

## **Minutes of the 15<sup>th</sup> meeting of ALERC Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> July 2012: 10:15a.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) or 10 mins taxi from New Street to the door (£5 taxi not claimed on expenses)



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# Minutes of the 15<sup>th</sup> meeting of ALERC

Present: Darwyn Sumner, Craig Slawson, Gary Lewis, Mark Wills, Simon Wood, Mandy Rudd, Alexa Tweddle, Nicky Court, Teresa Frost, Martin Horlock

The Chairman (Gary Lewis) declared the meeting open at 10:15

## 1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Tim Corner, Aisling Carrick, Eric Fletcher & Tom Hunt

## 2. Minutes of 14<sup>th</sup> Meeting

Minutes for the 14th Meeting were sent out on 12/02/12, and approved by Chair on 27/02/12

1. DS to correct and redistribute Minutes #13 **completed**
2. GL & TH with advice from AC & AT (send a letter to Welsh and Scottish Assemblies to acquaint them with ALERC and the ALERC National Coordinator and offer our services and collaboration) **completed**
3. TH & GL to provide quarterly summaries of ANC work priorities which had been addressed **ongoing**
4. TH & GL: "I like the idea of a monthly resumé of meetings that could be placed on the forum and as an attachment to the minutes" (outcome of an issue debated before, during and after this meeting) **ongoing**
5. Investigate the embedding of query system into ALERC website **under investigation**
6. DS to send BRISC link to Directors **completed**
7. DS to send APPG materials and contacts to TH to help him track developments **published yesterday**  
 The report contained much positive stuff about LRCs, there was a suggestion that they should be centrally funded by Government via a levy on Planning. Directors observed that Trevor James (NFBR) was responsible for the high profile of LRCs in this document.
8. All to discuss the development of an IEEM/ALERC Consultant publicity leaflet re data sharing **ongoing**  
 MR observed that the IEEM survey had been useful, TH was using information from the survey
9. TH & GL (=Accreditation - see below)
10. All - to comment on the issues flagged in the above table, particular attention is required on those issues flagged red. =Accreditation - ongoing
11. TF - to undertake the revisions discussed =Accreditation - ongoing
12. AC to update Work Plan from V1.1 to V1.2 **see Agenda item below**
13. Various: WP actions: 1.4, 3.2, 4.2, 4.3, 9.1, 9.2, 9.3, 11.2, 14.3, 15.2 **completed**
14. [WP 3.2] GL & TH Investigate the recruiting of Director from Ireland **not successful so far**
15. DS to invite all Directors to Dropbox **ongoing**
16. All - Conference theme ideas required **see Agenda item below**
17. DS - Doodle - for the simple purpose of determining the best date (not specifically for individual availability, but to avoid clashes with other events) **completed**
18. TH - to ask membership if they think this is a good idea (i.e. 2nd day for conference) **completed**
19. MW to provide TH with names of those volunteering at the 2010 Conference **completed**
20. MR + all to formulate letter template **not yet**
21. DS to initiate a Doodle for next Meeting **completed**

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

Teresa, Martin and Tom were present but not recorded as such on the last Minutes

1. DS to correct and redistribute Minutes #14

## 4. Officers Reports

### a. The Chairman

Gary remarked that in the 6 months that Tom had been with us, perceptions of ALERC had improved considerably and reckoned that the post was fundamental to ALERC. Martin Horlock suggested that funding for continuation of the post might be obtained out of the recommendations of the APPG.

**b. Treasurer**

1. NC Nicky provided a summary of our Income and Expenditure, remarking that we have a healthy balance; we take a small loss on the conference. We have 28 paid up members with another 5 about to pay and another 6 who might potentially be added. The following are not members: Isle of Wight, Essex, Bedfordshire, Derbyshire, Suffolk, Nottinghamshire, Shropshire, West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire, Sheffield, Durham, Isle of Man, Alderney, Guernsey and the Scottish Network

**2. DS to update Application Form and send to both Mark and Nicky**

**c. ALERC National Coordinator (ANC)**

Tom Hunt had prioritised a meeting with a minister at a Defra meeting. In his absence he had sent a report to Gary Lewis who distributed it at our meeting. Entitled “**National Coordinator’s Report, in lieu of Attending the 15th ALERC Director’s Meeting**”, this report should accompany these Minutes when it is made available in electronic format.

**3. GL/TH to send ANC report to Directors**

**5. Issues for discussion & resolution**

**a. General issues**

**DEFRA SLA 2013/14 onwards**

The SLA means funding to LRCs. Directors expressed the opinion that a minimum funding from this source (which will shortly, due to changes in DEFRA restructuring, encompass Environment Agency, Natural England and Forestry Commission) should be the sum that LRCs are getting now. An overarching SLA from this new combination will be developed and will be valuable in terms of reduced LRC administration effort. It was suggested that in future “targets” by LRCs will be the focus of the SLA, most probably along the lines of “species and habitats” again. Mark Stevenson is the DEFRA agent working on this matter.

**SBIF - report from Alexa**

Tom and Alexa had made presentations at an SBIF meeting (write-up by Tom in his report). Alexa had furthermore made a similar presentation to an SNH meeting. An SBIF subgroup had now been formed, the LRC representative to this SBIF is not Alexa, but Graham Wilson of BRISC.

**4. DS asked if TH was putting our SBIF notes onto the website, GL indicated that this was planned**

**NE Tendering process**

All people who had encountered the recent NE project (**Invitation to Tender for Biological Recording in the Voluntary Sector: Project 1**) and had studied the tendering process were in unanimous agreement that the process was so daunting that it actually prevented the funds from effective targetting of the most appropriate projects. Remarks were made concerning the most ludicrous aspects of the demands made within the tender, for example allowing 1 week to obtain landownership permissions and for all surveys to be completed by the end of August was considered ludicrous in the extreme. **Martin Horlock** was a Director who had pursued this tender, the reasons being that Norfolk had already, coincidentally, been preparing an invasive species monitoring programme and were able to match this up with the tender. Nevertheless he indicated that the tendering process was highly complicated. **Nicky Court** had also spent a full week on the task. Reports were that a total of 14 LRCs had attempted this tender.

Darwyn Sumner remarked on the **total costs to the LRC community**, estimating that, based upon NC’s efforts, a total of 16 weeks were spent on this tender. That’s approximately **1/3** of an annual salary for an LRC manager. Based on the modest “hiring-out” fees that my Local Authority charged for “buying” my time 4 years ago that’s **£10,000**, probably very much higher given more senior staff and at today’s costs.

**IEEM survey**

The results of this survey (made of Environmental Consultants) have been made available and also sent out to Directors. GL suggested that the information therein may be treated as one wills, it contains some useful points but there was also issues like a claimed figure of 72% of consultants who send their records to LRCs. GL remarked that he had never seen anything like this figure in any LRC.

**b. Accreditation**

• **Launch**

This was launched last Monday with invitations for applicants. Tom indicated that he could process 3 or 4 per quarter (maximum), others suggested that it would be valuable to ensure that one LRC per region went through the process and also that non-ALERC Director LRCs were well represented. There followed some (inconclusive) discussions regarding Accreditation Fees

**5. TH & GL to announce Accreditation Fees**

1. **Logos:** Following some discussion on emails between TH and Directors, the issue of LRCs usage of ALERC logos had been raised.

**6. DS to adapt Logo design to produce an agreed "ALERC Accredited" logo for use by LRCs**

2. **Workbook:** Tom has been hunting the most recent version of this down ...

**7. NC (who had noted errors and inconsistencies in the workbook) to coordinate fixing this with TH**

**8. TH to ensure availability of accreditation workbook for LRCs**

**c. Establishing priorities and work programme**

• **Work Plan**

GL was in possession of the most recent copy of this. Some updates were required.

**9. GL (+TH), Mark & AC to update Work Plan and provide copies to Directors in an upright /portrait format for use at ALERC meetings**

**d. Website**

Nothing to report

**e. ALERC Conference 6th November 2012**

TH had arrangements for the Conference in hand, the venue (BVSC, Birmingham) is booked, the programme outlined, with Mark Stephen of Defra and Helen Roy of CEH being the main speakers in the morning, followed by Soapboxes, AGM, the Tom Hunt standup act. Invitations to provide Poster Sessions would be made. The workshops were outlined, Teresa Frost on Social Networking, Henri Brocklebank on Enquiries, Eric on "Apps", Oliver Grafton on BARS and Richard Gallen (COFNOD) on Taxonomic Dictionaries.

After some discussion on costs it was agreed to charge £30 for members, £50 for non-members (to reduce the losses)

DS asked about the extent of invitations, MR indicated a preference for LRCs only

**10. DS to produce Conference Flyer in cooperation with MW & TH**

**f. NBN**

GL The new Chair is Mike Hassel, their strategy is being redeveloped and input from Trustees is being sought. The next Trustees meeting is in November

**11. GL to circulate NBN strategy document when published**

**g. NFBR**

MR summarised the current status, they have decided to become a Charity and to change their name from "Federation" to "Forum", Graham Walley is now Chair, Trevor James having retired. Next Conference is in Poole. Martin Harvey produces their newsletter now.

**h. Working groups**

Nothing to report

**i. Company work**

• **Annual Returns + Financial Returns**

Annual Returns - a document which keeps details of our Directors and Company details up to date - one special version of this is required by the end of July (online fee £14)

**12. DS to complete Annual Return**

The Financial Returns are required by the end of the Calendar Year after the Financial Year. Thus a Financial Statement could be begun shortly after the end of March, thus allowing a total of 9 months for its completion and submission.

The ALERC Year planner in these Minutes flags these key dates.

## 6. Any Other Business

### a. Digital Boundary Data for Designated Wildlife Sites

DS had been searching for publicly available Geospatial Data as part of some research, substantial data was available from OS and NE. Unfortunately the data for LWS should not be publicly available although DS indicated that he may have been almost successful (the data was not actually downloaded - and the file has now expired) as a result of being treated as an ALERC Director rather than an enquirer from the general public. No harm was done, though it may be worth reminding NE (nicely) about the terms of access to this data - worth telling DS too!

DS also remarked that Rights of Way Geospatial Data was a notable exception to important public data in that it was not made publicly available (counter to UK government's undertaking to make such data available), this lack of availability was blamed upon the Local Authority holders of the data.

### b. Biodiversity Audit: University of East Anglia

TF raised this topic, many LRCs will have received a request to answer this questionnaire, MH had completed it for the areas of Brecklands, the Broads and would be completing it for the Fens. He remarked upon the concept of "species guilds" that had arisen during the survey, these were based upon habitat "complexes" rather than pure habitats and could turn out to be a useful concept for use by many.

### c. iRecord

TF observed that NBN had now launched this initiative

### d. More C.I.C.s

MR told us that GIGL is currently going through the process of becoming a C.I.C.

## 7. Documents associated with these Minutes:

### a. ALERC Work Plan

Circulated and maintained by AC

### b. ANC report

see above

### c. Accreditation documents

Workbook (see above)

Accreditation logo (below is the initial proposal by DS)



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

GL proposed that ALERC meetings be reduced to 2 per year (i.e. omitting the September one this year)

**13.DS to initiate a Doodle for February 2013**

**Chairman**