



Minutes of the 18th meeting of ALERC

Tuesday 11th June 2013: 10:30a.m. to 4:00p.m.

Offices of EcoRecord

16 Greenfield Crescent, Edgbaston, Birmingham. B15 3AU

5 minutes walk from Fiveways Railway Station (trains from New street to Fiveways leave every 10 mins and take 3 minutes) Note that these new offices are around the corner from the previous offices, opposite the sandwich shop.



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Association of Local Environmental Records Centres

Minutes of the 18th meeting of ALERC

Present: Gary Lewis, Nicky Court, Darwyn Sumner, Tom Hunt, Mark Wills, Tim Corner, Eric Fletcher, Teresa Frost, Aisling Carrick, Mandy Rudd, Martin Horlock

The Chairman (Gary Lewis) declared the meeting open at 10:30

1. Apologies & introductions

Apologies were received from Craig Slawson and Alexa Tweddle

2. Minutes of 17th Meeting

Minutes for the 17th Meeting were sent out on 17/4/13, commented upon by Aisling Carrick and a revised version sent out on 23/4/13. Still some outstanding issues (NC 24/4, MW 24/4) leading to a proposal from GL to strip lengthy documents out of the Minutes which led to further proposals that reports should be fully prepared beforehand as much as was feasible (GL 7/5/13).

Action points (comments in parentheses indicate brief conclusions from the meeting)

1. All to seek a solution to the Chair's ALERC work overload (**resolved**)
2. TH & GL to provide quarterly summaries of ANC work priorities which had been addressed (**completed: TH, GL, MW et al "ANC 2012-13 Report to Defra"**)
3. Outline objectives of survey (TH) (**discharged**)
4. Contact regional groups to initiate the collecting of LRC data (TH) (**discharged**)
5. TH to ask Andrew Thompson to send new MoA annexe to Directors (**discharged**)
6. Publicise the work of ALERC, emphasising the need for the continuation of the ANC post at every opportunity - ALL (**ongoing, DS circulated sample materials**)
7. NC asked for a basic Accreditation tick sheet to be circulated
8. Review Accreditation Guidance - All (**discharged**)
9. Review Work Plan (All) (**completed: DS then AC, spreadsheet "ALERC Work Plan V1.2b"**) (**discharged**)
10. TH to check this issue with NE and Wildlife Link (**GL had proposed applying for the 12 month variable rate to determine if there was any benefit**)
11. Amend Work Plan under section 11 accordingly (**completed: DS then AC, spreadsheet "ALERC Work Plan V1.2b"**)
12. MW, EF & TH to address Website Home Page design, incorporating map and fixing twitter feed etc. (**Report is in preparation**)
13. How best to promote the desirability of Accreditation - All
14. Still thinking about paid advertising - Working Group to develop further (**3 people now involved in the working group comprising DS, TH is monitoring and should be kept in the email loop - see also item 17**)
15. ALERC article(s) to be written and targetted - TH (and others?)
16. Working Group: Publicity - to contact DS if they wish to contribute to this initiative - Any Director? (**see item 14**)
17. TH to be kept in the loop (that's not to say he necessarily has to be part of the Working group) (**see item 14**)
18. Advertise the Working group on the Forum (best done after we've some more Directors on board - EF and TC please confirm) (**see item 14**)
19. Amend Work Plan under section 13 (and possibly section 12) accordingly (DS, All) (**completed: DS then AC, spreadsheet "ALERC Work Plan V1.2b"**) (**discharged**)
20. MW to brief MR and MR to feed back on ALERC promotion at regional meetings (**see Matters arising**)
21. Achievements list to be maintained - DS TH and All (**completed: DS, spreadsheet "ALERC Achievements V1.0" to TH on 8/5/13**)
22. MW & TH to analyse feedback forms (**discharged**)
23. I didn't get a record of any response to this but according to GL on 13/3/13 Director's meetings are at 3 per year plus the conference (which counts as training in everyone's book) - any comment? (**increased back to 4 + conference**)
24. DS to initiate a Doodle for next Meeting (**discharged**)

Please note that items not marked as resolved or discharged will recur on future Agendas

3. Matters arising

Re item 20 above, plans were initiated to ensure that ALERC became a standing item on all the agendas

of all the regional Local Records Centre meetings, this action to become the responsibility of each Director responsible for the region concerned or to TH if a region has no Director guidance.

1. All Directors responsible for Regions to ensure ALERC is on their agendas

Conference to be held on 16th October

NC to determine the cost to each Director's host organisation of attendance at ALERC meetings

2. All to keep tabs on how happy each Directors employers are at the paying of expenses to attend ALERC meetings

MR raised the issue of raising the profile of ALERC (and our LRCs) with the NSSs. TH suggested we maintain a list of such contacts, possibly adding them to our Achievements list. Some debate ensued, how are we perceived by organisations such as Wildlife Trust.

3. All - the general topic of profile raising and perception in NSSs and other organisations

4. Officers Reports

In newly agreed format

- Chairman. ("Brief Jun 13.doc")

Gary Lewis had made his report in the above document (titled "ALERC Director's Briefing") and gave thanks to those Directors who had taken some of the weight off him.

- Treasurer

Documents were circulated yesterday

- ALERC National Coordinator ("ANC 2012-13 Report to Defra")

4. GL to send DS an additional report on the ANC

5. Issues for discussion and resolution

a. General issues

- Defra MoA - way ahead and feedback

This topic was introduced via GL's "Brief" - the relevant section reproduced here:

NE (DEFRA) MoA

The latest version of the NE MoA has gone out to all the English LRCs for their thoughts and Andrew has invited back comments. I think the big issues will be those we have already identified throughout the negotiation process:

- *The inability to commit to funding beyond March 2014*
- *Structured surveillance using volunteers and the LRC inability to deliver this*
- *OLR in place by March 2014*

This year there will be a split in LRCs prepared to sign (in my opinion) and we need to have an ALERC response in place for this. Directors views on:

- 1. Should we draft a response to any negative reaction from DEFRA/NE*
- 2. Should ALERC make a recommendation to LRCs as to whether they should sign or not, or should we leave it entirely to individual LRCs to decide*

TH remarked that it was a poor MoA as it will put LRCs in a poor light where it doesn't succeed

GL added that there will not be national coverage as some LRCs will not sign it

GL commented that we have negotiated the best package that it was possible to get from Defra, each LRC must now decide for themselves.

5. TH to ask for results of feedback to NE from LRCs in respect of their MoAs

- ANC post - feedback from meeting with Mark Stevenson and ANC workplan for 2013/14

Again from GL's "Brief":

ANC Way Ahead

1. Report to DEFRA FY 2012/13

The ANC Steering Group (Me, Andrew, Mark & Paula) has approved the report of Tom's work for 2012/13 after my meeting with Mark Stevenson last month. This report will form part of the wider NBN Trust's report to DEFRA in support of the NBN contract. Tom can provide copies of that report to Directors if required.

2. ANC Workplan FY 2013/14

Tom will circulate the plan; it is based on the format that DEFRA wanted and it focuses on 4 key outputs. We can

go through it in more detail at the meeting, but it conforms to last year's plan and gives ALERC a significant chunk of time allocation (28%).

3. Future Funding of ANC Post

At my recent meeting with Mark Stevenson, we discussed future funding of the post through the NBN contract beyond March 2014. He could make no promises, but as an individual he was keen to continue the post and will advocate for this in the DEFRA funding round that starts next month.

The main issue is that the "DEFRA suit" who signed the cheque last year, and who was convinced of the role, has taken early retirement so we will have to lobby the new incumbent. This will start in July and Mark will arrange for both ALERC and NBN (Geoff Johnson) to present the need for the post to him/her.

The DEFRA funding round will allocate funding in December (if you remember the funding for Tom's post was allocated in December and we interviewed in the January).

There are 3 possible scenarios:

- a. There is no funding forthcoming and the ANC post finishes
- b. DEFRA funding is allocated but very late, but in the interim Tom has found other employment. We would have to recruit again and the post would take a backward step until new postholder was up to speed
- c. DEFRA funding in place and post continues

ALERC Directors need to agree a set of plans to cover all these scenarios and this will form the basis of the discussions at the meeting, particularly how we mitigate the loss of a paid post in the worst case.

An additional item was suggested, 3.d. "Funding from other sources", suggestions made at the meeting included water companies, aggregates, banks, Wildlife Trust, FSC, NSS, museum initiatives (mentioned by TF since "hubs" are liked by museums who consider LRCs to be the largest outreach outfits in the country)

Also debated during the meeting was the possibility of part-funding:

1 day per week by ALERC funds + 4 days per week by an LRC who wants a part-time worker. ~£40k pa is needed for the full post, working out at around £1k pa for each LRC if we took it all on. EF suggested it might be possible to build this into a funding bid that could be presented to and by individual LRCs

b. Accreditation

- GL said "Accreditation is one of the most valuable things we deliver"

At some stage an Accreditation subgroup must be set up

6. All: to set up Accreditation subgroup

c. Work programme

- Seeking Director's approval for bunging on website (All)

Refer to the WorkPlan for ANC (ALERC Work Plan V1 2b). TH told us that Bedfordshire was next to run through the Accreditation process, followed by Kent in September

7. TH: NC wants to see a list of LRCS scheduled for Accreditation

d. Website & publicity

- MW had submitted a report (Website subgroup report June 2013)

e. Conference

Date and venue are fixed

Aisling and Alexa are to be involved in the organisation

Posters sessions, leaflets and publications from individual members to be encouraged

More formats for presentations were encouraged

A number of suggestions and ideas were put to TH, including the suggestion of "targetted training" in which, for example, someone was paid to give management training to LRC managers.

f. Regions

- no written proposals or reports

g. NBN

- TF has been reviewing the new Gateway controls and will know more perhaps when she attends her first NBNT Trustee meeting as a Trustee

h. NFBR

- MR has stood down from NFBR, their conference and talks are online

i. Working groups

- The Company Secretary had been in the habit of listing these in each set of Minutes/Agendas as a reminder even if no specific reports or activities were forthcoming. He had been asked to discontinue this practise.

j. Company work (MANDATORY)

• Directors' roles

It was suggested that a summary of these roles plus the individual's LinkedIn link might be incorporated into the ALERC website

8. MW & TH to put Director's roles on ALERC website

• Financial Returns

The following is a reminder:

Timeline: Year 2013/4 ends March 31st 2014. Then Treasurer has to sort out financial statement and chase auditor, 9 months to get this done or we get fined but it can be sent in earlier.

• Annual Returns

Timeline: this is just the same and DS does it (not Treasurer) and gets it in by July 31st.

6. Any Other Business

Topics not submitted in time for inclusion in the Agenda are deprecated

a. ALERC Newsletter

TC proposed that the Newsletter be made available to all to download from our website (seconded by NC)

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

9. DS to organise Doodle for next meeting (actually hijacked by an EGM)