local Records Centres in the NBN: a discussion paper**). Paula Lightfoot, NBN Trust Data Access Officer) which helped to position LRCs with respect to functions of the NBN Gateway etc. and provided a good opportunity for the Board to be informed of many issues concerning the LRC community.

Note that this paper was brought to the attention of ALERC Directors on 24/01/11, despite shortish notice, several Directors were able to comment upon it in time for Gary Lewis to take views to the NBNT meeting. The latest commented version of this paper was circulated to Directors by Nicky Court on 27/1/11.

This is a new Position Statement from the NBNT regarding LRCs and their function within NBN, it will be finalised and published following consultation with ALERC.

At this point, item [2] was dealt with (as the Chair was due to leave imminently)

Nicky Court distributed copies of ALERC's Income and Expenditure for the past year. She indicated that more than half of LRCs were now members, a first benchmark.

c. Sharing Consultant Data

[8]. IEEM working group proposal & "The Kent Letter"

Sally Hayne (CEO of IEEM) is to meet GL about this matter. It was noted that some planning authorities are now refusing to accept reports from Environmental Consultants which have only used NBN Gateway data.

5. Action GL

Key comments regarding this matter may be located in an email from GL (18/2/11) in which he relays Roy Tapping's comment about Sally Hayne: "... *really positive towards ALERC She is keen to pursue some form of formal agreement (MOU) with us, which would hopefully result in greater sharing of data from consultants*" and in general: "*We need to look at some practical solutions to how consultants are or might share data with us.*"

Nicky Court also brought a copy of the IEEM publication "In Practice" to the meeting and referred us to an article about LRCs and Consultants written by Andy Tasker of Middlemarch Environmental.

AC mentioned the idea of an online data portal which is currently being debated amongst Consultants.

d. ALERC Conference 2011

[9] Mark has booked the same BCSV rooms in Birmingham for 29th September 2011, including sufficient rooms for workshops.

The following conference topics were suggested:

1. Sustainability - funding and staying alive
2. Data quality and data flows
3. Working together: LRCs and NSSs
4. Changes to the Planning System
5. Accreditation: an update
6. Consultants data
7. Habitats

Aisling proposed a "soapbox" section to the presentations. The idea is to invite ALERC members to provide a short (ca 3-5mins) presentation. To assist this, one or two Directors should bring one of their own in order to "seed" the activity (N.B. Mark and Tim were the "performance artists" at the last conference)

6. Action: to have one or two "soapboxes" on hand for use at the conference - All

The following outline for the Conference was proposed:

1. Introduction with accreditation (Chair)
2. Session 1 - Sustainable Funding, Nicky Court (20 mins)
3. Session 2 - Data flow agreements and national data agreements, Paula Lightfoot (NBN) (20 mins)
4. break (20 mins)
5. Soapboxes x ca 5 (12:00 until 1:00)
6. Lunch (until 2:00)
7. AGM (until 2:20)
8. Workshops (until 3:15)

Data quality - verification and validation
Examples of data flows
Best practise, accreditation, quality assurance
Consultants data
Habitats

9. Feedback

10. Close (4:00)

The importance of reasonable opportunities for members to network was recognised, accordingly it was felt that breaks should be of a reasonable length

Costs proposed were £20, for non-members £40

Unlike our 2010 Conference, there is no overall theme to the 2011 Conference, the flyer need not have title

7. MW to liaise with DS who will produce the "flyer" again

Mark Wills will continue with the arranging of the conference

8. Conference organisation: MW

9. Assistance where required: All

After a brief discussion on item [12] (minuted later) Gary Lewis left the meeting and, after lunch, Mark Wills was chosen to Chair the remainder.

e. Website

- 10. Website

A. After briefly outlining the current status of the development of the website the following actions were noted:

1. Features of the existing site (DS) would be examined and mapped to the desired functioning of the "new" website

10.Action: MW

2. The "holding page" is to temporarily replace the existing page until the above changes have been made (already done)
3. The passwords required to carry out the moving and accessing of the "existing" site were given to CS by DS in the meeting, CS will move the site to his own server. DS was advised that there was no longer any need to do anything about the 123-reg subscription except to pay for the continued use of ALERC.org.uk, once the subscription expires in October the "existing" site will expire.

B. Contact emails

DS informed Directors that the current email Contact@ALERC.org.uk was a facility that had been obtained from 123-reg and that he had set it to redirect to several of the original ALERC Directors. Again, when 123-reg subscription expires, this facility will expire too. CR & CS indicated that it would be simple to set up a replacement.

Two such emails were proposed:

- Contact@ALERC.org.uk (directed to Tim Corner, *Eric Fletcher + **Darwyn Sumner)
 - Membership@ALERC.org.uk (directed to Nicky Court, Mark Wills + **Darwyn Sumner)
- * when asked, ** for monitoring and archiving

C. LRC database

CS provided a brief background to the LRC database (a note about a modified relational version developed by DS in the early days of ALERC in order to assist in furthering ALERC objectives was added by DS).

CS needs to continue to update the database

The database needs to be reconciled with the system that AC uses in Cofnod in order that the Cofnod "LRC locator" may be used in the website.

11. Various actions: via the Website discussion group

f. Biodiversity offsetting

- 11. Biodiversity Offsetting consultation

This is an item from a previous meeting - see AOB item 1

g. Establishing priorities and work programme

- 12. Use of ALERC funds

There was some discussion regarding the possibility of ALERC employing someone to carry out work that had come to us.

Two suggestions were made:

1. Development Officer - for broad ALERC work that would benefit all LRCs
 A Job Description is needed for this post

12. All to come up with ideas for Job Description (see also AP 17)

2. Accreditation Officer - purely for Accreditation work

The above broad ideas were expanded upon later in the afternoon section of the meeting, Mark Wills having leafed through the Feedback Forms from the 2010 Conference (which DS just happened to have at hand) and the following suggestions made:

Nicky Court to extract a list of suggestions from the NBN Paula Lightfoot paper

13. NC

Questionnaire to be constructed to ask membership how we should spend monies, utilising:

- Nicky's list (above)
- Survey monkey survey

14. MW

- Email shot to all ALERC members

15. CR

- 13. ALERC Statement of Intent

16. Action: Nicky Court & Gary Lewis

- 14. Priorities - discussion

Aisling Carrick referred to the papers from Workshop 5 of the 2010 Conference and pulled out the following points (made by ALERC membership as a whole):

- Develop ALERC position statement and guidance for LRCs on data ownership and copyright issues
- Carry out audit of the tools LRCs have developed (online – part of website?)

17. Action: All to address the broad issue of "establishing priorities and work programme"

6. Any Other Business

1. The Company Secretary was asked to minute the fact that ALERC fulfilled a request to respond to CLG Consultation on the single list of data requirements for Local Authorities - fulfilled via emails recently.
2. Company Secretary expenses were discussed, he was asked to provide them in the form of an Invoice
3. DS reminded Directors of the paper produced by he and Matt Grose following the Conference. This was required in time to inform the Accreditation document (it was referred to in that document). DS requested that a Director produce an Executive Summary to Metadata & Archives paper. Charles Roper had an insight on why it was sometimes so difficult to stand back from a technical subject (in this case deeply sleep-inducing too) and do an effective job of rationalising it with respect to its purpose. Teresa Frost kindly offered to reread and provide an Executive Summary. Once done, the paper will be consumable by the wider LRC community.

18. TF to provide Executive Summary to Metadata & Archives paper

4. "Swan's legs"

This is the title of a series of emails that has surrounded some debate over the past few months. The reason for the title was explained to DS as a simile for "things going on under the water when all you see is the Swan" and is the basis for an ALERC e-Newsletter with the same title.

Charles has the idea of providing regular updates/newsletters in an electronic format by direct emailing or by drawing the attention of members to selected items on the Forum (and presumably, eventually, the website) - to inform members about Director's activities & progress, upcoming events, tips on using and contributing to the Forum. Directors are urged to use the Forum and to submit some material for this e-Newsletter to Charles by the end of March.

19. All to submit material to Charles

20. Action CR to assemble e-Newsletter

5. Assett lock letter.

Following a request from Mark, DS approached Helen Roy (of CEH) and Darren Mann (of Oxford University Museum) both of whom agreed to be named as recipients of an LRC's data in the extremely unlikely event of a complete shut-down. Both have agreed so DS was asked to write to them formally on behalf of ALERC so that this kind service (required for a CIC) could be made available to all ALERC members.

21. DS to write formally to Helen Roy & Darren Mann

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

22. DS to initiate a Doodle for March

Chairman