

Minutes of 31st Directors Meeting - 10.30am – 16.00pm Thursday 22nd September 2016

Birmingham & The Black Country Wildlife Trust, 16 Greenfield Crescent, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 3AU

Present: Martin Horlock (MH, Chair), Nicky Court (NC), Tom Hunt (TH), Adam Rowe (AR), Mandy Rudd (MR), Craig Slawson (CS), Mark Wills (MW), Gary Lewis (GL) prospective ALERC director, Clare Blencowe (CB) prospective ALERC director, Sara Carvalho (SC, Minutes) prospective ALERC director

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
22/3	Associate membership of Wildlife link to be progressed on one year trial basis.	Carried forward Annual report required for 2015/16 Agreed to still put in for 1 years membership	NC/MH
22/16	NC to establish DCLG contact re possible new Defra Guidance on LWS and 'introduce' ALERC.	Carried forward The new Biodiversity DCLG contacts are Tom Selley and Pamela Roberts. TH suggested they could perhaps be contacted once the outcomes of the research by LERCs (London/GIGL, SEWBREC and Northamptonshire) on the use of Biodiversity data in planning were available. GIGL's research is now complete and the Greater London Authority (GLA) will publish the report shortly. Need to be clear on what we will be talking to them about.	NC
22/21 & 24/2	Request information/update from Bill Butcher regarding offsetting project. To be made available through the forum.	Carried forward MR has asked BB, who has agreed but not yet supplied information. MR to send a reminder.	MR
25/9	Position Statement on working with DEFRA and BMSS present to DEFRA as a letter response from ALERC - Revise position statement, pending further progress Re: Natural England	Carried forward MR: BMSS will be part of Defra's 25 year plan, but we are not yet clear whether the previous draft document will form part of the new doc. Position statement will be produced once 25 year plan is released	IE/MH
28/11	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).	Carried forward	MW
28/24	Suggestions for projects that could potentially fund the ANC post and that fulfil ALERC objectives to be submitted via the Forum.	Carried forward	All
28/28	Report back on the outcome of the clarification requested by several local authorities on the European Court of Justice ruling on Environmental Information Regulations.	Carried Forward. NC to circulate latest clarification details.	NC

28/29	Request suggestions via the forum for ways of changing the website so products and services that might be of use to the LERC community are more prominent.	Carried forward	TH
29/4	NC to draft and circulate a paragraph describing the time limit rules for the role of ALERC Director so it can be agreed and included in the articles of association.	Doesn't appear the Articles of Association can be amended to include the time limit. NC has sought clarification from the CIC association. It may have to be an internal policy document. Carried forward	NC
29/14	MH to contact IE and check if the Strategy and Policy Group are willing to be responsible for converting the current ALERC 5 year strategy action plan into the ANC work plan	IE confirmed he would be happy to be responsible for taking forward this action. Comments on IE's draft sent via email-item 10b (meeting papers) to be sent by the 30 th of September 2016.	All
29/15	TH to review ALERC's strategy and action/work plan, note what has been achieved and circulate to members along with a reminder of the new membership prices.	This is tied in with the production of the Annual Report and the membership renewal letter. Annual Report partially drafted and was circulated with the meeting papers.	TH
29/19	TH to contact BCT to request they update the link to find an LERC on their guidance document from the current link to the NFBR website to the ALERC website.	The outdated link (to the old NFBR LRC database) was in the BCT Survey Guidance document- Matter reported to BCT. TH unsure whether they have changed it or whether they will do so in future drafts.	
30/1	Include a poll/vote of members on the location for next year's conference at this year's conference.	Carried forward to next conference.	TH
30/4	Write letter to JNCC asking for information on the future of Recorder 6.	Carried forward (also consider/refer to action 30/10-potential Welsh model alternatives).	MH
30/6	Send report to TH on which LERCs are not conforming to terms of EA agreements.	Carried forward	MF
30/7	Communicate with member LERCs who are not conforming either directly or via regional meetings.	Carried forward. To be followed up with MF when information is available (see 30/6)	TH
30/8	Liaise with MF over a paper on the reasons for the differences in charges.	Carried forward. Marina circulated a questionnaire to all LERCs and will share the results. TH to follow up with MF when results are available.	TH
30/9	Produce a generic pie chart of LERC income sources using existing sample data which can better reflect the current situation and supply to MF.	Carried forward. TH to produce when results from MF's questionnaire are available (see 30/8).	TH
30/10	Provide description to MF of what the Welsh system may be able to deliver in the future.	Carried forward (consider in particular any alternatives for providing data to EA in the future, once the NBN Gateway is shut down)	AR
30/14	Explore options for sponsorship of 2016 conference	Carried forward to next conference.	MH
30/15	Expand the accreditation complaints procedure out to become a general ALERC complaints procedure.	Carried forward. To be completed before the end of 2016.	TH

30/19	Business group to look at the use of LERC term (L.E.R.C. Vs LERC/Lurk), plus some of the other older style terminology	Carried forward	MR
30/20	Produce a draft protocol on how consultations with members are carried out by ALERC	Draft completed. TH to circulate and give directors a deadline for comments to be received.	TH

Actions from this 31st meeting

Action #	Action item	Who
1	MH to make a plea for volunteers to join a biological recording database development working group at the conference.	MH
2	NC to re-circulate information on Wildlife Link Membership.	NC
3	TH to start compiling evidence of NE's use of data accesses through the NBN gateway and/or locally via direct requests to LERCs and others.	TH
4	NC to finalise accounts to be presented at the AGM on the 12th of October.	NC
5	NC/TH to chase outstanding payments at the conference.	NC/TH
6	NC to remind accountant of Companies House deadline for submitting the accounts.	NC
7	MH to include figures provided by directors on time/resources spent on ALERC business in the annual report.	MH
8		
9	MH to clarify DS's role given the revised terms of the Company Secretary's position.	MH
10	TH to draft a response letter outlining the process by which applications are assessed and what requirements need to be in place in order to become an ALERC member. This is to be circulated to the directors for comment before responding to both applicants.	TH
11	TH to email confirming ALERC's presence and stand at NBN conference.	TH
12	TH to set up NBN conference stand (remember to bring power lead).	TH
13	AR to contact Lindsay Bamforth to clarify the commitment requirements and options.	AR
14	AR to contact the other prospective directors (Charlie Barnes, Ben Deed, Nick Bruce and Camilla Burrows) to follow up the recent communication regarding their potential interest.	AR
15	MR to amend statement to make it clear what is meant by data.	MR
16	Open data statement to be finalised by the business group/MR and be made available on the ALERC website.	MR
17	TH to offer LERCs the option of appointing/appoint an accreditation mentor to those LERCs that request it.	TH
18	MR to check whether the GI (Green Infrastructure) typology used in the project can be shared/made available.	MR
19	MH to sort contractual arrangements for TH with MW (NEYEDC).	MW
20	IE/GL to redraft the ANC's work priorities to ensure there is adequate capacity for both project and work plan delivery. ALERC board to consider what ALERC work priorities directors might be able to deliver.	IE/GL
21	TH to re-circulate ANC skills document via the forum so membership has the chance to consider how the ANC might be able to help with project work/contracts.	TH

Minutes of the 31st meeting

1. Apologies & Introductions

Apologies were received from Ian Egerton (IE) (contributions were received to the meeting from Ian via instant message), Ben Deed (BD) prospective ALERC director, Charlie Barnes (CB) prospective director ALERC director

2. Minutes of previous meeting and outstanding actions

The minutes of the 30th meeting were accepted.

The status of all previously outstanding action items is detailed in the table above. Updates on actions of the previous meeting are as follows:

1. **(26/2)** Company secretary's role description and remuneration agreement reviewed and finalised by MW. See item 2a on this (31st) meeting's agenda. Completed
2. **(28/3)** ALERC board members' details updated on the Companies House website as part of the submission of the annual returns. It was further agreed that board membership is to be updated annually by the Company Secretary as part of the Annual Return. Completed.
3. **(28/27)** ALERC Code of Conduct agreed by the board and circulated by TH with the membership renewal. Completed.
4. **(30/4)** Consider setting up a working group to look into biological recording databases development options given they are a critical business need to LERCs and the likely withdrawal of all future investment/support for Recorder 6 by JNCC.

Action 1: MH to make a plea for volunteers to join a biological recording database development working group at the conference.

5. **(30/2)** Directors submitted a summary of ALERC activities, time spent and costs covered to MH. Completed.
6. **(30/3)** AR sent documentation on Directors' work areas and working groups to potential Directors. Completed.
7. **(30/5)** Full accounts for ANC post, plus income due for this coming financial year sent to NC. Completed.
8. **(30/11)** Membership form amended by TH, to include a field to commit to an accreditation date. Completed.
9. **(30/12)** TH amended work plan so reporting is done a year at a time, rather than covering 2-3 years. This was already reflected in the latest report circulated with this meeting's papers. Completed.
10. **(30/13)** All directors to send TH comments on online membership renewal before 4th June. In place. Completed
11. **(30/16)** MR to talk to Maria Longley, chair of dataflow working group about subsuming the dataflow working group into the NBN dataflow working group. This was agreed. Completed
12. **(30/17)** All to email any further comments on the Position paper on LERC to charging to MR. Completed.
13. **(30/18)** MR to amend the position paper on LERC charging based on comments received and to recirculate to Business Group. Completed.

3. Officers reports

3a Chair (MH)

i. Decision on Wildlife Link

- ALERC is to join Wildlife Link for a one year trial period following the completion of the 2015/16 annual report (see update of action **22/3**).

Action 2: NC to re-circulate information on Wildlife Link Membership.

ii. Meetings update – Jo Judge / CWS

- MH reported that the meeting with Jo Judge, the new NBN Trust CEO had been very positive and that ALERC had the opportunity to stress the importance of a collaborative, partnership oriented approach and to emphasise the importance of the network. Also to stress the importance of consulting the network on decisions made regarding the Atlas(es) and other NBN Trust initiatives and direction.
- The meeting with Marina Flamank focused mainly on the need to find an alternative solution for providing EA with LERCs data once the NBN gateway shuts down on March 2017.
- MH also reported meeting with the Wildlife Trusts and NE to discuss County Wildlife Sites data access post termination of LERCs MOAs. Discussions around open data still unclear without much progress

made. MH suggested that it might be worth collecting information on NE LERC data downloads and local data access requests.

Action 3: TH to start compiling evidence of NE's use of data accesses through the NBN gateway and/or locally via direct requests to LERCs and others.

3b Treasurer (NC)

- ALERC accounts spreadsheet was circulated. Work on finalising the accounts is a priority so they are complete before the AGM on the 12th of October.

Action 4: NC to finalise accounts to be presented at the AGM on the 12th of October.

- Income: Total to the 16/09/2016 **£17,220**. 34+ LERCs renewed their membership with some more payments coming in.

Action 5: NC/TH to chase outstanding payments at the conference.

- Expenditure: Total to the 16/09/2016 **£14,850**
- Balance carried forward from previous year (from 05/04/2016) **£8,536.66**
- Balance on the 16/09/2016 **£10,906.66**

Action 6: NC to remind accountant of Companies House deadline for submitting the accounts.

3c Legal duties

i. ALERC annual report

- A draft had been circulated with the meeting's papers.

Action 7: MH to include figures provided by directors on time/resources spent on ALERC business in the annual report.

- Reporting format was briefly discussed, including the treasurer's report.

Action 8: MW to remove the reference to TH's-ANC coordinator's salary and make this staff costs and expenses.

ii. Company Secretary Role Description

- The revised Company Secretary Role description was circulated with the meeting's papers.

Action 9: MH to clarify DS's role given the revised terms of the Company Secretary's position.

4. ALERC Membership requirements

4a Essex WT application consideration

- Existing information regarding the application to join ALERC were circulated with the meeting's papers.

4a Jersey BRC application consideration

- A discussion followed on both applications (4a and 4b) and the specific circumstances of these areas.
- It was agreed that it is crucial that new applicants either meet the current accreditation criteria or can clearly outline how they plan to meet these criteria in the near future.

Action 10: TH to draft a response letter outlining the process by which applications are assessed and what requirements need to be in place in order to become an ALERC member. This is to be circulated to the directors for comment before responding to both applicants.

5. NBN Conference stand

- TH to confirm ALERC's presence/stand at the NBN conference. Any director's attending the conference can help during conference.

Action 11: TH to email confirming ALERC's presence and stand at NBN conference.

Action 12: TH to set up NBN conference stand (remember to bring power lead).

6. Prospective new Directors – Q&A session

- Prospective directors introduced themselves and indicated what ALERC work areas they feel they might be able to support.
- GL, Manager of ERCCIS and previous ALERC director indicated his willingness to carry out supporting the accreditation process being one of the existing assessors. Other work areas could include supporting the strategy and policy group and if necessary the role of secretary. GL also indicated that he would be willing to liaise with the Environment Agency as there is a geographical proximity between both ERCCIS and EA's offices.
- CB, Manager of Sussex BRC former EA/DEFRA policy adviser, indicated her willingness to support the data flow working group and support TH's work with consultation responses and other advocacy work.
- SC, Manager of EcoRecord, currently responsible for taking the director's meetings minutes indicated that she'd be willing to continue supporting ALERC in this role.
- Scottish representation was highlighted as an important priority to pursue and it was agreed that an alternative meeting attendance/representation process could be put in place e.g submission of a written Scottish LERC update report, conference call and/or other similar remote meeting attendance options.

Action 13: AR to contact Lindsay Bamforth to clarify the commitment requirements and options.

Action 14: AR to contact the other prospective directors (Charlie Barnes, Ben Deed, Nick Bruce and Camilla Burrows) to follow up the recent communication regarding their potential interest.

- Following Q&A AR proposed the election of Gary Lewis, Clare Blencowe and Sara Carvalho as ALERC directors. The proposal was unanimously endorsed by all directors.

7. Update on/matters arising from recent meetings

7a NBNT – Jo Judge

- Dealt with above (see actions update and Officer's reports/Chair's –item 3.a.ii). Additional NBN Trust papers circulated: (1) A review of the current verification network; (2) Develop an online recording standard; (3) Agree a simplified data flow model; (4) Develop and award data sharing badges.

7b CWS

- Dealt with above (see actions update and Officer's reports/Chair's –item 3.a.ii).

8. ALERC open data statement

- MR circulated a draft Open Data statement.
- CB suggested clarification is needed to ensure that what is meant by data is clear (ie species data vs all data).

Action 15: MR to amend statement to make it clear what is meant by data.

- Issues such as the potential impact of open data on LERCs business models are recognised and GIGL are currently working with ODI (Open Data Institute) to explore how best to incorporate open data principles into the LERC business model (e.g. through the creation of 'open data' data sets).
- MR is planning to organise a workshop where ODI would explore how LERC business models can fit in/deliver open data and will welcome other LERCs join GIGL in the workshop. Additional financial contributions to the workshop will be necessary (expected total cost of the workshop is £3000). ODI workshop to be funded by GIGL & BID-REX project.
- TH requested advice regarding a request for clarification on open data licensing and what is involved including any legal requirements. Publishing the open data statement on the website would help refer queries. It is also important to emphasise the need for data custodians to consult adequately with data providers as part of the process of delivering open data. This is also crucial to maintaining good relationships with data providers.

Action 16: Open data statement to be finalised by the business group/MR and be made available on the ALERC forum and website.

9. National Coordinator

9a ANC report

- TH circulated a report.
- The appointment of mentors to support LERCs through the accreditation process was discussed. NC suggested the form could be modified to include a question about the need for a mentor to be appointed.

Action 17: TH to offer LERCs the option of appointing/appoint an accreditation mentor to those LERCs that request it.

- It was agreed that CB would become ALERC's main point of contact for consultation responses, supporting this aspect of TH's work.
- TH continues to work on membership renewal.
- TH reported on the outcome of SPADES. The project has finished and the final claim as been submitted. The project successfully proved the concept of using environmental data, including LERC data, to model ecosystem services for decision makers.

Action 18: MR to check whether the GI (Green Infrastructure) typology used in the project can be shared/made available.

- TH reported on recent meetings (1) positive meeting with Jo Judge CEO NBN Trust; (2) NE's Director for Evidence, David Askew at a workshop at the NEYEDC. David Askew is interested in the idea of a framework that enables work between NE's local offices and LERCs; (3) Habitat suitability/modelling workshop organised by NEYEDC for Harrogate district council and (4) FSC Biolinks projects

<http://www.field-studies-council.org/about/fsc-projects/current-projects/biolinks.aspx>. Good project aimed at increasing the skills/capacity in biological recording focusing in the South and East of England and the West Midlands. Useful consultation.

9b Work Plan

- TH circulated a work plan progress update.
- The need to consider project work planned for TH for the rest of the financial year was raised. In particular Norfolk's EU project work which is due to start during October 2016 and will require an average of 2 days/week over 6 months.

9b Membership – renewal status/new members

- TH circulated an update as part of the ANC's report.

10. ANC post funding

10a Current financial position

- MW had circulated a spreadsheet containing the financial information relating to the ANC's post and a financial forecast analysis of the funding available given a number of scenarios regarding membership income and overall ALERC expenditure. A shortfall is anticipated and planned project work is expected to address this shortfall, for example Norfolk's EU project.

Action 19: MH to sort contractual arrangements for TH with MW (NEYEDC).

10b ALERC work plan/Director input/ANC capacity

- It was recognised that there is a need to re-assess ANC's work plan priorities in light of the additional project work. Where possible directors might be able to pick up some of the work priorities to ensure these can still be delivered.

Action 20: IE/GL to redraft the ANC's work priorities to ensure there is adequate capacity for both project and work plan delivery. ALERC board to consider what ALERC work priorities directors might be able to deliver.

10c External contracts

- Other confirmed project work includes support for Staffordshire Ecological Record's (SER) accreditation. This contract is for one week's work to be completed between January 2017 and the end of March 2017. The total income from this work is expected to be around £1000.

Action 21: TH to re-circulate ANC skills document via the forum so membership has the chance to consider how the ANC might be able to help with project work/contracts.

11. ALERC conference Final plans

- TH reported that conference planning was on track and outlined the focus of the talks/speakers which include FSC and Roddy Fairley from SNH speaking about the Atlas of Living Scotland. TH asked directors for feedback on the timings suggested in the conference program.

11a Lunchtime demonstrations

- MW to bring NEYEDC's UAV (Drone) along with the flight control software and some examples of output to demonstrate during the lunch.

11b Soapboxes

- TH suggested MW/NEYEDC might like to take up a soapbox slot to discuss ways of engaging and retaining new partners.

11c AGM

- AGM to include the usual necessary items – Chair, Treasurer, Nat Co-ord report, appointments & resignations etc.

12. AOB

12a Future meeting venues

- MW reported that B&BC WT and SC suggested some other potential Birmingham venues namely another of the trust's centres- the COE in Winson Green and Winterbourne House and Gardens by Birmingham University.