

Minutes of 28th Directors Meeting - 10.30am Wednesday 2nd December 2015
Offices of Ecorecord, 16 Greenfield Crescent, Edgbaston, B14 7ET, Birmingham

Present: Martin Horlock (MH,Chair), Sara Carvalho (SC,Mins), Nicky Court (NC), Ian Egerton (IE), Tom Hunt (TH), Adam Rowe (AR), Mandy Rudd (MR), Craig Slawson (CS), Darwyn Sumner (DS), Mark Wills (MW)

Actions carried forward from previous meetings

Meeting# / Action#	Action item <i>Full description of carried action</i>	Status <i>This column updated as a result of this meeting</i>	Who
22/14	TH to approach Mike Oxford to gauge ALGE opinion on BCT project re usefulness to LAs.	Completed	
22/16	NC to establish DCLG contact re possible new Defra Guidance on LWS and 'introduce' ALERC.	Carried forward	NC
22/3	Associate membership of Wildlife link to be progressed.	Carried forward	NC
22/5	ALERC to produce an Annual Report in a simple format.	Completed	
24/15	Conference working group to take the comments on noise at the venue and sound Re: use of microphones and discuss the former with the venue.	Completed	MW
25/9	Position Statement on working with DEFRA and BMSS present to DEFRA as a letter response from ALERC - Revise position statement.	Carried forward	IE
	ALERC Scottish representation needed. Action MW to progress	Carried forward	MW
Additional discussion point from previous meeting (26)	Enquiry into Local Nature Partnerships. Report now published on the UK parliaments' website http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/environmental-audit-committee/inquiries/parliament-2010/local-enterprise-partnerships-inquiry-page/	No further action at present	
26/1	TH to circulate a summary of LA involvement with LERCs	Carried forward	TH
26/5	Draft membership renewal covering letter.	Completed	
26/3	MW/NC to circulate request for volunteers to take on: (1) ALERC work Programme and (2) ANC work plan	(1) Completed – No further action needed (2) Carried forward (ANC work plan)	
26/6	Draft paper explaining the accreditation process. TH to extract relevant content from accreditation guidance and draft an explanatory note summarising the accreditation process year	Carried forward	TH/MW

	by year.		
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Actions from 28th meeting

Action #	Action item	Who
1	Circulate annual report to the membership.	TH
2	Details of the new board structure/members to be updated on the ALERC website.	MW
3	Update the relevant board members details on the companies house website before the next directors meeting	DS
4	Contact Eric Fletcher, previous treasurer, to clarify queries raised	TH
5	IE to check the ALERC membership payment for DBRC is correct and provide the information to NC so accounts can be updated	IE
6	A reminder that payment is overdue is to be sent to those LERCs whose payment is outstanding and consider using the regional networks to increase the membership coverage	TH
7	Clarify COFNOD's membership amount	TH
8	Complete the accounts and submit them to Companies House	NC
9	Update the "find an LERC" map on the website to include the Isle of Man and the Channel islands.	TH
10	To amend the current LERC map on the website to distinguish ALERC members from Non-ALERC members. TH to also draft a brief narrative which is to be attached to the county of Essex - relating to the fact that coverage in the Essex area currently involves multiple organisations and circulate to the directors for agreement.	TH
11	Research guidance on the use of colours on websites to ensure website is fully accessible (e.g. make the website accessible to those who are colour blind).	MW
12	Circulate the Great British Bioblitz bid documents to the directors with a deadline for receiving comments.	TH
13	Continue liaising with Andy Webb (Natural England) to find out whether/when the latest BMSS draft can be shared.	TH
14	Circulate CIEEM guidance on accessing/using biodiversity data to directors.	TH
15	Create an email group to coordinate support and initiate the discussions to produce a project brief for an ALERC led project looking at the current use of LERC to inform planning applications.	TH
16	Report back on the analysis of the pilot work already being carried by GIGLE in some areas of London, looking at numbers of planning applications that use/don't use LERC data.	MR
17	Contact those LERCs who haven't yet provided a date for accreditation.	TH
18	Redraft the terms of reference in light of the decision to create a new working group - Strategy Group.	IE/MW
19	Appoint a Director to take over the ALERC conference work area from MW.	All
20	Appoint a Director to the role of NBN Trust Liaison.	All
21	Contact prospective members and find out whether they'd be interested in becoming a Director of ALERC.	AR
22	Speak to acting CEO Rachel Stroud and write to the NBN trust to enquire about the representation of ALERC on the NBN trust's board.	MH
23	Existing ALERC funds to be used to cover the income shortfall of the Coordinator post to the end of the current financial year. MW to follow up as NYDC host the coordinator post.	MW
24	Suggestions for projects that could potentially fund the ANC post and that fulfil ALERC objectives to be submitted via the Forum by the end of December 2015.	All
25	Initiate an email discussion outlining the terms of a LWS project proposal/methodology following the feedback and discussions with RSWT.	IE
26	Contact LERCs that expressed concerns about the new fee structure.	TH
27	Circulate the draft ALERC members code of conduct to the board.	IE
28	Report back on the outcome of the clarification requested by several local authorities on the European Court of Justice ruling on Environmental Information Regulations.	NC
29	Consider ways of changing the website so products and services that might be of use to the LERC community are more prominent.	TH
30	Invite Marina Flamank (EA) to the next meeting.	MH
31	Set up doodle polls with dates for 2016 ALERC Directors meetings (first meeting in 2016 to be organised for the second half of February).	MW

1. Apologies & Introductions

Apologies were received from Simon Wood. SC to take the minutes of the meeting.

2. Minutes of previous meeting, outstanding actions & discussions on future process

It had not been possible to circulate the minutes of the 26th meeting. As these were not available individual Director's notes were used to refer to specific action points. Items/Actions specifically discussed are summarised below.

The minutes of the 27th meeting – ALERC AGM were agreed.

- The annual report had been produced and was accepted by the board.

Action 1: TH to circulate annual report to membership

- New Chair –Martin Horlock, appointed at the ALERC AGM 14/10/2015
- **Progress report on action 26/3:** All agreed that the ALERC work plan was now superseded by the ALERC 5 year strategy and action plan.

3. Officers reports

3a Chair (MH)

- The ALERC board of directors was voted in at the AGM on 14/10/2015
- MH reported he had received an expression of interest from Gary Lewis (**ERCCIS**) to join the ALERC board.

Action 2: Details of the new board structure/members to be updated on the ALERC website.

Action 3: DS to update the relevant board members details on the companies house website before the next directors meeting.

3b Treasurer (NC)

- NC circulated an update of the accounts and summarised the current status. Some queries were raised regarding the figures. TH to contact Eric Fletcher (previous treasurer) to clarify these. NC gave a brief verbal update on the current status of the membership fee income including: (i) ALERC is yet to receive payment from 14 LERCS for the current year's membership; (ii) 2015-2016 membership looks as if it might be just short of the (47) target identified in the strategy; (iii) A brief discussion followed around an analysis carried out by NC on the changes in the type of membership which links to the changes in the structure/staff levels of individual LERCS; (iv) IE pointed out that the membership fee figure stated in the accounts for Devon Biodiversity Records Centre (DBRC) is lower than it should be. IE to check the record of payment made and report back to NC so this can be amended in the accounts; (v) The ALERC conference is expected to be cost neutral once all conference fee payments are received. TH to chase these payments. With these outstanding matters resolved NC can complete the accounts and submit them to Companies House.

Action 4: TH to contact Eric Fletcher, previous treasurer to clarify queries raised.

Action 5: IE to check the ALERC membership payment for DBRC is correct and provide the information to NC so accounts can be updated.

Action 6: TH to send out a reminder that payment is overdue to those LERCS whose payment is outstanding and consider using the regional networks to increase the membership coverage.

Action 7: TH to clarify COFNOD's membership situation.

Action 8: NC to complete the accounts and submit them to Companies House.

3c Membership (TH)

- Following on from the above. A discussion followed around the need to carry out various updates to the map showing LERC/ALERC members on the website. Actions arising from the discussion are listed below:

Action 9: TH to update the map on the website to include the Isle of Man and the Channel islands.

Action 10: TH to amend the current map to distinguish ALERC members from Non-ALERC members. TH to also draft a brief narrative which is to be attached to the county of Essex - relating to the fact that coverage in the Essex area currently involves multiple organisations and circulate to the directors for agreement.

Action 11: MW to research guidance on the use of colours on websites to ensure website is fully accessible (e.g. make the website accessible to those who are colour blind).

3d National Coordinator (TH)

- A report was circulated by TH. A discussion followed regarding some aspects of the report. These were as follows: **(i)** Brief update on the ALERC conference; **(ii)** Great British Bioblitz – ALERC has been invited to comment on the bid. TH suggested it would be useful for Directors to comment. TH to circulate the relevant documents and specify the deadline for receiving comments; **(iii)** TH will continue to liaise with Andy Webb, Natural England's new LERC national liaison contact, to find out whether/when the latest BMSS draft can be shared; **(iv)** latest best practice guidance on accessing/using biodiversity data from CIEEM is available and TH to circulate this to directors; A discussion around the need to work with and influence other organisations such as ALGE and the Wildlife Trusts to reinforce the importance of LERCs and LERCs data to inform planning decisions followed. Suggestions around a potential project looking at the current use of LERC data in planning in some pilot areas were made and how this could provide good evidence on the current levels of consultation of biodiversity data in planning decisions and the importance of the role of LERCs. Several directors and others are to be involved in developing a project brief. Initial suggestions of ALERC members and ALERC directors may be able to support this project were: Steve Whitbread, Northamptonshire Biodiversity Records Centre Manager and the following directors – AR, IE, MR, MW and NC; **(v)** TH summarised the feedback received from the membership regarding the intended dates to achieve accreditation. A few LERCs had not indicated a date. TH to contact these LERCs to discuss timescales for accreditation. Actions arising from the discussion are listed below:

Action 12: TH to circulate the Great British Bioblitz bid documents to the directors with a deadline for receiving comments.

Action 13: TH to continue liaising with Andy Webb to find out whether/when the latest BMSS draft can be shared.

Action 14: TH to circulate CIEEM guidance on accessing/using biodiversity data to directors.

Action 15: TH create an email group to coordinate support and initiate the discussions to produce a project brief for an ALERC led project looking at the current use of LERC to inform planning applications.

Action 16: MR to report back on the analysis of the pilot work already being carried by GIGLE in some areas of London, looking at numbers of planning applications that use/don't use LERC data.

Action 17: TH to contact those LERCs who haven't yet provided a date for accreditation.

3e Companies House return

- NC to submit Companies House return as stated previously (as per **Action point 8**)

4. ALERC Directors

4f Directors Role Description: responsibilities – work areas & Working groups

- Directors roles, portfolios/work areas and working groups were discussed and changes agreed. The ALERC website was amended to reflect the changes and these can be found on: <http://www.alerc.org.uk/alerc-work-areas.html> Main changes agreed were as follows: **(i)** The creation of a new Strategy working group responsible for two sub work areas (1) Policy and Delivery and (2) Resources and Funding. The named director of the Strategy working group is IE; **(ii)** The Recorder6 work area is to be integrated into Data Management and Data Systems; **(iii)** MW will no longer be the Director responsible for the ALERC conference; **(iv)** A Director is to be appointed to the role of NBN Trust Liaison.

Action 18: IE & MW to redraft the terms of reference in light of the decision to create a new working group - Strategy Group.

Action 19: To find a Director to take over the ALERC conference work area from MW.

Action 20: Action for the board – to appoint a Director to the role of NBN Trust Liaison.

4g Make up of board – recruiting Directors, Geographical coverage, travel expenses, remote engagement

- There was general agreement that full geographic representation on the ALERC board is an aspiration but might not always be feasible/possible. It was suggested that a means to overcome this would be for TH to ensure a degree of LERC regional representation through the coordinator's role and its active engagement with the regional networks. Remote engagement (e.g. via skype) was also discussed and all agreed that this would be a worthwhile means of engagement as it would make the involvement of more remotely based LERCs, such as LERCs in Scotland, more likely. A brief discussion around the need for recruiting additional members to be part of the ALERC board of Directors as currently the number of Directors is short of the agreed 12. 3 new Directors are to be recruited and a number of suggestions of members that could be contacted were made. These were: Camilla Burrows (TVERC); Ben Deede (Merseyside BioBank); Gary Lewis (ERCISS); Charlie Barnes (Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership); Nick Bruce (Lancashire Environmental Records Network); Lindsay Bamforth (Fife Nature Records Centre); Sara Carvalho (EcoRecord).

Action 21: AR to contact prospective members and find out whether they'd be interested in becoming a Director of ALERC.

4h NBN Working groups – link to ALERC working groups, coverage and LERC input

- The appointment of a new NBN CEO, which is expected to happen soon, was highlighted as an important matter arising for ALERC. The need to follow up any emerging changes in the NBN/NBN working groups was identified to ensure alignment of ALERC and NBN working groups.

Action 22: MH to speak to acting CEO Rachel Stroud and write to the NBN trust to enquire about the representation of ALERC on the NBN trust's board.

5. ALERC finances

5i Funding for ANC post

- MW gave an update on the current funding status of the ALERC National Coordinator (ANC) post. There is currently an income shortfall of around 10k in the funding needed to support the ANC post until the end of the current financial year. A discussion followed around possible strategies to bridge the income gap for the coordinator post such as the involvement of the ANC in supporting individual LERCs paid project or, probably more desirably, to source project funding that supports/contributes to the delivery of ALERC's objectives. The recent experience with RSWT application, although unsuccessful, generated a potential project idea linked to the provision of Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) data to support the new countryside stewardship schemes.

Action 23: It was agreed that existing ALERC funds would be used to cover the income shortfall of the Coordinator post to the end of the current financial year. MW to follow up as NYDC host the coordinator post.

Action 24: All to think of project suggestions that could potentially fund the ANC post and that fulfil ALERC objectives. All project ideas to be suggested via the Forum by the end of December 2015.

5j RSWT bid feedback (IE)

- IE reported that the bid submitted to RSWT had been rejected and the main reason given in the feedback received was that the project wasn't supporting external organisations. However the discussions highlighted other possibilities which could be explored (e.g. the LWS project mentioned above -5i).

Action 25: IE to initiate an email discussion outlining the terms of a LWS project proposal/methodology following the feedback and discussions with RSWT.

6. ALERC 5 year strategy

6k Review of comments

- Most comments received contained suggestions of minor amendments to the text and have been incorporated. A few comments were received relating to the suggested fee structure.

6l Consultation on price increase

- A brief discussion followed on the feedback received and issues raised. It was decided that the best approach would be for TH to contact the LERCs that expressed concerns with the proposed fee structure and liaise directly to find how to best address their concerns.

Action 26: TH to contact LERCs that expressed concerns about the new fee structure.

6m Members code of conduct

- IE has drafted an ALERC members code of conduct which is to be circulated to the board for comments. This will be considered for adoption at a future meeting.

Action 27: IE to circulate draft ALERC members code of conduct to the board.

7. European Court of Justice ruling on Environmental Information Regulations

- NC reported that a number of local authorities were seeking clarification on the ruling.

Action 28: NC to report back.

8. ALERC support for LERC products – Second Site

- It was thought that the website could be better used to promote products/useful contacts, namely IT support contacts which could be useful to LERCs.

Action 29: TH to consider ways of changing the website so products and services that might be of use to the LERC community are more prominent.

9. AOB – to be notified in advance and paper/note circulated

- Marina Flamank (Environment Agency) requested if she could attend the next ALERC meeting to discuss possible changes to EA's screening process.

Action 30: MH/TH invite Marina to the next meeting.

- Timings of future meetings were briefly discussed.

Action 31: MW to set up doodle polls (first meeting in 2016 to be organised for the second half of February).