



Community Interest Company: Incorporation number 06951023 2nd July 2009
Registered Office: C/O RECORD, Cedar House, Chester Zoological Gardens,
Caughall Road, Upton, Chester, Cheshire. CH2 1LH
www.alerc.org.uk Forum: <http://forum.lrcs.org.uk>

Sixth Annual General Meeting of ALERC Members

[Minutes of the 27th meeting of ALERC]

**14:45 – 15.15hrs, Wednesday 14th October 2015 ,
BVSC, The Centre for Voluntary Action, 138 Digbeth, Birmingham, B5 6DR**

Present: Nicky Court, Ian Egerton, Teresa Frost, Martin Horlock, Adam Rowe, Mandy Rudd, Craig Slawson, Mark Wills (all Directors), plus 71 members.

- 1. Apologies** – received from Eric Fletcher (Director), Simon Wood (Director), Darwyn Sumner (Director, Secretary)
- 2. Chair's Report (Nicky Court)**

Nicky expressed her thanks to all the ALERC Directors, especially Eric Fletcher and Mark Wills who have been managing the ALERC National Co-ordinator (ANC) post (Tom Hunt), Mandy Rudd taking responsibility for various meetings in London and Teresa for her work as NBN Trustee. All Directors now serve for a five year term. Details of the Directors, their Portfolios and work can be found on the ALERC website. There are various changes coming up for the board, with the resignations of Tim Corner, Eric Fletcher, Mark Pollitt and Steve Hannah. Nicky will be standing down as Chair, but hoping to continue as Treasurer.

Nicky commented that it had once again been a challenging year for LERCs, with cuts coming from all directions. Her own LERC, Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre (HBIC) is Council-hosted, but needs to cover all its own costs by 2017. It may ultimately need to explore the independent/Community Interest Company route.

More details of ALERC's achievements over the past 12 months are detailed in the Annual Report (which was circulated beforehand and is attached to these minutes as Annex 1). Nicky highlighted in particular:

- Negotiations to get the best deal possible for the Natural England MoA;
- Detailed input into the NBN Strategy;
- Growing links with other environmental professionals, e.g. Bat Conservation Trust and CIEEM; and
- The funding application to the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts.

Nicky thanked everybody for their support and wished her successor well.

- 3. Treasurer's Report (Presented by Mark Wills on behalf of Eric Fletcher)**

Mark highlighted key aspects of the financial summary (circulated beforehand and included in the Annual Report in Annex 1).

On the expenditure side, the major items were the ANC post, conference costs, the EcoBuild event (including display costs) and the company secretary's expenses. The 'Find an LERC' tool developed by Cofnod was highlighted as a 'bargain' at £420.

Income from membership was far the greatest income item, followed by conference fees. Accreditation income will disappear in future years, as the fee has been scrapped.

The overall deficit for the year was £7,160. Not a huge figure, but with reserves under £20k further income sources or increased membership fees are needed. A consultation will be undertaken on further fee increases that are proposed within Years 2 and 3 of the ALERC five-year strategic plan.

During the current (2015/16) financial year, fees raised will be circa £16k with the ANC post costing £2,500 per month (down from £3,000). This cannot be sustained without increases to membership fees and successfully securing external funding.

4. ALERC National Coordinator report (Tom Hunt)

Tom presented in detail his AGM report which is attached as Annex 2.

5. Appointments

The Chair indicated that actual appointments of Directors take place at Director's meetings once nominations/proposals have been received either at the AGM or soon after.

The following Directors have resigned: Tim Corner, Eric Fletcher, Teresa Frost, Steve Hannah and Mark Pollitt. Nicky thanked them all for their service.

Nicky Court resigned as Chair. Martin Horlock is nominated to replace her. Nicky nominated to become Treasurer.

All changes unanimously accepted by the membership.

Directors role descriptions have now been updated and published to the website. All Directors must lead on one work area and be involved in at least one working group. They will serve a maximum five year term. The Chair role will be for two years. All of these changes will be discussed at the next Directors' meeting.

Even taking into account the Boards wish to operate with a reduced total of twelve Directors, the number of resignations mean that we currently have three vacancies. Nominations would be very welcome, especially from Scotland. Teresa Frost's resignation also means we are looking for a replacement NBN Trustee (assuming such a role is still available to ALERC).

6. Any Other Business

None.

ANNEX 1: ANNUAL REPORT



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Annual Report 2014–2015

Introduction

Formed in 2009, ALERC is an association between Local Environmental Records Centres (LERCs) in Great Britain. The Association aims to provide a central voice for the views and concerns of the Records Centre community, whilst building a support-based network of knowledge and advice to meet the needs of its members.

Local Environmental Records Centres (LERCs) are not-for-profit organisations that collect, collate and manage information on the natural environment for a defined geographic area. LERCs support and collaborate with a network of experts to ensure information is robust, and make information products and services accessible to a range of audiences including decision-makers, the public, and researchers.

Association Objectives

- To promote and encourage the completion of a UK-wide network of Local biodiversity and geodiversity Records Centres.
- To promote and develop good standards of practice in the collation, management, dissemination and analysis of biological and geological records.
- To promote Local Records Centres regionally, nationally and at a UK level to potential users and suppliers of data.
- To provide full representation of the UK with country specific solutions and equal emphasis on the individual countries requirements.
- To develop and promote accreditation schemes for biodiversity and geodiversity records centres and their staff.
- To encourage and facilitate networking between Centres to enable exchange of ideas, collaborative working, developing joint tools and sharing good practice.

Chair's Review

It has been a demanding year for ALERC and it mustn't be forgotten that the Directors are incredibly busy running their own environmental records centres in challenging times. The need to diversify and explore new income streams is becoming increasingly important and whilst LERCs already cover far more than just data in/data out (and the processes in between!) it is heartening

to see the continuing increase in demand for local data across all sectors, not least from the private sector to inform development.

Over the past year the Directors and the ALERC National Co-ordinator (ANC) have:

- Held three Board meetings and one AGM
- Carried out most of its business using the ALERC Directors Google group, generating some 940+ pieces of productive email traffic
- Sought feedback from members on numerous consultations and items of interest using the on-line ALERC forum
- Dealt with membership applications and membership renewals in good time
- Filed the Annual Return and Company Accounts to Companies House in good time
- Provided a Trustee on the NBN Board of Trustees and contributed to the NBN Annual Report
- Ran a successful annual conference well attended by 75 LERC members. See: <http://www.alerc.org.uk/conference-2014.html>
- Drafted an ALERC 5 year Strategy
- Wrote to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs successfully re-instating NE funding to 4 LERCs
- Attended workshops & provided an ALERC response to the NBN Strategy 2015-20
- Attended workshops and provided an ALERC response to the Defra Biodiversity Monitoring and Surveillance Strategy
- Input into the work of the Bat Conservation Trust Planning toolkit project
- Reviewed/streamlined the Accreditation Criteria and accredited 1 LERC
- Provided input into the UK Parliament PostNote on Biodiversity Auditing
- Provided an ALERC stand/presence at the National Ecobuild Exhibition
- Provided input and a watching brief on the NBN-CIEEM Consultants' Portal
- Responded to the EC consultation on EU nature legislation.

Further details on some of these achievements are given in the accounts from the working groups and the ALERC National Co-ordinator. The one item of bad news was the unsuccessful bid to the Esmee Fairburn Trust for funding towards the ANC post. A search for other funding sources continues. Meanwhile the draft ALERC 5 year strategy will be examining an increase in membership fees to contribute towards the ANC post.

Nicky Court, ALERC Chair (2013-15)

LERC Board and Officers (serving during 2014/15)

Name	LERC	Officer Position	Working Groups and Responsibilities
Nicky Court	Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre	Chair of Directors	Consultations
Mark Wills	North & East Yorkshire Ecological Data Centre	Vice chair	Website, accreditation, ALERC forum, conference
Eric Fletcher	RECORD	Treasurer	National Coordinator work management, conference
Darwyn Sumner		Company Secretary	Publicity

Craig Slawson	Staffordshire Ecological Record		Membership and recruitment
Teresa Frost	Cumbria Biodiversity Data Centre		NBN Trustee, National Schemes and Societies Liaison/Data Flow
Mandy Rudd	Greenspace Information for Greater London		Business Development
Ian Egerton	Devon Biodiversity Records Centre		ALERC Strategy & Policy
Tim Corner	Bristol Environmental Records Centre		Enquiries
Martin Horlock	Norfolk Biodiversity Information Service		Data Management and Data Systems
Simon Wood	Worcestershire Biological Records Centre		Minutes
Mark Pollitt	Dumfries & Galloway Environmental Records Centre		
Steve Hannah	The (Lothian) Wildlife Information Centre		
Adam Rowe	South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre		
Tom Hunt		National Coordinator	ALERC Work programme inc. conference, membership and accreditation

ALERC Working Group Reports

Business Development

By Mandy Rudd, Chair of group.

Other group members: Ian Egerton, Eric Fletcher, Adam Rowe, Simon Pickles, Camilla Burrow and Tom Hunt

The group was set up to advance the reach of the LERC community through the development of guidance and influencing key external organisations that engage with, or ought to engage with our members. During 2014/15, the BDG has engaged with organisations such as the Cabinet Office, UK Contractors Group, and CIEEM to discuss a range of topics including publicly accessible greenspace mapping and mobilisation of private sector data.

The group also led on updating the generic name for member organisations and the brief definition that outlines their core roles. This work involved an introduction at ALERC's national conference in October 2014, the opportunity for members to provide feedback and ideas both at the conference and via ALERC's online forum, and the writing of the new definition based on all the feedback and the BDG's objectives.

Accreditation

By Gary Lewis, Chair of group.

Other group members: Mark Wills, Jackie Ulyett, Hannah Cook and Charlie Barnes.

The main achievement for FY 2014–15 was the review of the standard 20 accreditation criteria to take account of the feedback from those LERCs that had gone through the process. The revised criteria have been approved by the ALERC board and will be re-issued. LERCs starting the process after the re-issue will work towards accreditation using those criteria. It was also decided that the advanced level of accreditation will be put on hold until the majority of LERCs have achieved the standard level.

During FY 2014–15 1 LERC achieved the standard level of accreditation with 3 stating they are working towards accreditation within FY 2015–16."

Website

By Mark Wills, Chair of group.

Other group members: Teresa Frost, Elaine Wright, Luck Lunla and Charles Roper

As part of the ALERC national Conference held in Birmingham in November 2014, the Website working group ran a discussion session on the ALERC website (www.alerc.org.uk) content, and the publicity and image of ALERC via logos, email/website badges and how to advertise the ALERC message most effectively. The discussion was open to all delegates at the conference representing LERCs from across the UK. This produced some good suggestions on the direction the website should take and suggestions on how ALERC should publicise itself. These were captured in a document by a member of the working group. We intend to take forward the idea of a 'Top task analysis' this year.

The major content achievement of the group in 14/15 was the replacement of a rudimentary map-based facility for finding an LERC depending on location, with a more sophisticated hosted solution developed under contract by one of our members. The map showing the LERC boundaries on the front page acts as a hyperlink to the 'Find an LERC' page which has also been updated.

Data flow group

By Maria Longley, Chair of group.

Other group members: Catherine Burton, Charlie Barnes, Daniel Marshall, David Slade, Lizzy Peat, Teresa Frost, Martin Horlock, Purgle Linham, Rachael Potter, Gary Hedges, Christine Johnston, Tim Corner and Tony Witts.

ALERC's data flow group was active in the email group discussing all aspects of data flow from national schemes wanting to share data with LERCs to technology in data sharing. The group was also asked to comment on JNCC's stance on Recorder 6 software and its future and discussed the use of LERC data for rarity reviews when not all data is on the NBN Gateway. At the ALERC Conference in October 2014 there was a discussion about the future of this group and John Sawyer from the NBN Trust offered his help in approaching data providers on the NBN Gateway to facilitate better data access for LERCs. In 2015, the terms of reference of the group were agreed

and I took over as chair of the group. Huge thanks to Teresa Frost at Cumbria Biodiversity Data Centre for setting up the group and to Aisling Carrick from Cofnod, retiring chair of the group.

Conference

By Mark Wills, Chair of group.

Other group members: Elaine Wright, Eric Fletcher and Matt Davies

The conference working group planned and delivered a successful National Conference in October 2014. The event included two external (non-LERC) speakers, a number of speakers from within the LERC community and an open-floor discussion session stimulated by short verbal reports from each ALERC working group.

The conference was attended by 78 delegates from 75 member LERCs with 3 other delegates not from within the LERC community.

Strategy Group

By Ian Egerton, Chair of group

Other group members: Mark Wills, Tom Hunt and Nicky Court

ALERC has made many advances in the last few years and in late 2014 it was agreed that a five year strategic plan was now required to set a firm course for its future development. The strategic plan would align our priorities with the needs of our members and the resources required to deliver our vision'. Initially developed by the Director of Strategy in Dec – Jan, the draft was reviewed by a small working group during February, with a further draft being reviewed by the directorate in April.



This document is now awaiting final review once consideration has been given to future sustainable funding mechanisms for the ANC post. It will then go out to consultation with the membership and will hopefully be published during mid 2015.

ALERC National Coordinator Report

By, Tom Hunt, National Coordinator

Summary of achievements

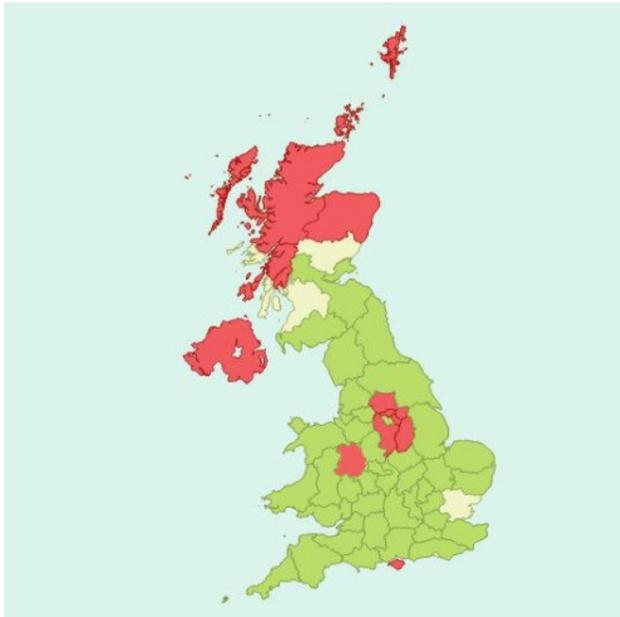
The year 2014–15 has seen a wide variety work, especially as funding from outside organisations ended in September, and time has since been devoted solely to internal ALERC work, particularly supporting the work of the directors, the ALERC subgroups, the membership, and conference planning

Outside of this work, the main achievements for the year have been:

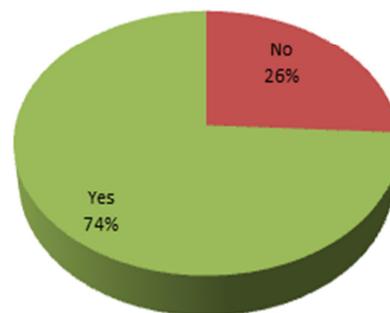
- Completion of work in conjunction with NBN Trust, including
 - Working with NSSs to provide access to data for LERCs (particularly Odonata).
 - Completing a survey of Welsh LERCs on what they need from ALERC/NBN.
 - Sharing good examples of webservice implementations.
- Working with LERCs and completing data tasks to assist with the biodiversity offsetting decision support tool feasibility study with eCountability Ltd.
- Submitting consultation responses on behalf of ALERC specifically:
 - The Welsh Government's Nature Recovery Plan for Wales
 - Defra's Biodiversity Monitoring and Surveillance Strategy.
- Working with the UK Contractors Group to find a way of allowing consultants to easily share their records.
- Working with LERCs and CIEEM to assist LERCs in providing the most relevant data products to the private sector.
- Continuing to build relationships with National Schemes and Societies.
- Continuing to help ensure the website is kept up to date, including project managing the new 'Find an LERC' map.

Membership Report

In 2014–15, ALERC gained one more member in the form of Suffolk Biological Records Centre. Work was also completed in Scotland to provide a definitive list of who is and who isn't an LERC. There is ongoing work in Scotland to look at the potential for existing LERCs to expand to fill the gaps. As a result of compiling information on LERCs in Scotland, it is currently possible to say that the total number of LERCs in the UK is 58, of which 43 were members of ALERC (74%) during 2014–15



LERCs as Members of ALERC



Treasurer's Report

Expenditure		Income	
ANC Salary/expenses*	£13,460	Membership fees~	£11,690
Conference	£2,373	Conference fees	£2,270
Ecobuild event	£1,552	Bank interest	£49
Company Secretary (2013/14)	£1,543	Accreditation fee	£300
ALERC displays	£1,051		
'Find an LRC' facility	£420		
NBN membership fee	£350		
Companies House fees	£178		
Room hire - Board meetings	£225		
Accountants	£150		
Accreditation costs	£142		
Directors expenses	£25		
Total	£21,469		£14,309
Surplus/Deficit			-£7,160
Balance 1 st April 2014			£26,437
Balance March 2015			£19,274

*Additional funding from Defra paid directly to employing organisation (NEYEDC)

~ Does not include two outstanding membership fees (£400.00)

ANNEX 2: ALERC NATIONAL CO-ORDINATOR'S REPORT

It's been a busy year as one might expect.

The main things that members will have noticed that have been completed with my facilitation / management since the last AGM are:

- The new map on the website. Special thanks to Cofnod for doing this. The simple interface that allows the map to be updated quickly and easily is a real boon.
- Facilitating the consultation that came out of last year's conference, which set the collective term for members to the more informative "LERC" and set the definition of LERCs.
- Facilitate the production of, and provide staffing for, the Ecobuild stand. We had many contacts with people from a range of sectors, although the geographic range of these people seemed to be mostly limited to the south east. Without pre-empting a board decision, I think the likelihood is that we won't want to use members' money to go again next year, when the main outcome seems not to be benefit the whole country. There may be better, cheaper ways of advertising LERCs. Thanks to Caroline at Devon though, and we will be reusing the material she produced for the stand at other events.
- Support directors' delegation to NE / EA MoA meeting. This has been with a view to providing a view from the point of view of the smaller LERCs, for whom the MoA is a larger percentage of their income, as the directors available for this meeting tend to come from the larger LERCs. I am not sure if and when the negotiation process will restart in the coming winter, but keep an eye on the forum for updates.

Consultation responses:

- EC Nature Legislation fitness check
- Biodiversity Monitoring and Surveillance Strategy
- See website for copies of these responses

Assisting directors and working groups is a big aspect of work and you have heard or will hear about much of that work from those groups themselves. In summary:

- Accreditation
 - Rewording documentation.
 - Updating the website (still some work to do on that).
 - Conducting the assessments.
 - Updating the membership on what has been happening.
- Conference
 - Subgroup needs new impetus – if it is needed at all
- Membership renewals and providing figures to the directors for things like the strategy.
- Acting as a single point of contact for BCT (working with data flow subgroup) and for the ALERC directors.

Other work includes:

- Supporting the ecosystem services project, led by eCountability, that some LERCs are involved in. This is project that looks to solve urban problems with environmental data. I will be looking at the potential for engaging local authorities, although I haven't started any work on this.
- Facilitate data exchanges
 - Data to Sepsidae national recorder for atlas.
 - Data from RSPB swift inventory. This is still available via the forum. Those LERCs who have accessed it have been very appreciative, although I don't think many have. Please ask if you have questions or need more support.
- Working on data sharing with consultants.
 - The Portal you will hear about from NBNT. I have tested it by putting records in and seeing how quickly they could be accessed by an LERC. It was instant, although the species in question were not protected and probably didn't require verification. Hopefully a session is

planned in the northwest to demonstrate the portal from start to finish to show how it benefits consultants and LERCs. The results of this will be shared session, probably on the forum.

- Intending to get a list of iRecord user names for LERCs as this is needed for you to log into iRecord and obtain the data. Will get this from David Roy and you can contact me if you need reminding what yours is.
- Also, Mandy and myself have been working with an organisation called Build UK on getting consultants to share data. Build UK represent building organisations and contractors in the UK. They estimate this to be something like 60% of the total building industry in the UK, including the supply chain etc.
- They want to mandate all their members to require ecological consultants working with them to share the ecological data with LERCs.
 - Through the portal where that is most cost effective.
 - With LERCs where this is most cost effective, advising them to use LERC-ready spreadsheets or GIS exports. This has been tested successfully.
 - Other routes that they already use.
 - Share habitat data in GIS format. This has been tested with LERCs. Files with data on for several LERCs can easily be directed to the correct centres by either me or an LERC using a GIS.
 - Conduct a data search with LERC.
- This will be in their “Ecological Scope of Works” document, which goes to all ecological consultants. When this is published, I will endeavour to place it on the forum.

Next year

Depends on funding (e.g. SDF). A lot of projects going on and hope to be involved. There will definitely be a lot of work to do on accreditation assessments and ALERC’s involvement in the NBN strategic action plan. I’ll be sitting down with Martin asap to plan the year ahead. If there is something you think ALERC should be doing, please don’t hesitate to say so.