

Minutes of 33rd Directors Meeting - 10.30am – 16.00pm Thursday 26th January 2017

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), Mark Wills (MW), Gary Lewis (GL), Clare Blencowe (CB), Sara Carvalho (SC, Minutes), Ian Egerton (IE)

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 (in part) NC to progress membership of Wildlife Link and sign up for 1 year.	NC
22/16	NC to establish DCLG contact re possible new Defra Guidance on LWS and 'introduce' ALERC.	Carried forward NC to draft a letter/email to DCLG's Biodiversity contacts (Tom Selley and Pamela Roberts) and circulate for comment. Suggested focus: presenting the result of recent research/statistics available on how local authorities are performing with regards to use of LERCs data in planning applications.	NC
22/21 & 24/2	Request information/update from Bill Butcher regarding offsetting project. To be made available through the forum.	Carried forward	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 document. 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 (CB to send report on issues found on LERC website map to MW)	MW/TH/CB
28/24	Suggestions for projects that could potentially fund the ANC post and that fulfil ALERC objectives to be submitted via the Forum.	Completed. Ongoing agenda item (item 11c. in this meeting)	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 report back to the group as updates become available.	NC
28/29	Request suggestions via the forum for ways of changing the website so products and	Carried forward.	TH

	services that might be of use to the LERC community are more prominent.		
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.	Carried forward 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. It was suggested that GIGL's articles of association (MR to provide) could be used as a basis for updating ALERC's articles of association where relevant and use directors' role descriptions for any other updates necessary.	NC/MR
29/14	MH to contact IE and check if the Strategy and Policy Group are willing to be responsible for converting the current ALERC work plan into the ALERC 5 year strategy action plan?	Completed (but to be reviewed as part of ANC's work plan 2017/18).	
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.	Completed for the current year through the production of the annual report (available on the website) and information sent with the membership renewal letter.	
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.	Completed, matter reported to BCT (The outdated link (to the old NFBR LRC database) was in the BCT Survey Guidance document).	
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 (2017).	TH
30/4	Write letter to JNCC asking for information on the future of Recorder 6.	Carried forward.	MH
30/6 & 30/7	MF and TH to liaise regarding instances of LERCs not conforming to terms of EA agreements. TH to communicate with member LERCs who are not conforming either directly or via regional meetings.	Completed. TH requested information and matter can be followed up when information is received.	
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 send MF a reminder.	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	Completed. Item removed.	
30/15	Expand the accreditation complaints procedure out to become a general ALERC complaints procedure.	Completed. Draft circulated with meeting papers.	
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 to circulate suggestion.	MR
30/20	Produce a draft protocol on how consultations with members are carried out by ALERC	Draft completed and circulated with meeting papers. Deadline for any additional comments 16th February 2017.	All
31/1	MH to make a plea for volunteers to join a biological recording database development	Completed.	

	working group at the conference.		
31/2	NC to re-circulate information on Wildlife Link Membership.	Completed.	
31/3	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.	Completed.	
31/4	NC to finalise accounts to be presented at the AGM on the 12th of October.	Completed.	
31/5	NC/TH to chase outstanding payments at the conference.	Completed.	
31/6	NC to remind accountant of Companies House deadline for submitting the accounts.	Completed.	
31/7	MH to include figures provided by directors on time/resources spent on ALERC business in the annual report.	Completed.	
31/9	MH to clarify DS's role given the revised terms of the Company Secretary's position.	Completed.	
31/10	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.	Completed.	
31/11	TH to email confirming ALERC's presence and stand at NBN conference.	Completed.	
31/12	TH to set up NBN conference stand (remember to bring power lead).	Completed.	
31/13	AR to contact Lindsay Bamforth to clarify the commitment requirements and options.	Completed.	
31/14	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.	Completed.	
31/15	MR to amend statement to make it clear what is meant by open data.	Completed.	
31/16	Open data statement to be finalised by the business group/MR and be made available on the ALERC website.	Completed.	
31/17	TH to offer LERCs the option of appointing/appoint an accreditation mentor to those LERCs that request it.	Completed.	
31/18	MR to check whether the GI (Green Infrastructure) typology used in the project can be shared/made available.	Carried forward.	MR
31/19	MH to sort contractual arrangements for TH with MW (NEYEDC).	Completed.	
31/20	IE/GL to redraft the ANC's work priorities to ensure there is adequate capacity for both	Completed.	

	project and work plan delivery. ALERC board to consider what ALERC work priorities directors might be able to deliver.		
31/21	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.	Carried forward.	TH

Actions from this 33rd meeting

Action #	Action item	Who
1	Set up a Recorder 6 task and finish group – consider including Mike Weideli, Sally Rankin, Andy Foy	TH/MH
2	Liaise regarding transition of duties to SC as part of Co. Secretary role. Includes preparation/circulation of meeting papers, ALERC annual and financial returns to companies house.	MW/NC/SC
3	Add 'Declaration of Conflicts of interest' as a standing agenda item.	SC
4	Review progress and accreditation targets for 2017/18 as part of strategy/ANC work plan review.	TH/IE
5	Compile a list of all LERCs and their respective accreditation and membership status	TH
6	Take forward/develop the suggestions for the 2017 ALERC conference and report back.	TH
7	Consider publishing an ALERC membership fact sheet using LERC headline data collected.	TH
8	Draft a letter to JNCC enquiring about the future of Recorder 6 (see action 30/4).	TH
9	Consider whether an audit of how the membership uses Recorder 6 is required.	TH
10	Consider consulting membership on whether there is a need for ALERC to lead on Recorder 6 maintenance and development depending on whether JNCC plans to continue to invest in Recorder 6 support.	TH
11	Invite Ben Deed, Lindsay Bamforth and Steve Whitbread to join the next ALERC meeting as prospective Directors.	AR
12	Circulate guidance paper on the use of the Directors email group	MW
13	To decide whether he is available to continue as chair of ALERC for another year by the date of the next ALERC Directors meeting (May 2017).	MH
14	Clarify Lancashire ERC on their position on ALERC membership	TH
15	Look into membership fee increase options (staged Vs full increase) and the impact against income/expenditure.	NC
16	Draft a letter to members, to be circulated with membership renewal information by end February	MH
17	Send an estimate of time spent on ALERC business to Martin Horlock. MH to send a reminder if necessary	All directors
18	Contact Essex WT's CEO regarding their ALERC membership application.	MH
19	Contact Dan Wrench (Shropshire) to propose an individual ALERC membership	TH
20	Ensure ODI report is made available to the membership	TH
21	To consider compiling an ALERC data set to be available via the Atlas platform as part of the ANC's work plan 2017/18.	IE/TH
22	Circulate how LERCs expenditure/core costs have been calculated by the SE LERC group and Welsh LERCs respectively. TH to encourage other LERCs to provide this (e.g. through regional networks) so that ALERC has a national figure for the cost of running the LERC network.	MR & AR
23	Any director that attends one of the ODI/DEFRA events to report back at the next meeting	All
24	Continue to liaise with the NBN trust to clarify the definition of commercial vs non-commercial use with a view to agree a definition.	MR/AR
25	Contact GLNP regarding progress on legal advice received and report back.	TH
26	Draft a set of ALERC key messages to be used in consultation responses	CB?
27/28	Communication – priorities and opportunities to be added to next agenda, to include consideration of producing a communications plan	SC
29	Amend ALERC consultation procedure to reflect the outcome of actions 26-28	CB
30	Prepare Welsh Government consultation response	CB/AR
31	Look into organising a workshop/meeting for ALERC members and NSSs via NFBR	TH
32	Draft an ALERC IT requirements paper for the next directors meeting – liaise with CB at Sussex regarding server changes at Sussex and impact on ALERC forum)	MW
33	Send an email to all members with a guide on how to make better use of the forum (search/filter new posts etc)	TH
34	Update the ANC post budget for 2017/18 once figures for membership are available (see action 15 NC)	MW
35	Provide an estimate of the number of ANC days needed to deliver the Bid-Rex work, when the work is likely to take place and corresponding income.	MH
36	Explore potential projects and funding sources for ANC role for 2017/18	IE/TH

Minutes of the 33rd meeting

1. Apologies & Introductions

All present (GL left the meeting at 12:30).

2. Minutes of previous meeting and outstanding actions

The minutes of the 31st meeting were accepted (32nd meeting was the AGM-minutes also 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. **(22/3)** Annual report 2015/16 completed. NC to progress membership of Wildlife Link and sign up for 1 year. NC to be the contact for Landuse planning matters and SC the contact for newsletter/wildlife link general information (so it can then be circulated).
2. **(22/16)** NC to draft a letter/email to DCLG Biodiversity contacts presenting the results of recent research by GIGL <http://www.gigl.org.uk/planning-title-page/data-searches-and-planning/> and Hampshire statistics on how local authorities are performing with regards to use of LERCs data in planning applications.
3. **(28/11)** MW provided an update on progress. TH and MW to continue to progress. Related to this action point, CB to send report of issues found that need correcting on the ALERC map section of the website.
4. **(28/24)** Agenda item 11c.
5. **(28/29)** TH update: See the following suggestion about creating a table of resources for recorders: <https://forum.lrcs.org.uk/viewtopic.php?id=1243>. Refer to existing resource/list on the website.
6. **(29/4)** It was suggested that NC would use GIGL's articles of association as a basis for updating ALERC's articles of association. Any other necessary amendments could be made as part of the director's role descriptions.
7. **(30/4)** Recorder 6 was recognised as an immediate key priority for ALERC.

Action 1: TH and MH to prioritise setting up a Recorder 6 task and finish group (consider including Mike Weideli, Sally Rankin and Andy Foy).

8. **(31/3)** TH compiled some information through Merseyside Biobank's download log. There is evidence of continued need/access/downloads by NE staff. Such instances will continue to be noted down.

3. Officers reports

3a. Chair (MH)

- No specific report tabled.

3b. Treasurer (NC)

- An update of the ALERC accounts/financial information (including membership income) was circulated prior to the meeting. NC gave an overview of the situation to date. ALERC's account balance on the 20th of January was **£11,095.75**.

3c. Legal duties (e.g. Companies house)

i. ALERC Financial return

- NC confirmed the financial return due in December 2016 was submitted on time. The annual return is due in July 2017.

ii. Company Secretary Role

- Following the previous meeting's discussion regarding company secretary arrangements SC agreed to take on the role of company secretary.

Action 2: MW, NC and SC to liaise regarding the transition of duties/responsibilities to SC as part of the company secretary role. These duties include the preparation and circulation of meeting papers as well as ALERC's annual and financial returns to Companies House.

Action 3: SC to add 'Conflicts of interest' as a standing agenda item.

4. National Coordinator

4a. ANC report

- TH circulated a report prior to the meeting. Items included: (i) Accreditation updates - a good number LERCs scheduled for accreditation, in line with target in the strategy (23 LERCs accredited by the end of 2017); (ii) Conference – Possible date for conference, Wednesday the 11th of October 2017. Steve Whitbread suggested 'Natural Capital' as the theme and volunteered to help organise the conference. All agreed TH should follow this up with Steve but consider having the afternoon reserved for LERC business only; (iii) NBN working groups – there will be a single combined group but a meeting of this group has not yet been arranged (though there was a workshop dedicated to verification at the recent NBN conference); (iv) BID-REX – questionnaire circulated to LERCs. Details of the project can be found on <http://www.interregeurope.eu/bid-rex/>; (v) ALERC information on members collected annually with membership renewal – This is useful information but collecting it annually, though ideal, might not be essential (as it is seen as onerous and can delay membership renewals). The information could potentially be made more widely available perhaps by publishing a fact sheet on the ALERC website. At present this information isn't published so it is only available on request; (vii) Other updates – (vii.a) East of England LERCs have completed a list of regional technical needs (including web-services, due, in part, to the impending closure of the NBN gateway) (vii.b) East Midland LERCs considering alternatives to Recorder 6. Leicestershire and Rutland LERC looking into adopting COFNOD's ORCA system.

Action 4: TH/IE to review progress and accreditation targets for 2017/18 as part of strategy/ANC work plan review.

Action 5: TH to compile a list of all LERCs and their respective accreditation and membership status.

Action 6: TH to take forward/develop the suggestions for the 2017 ALERC conference and report back.

Action 7: Consider publishing an ALERC membership fact sheet using LERC headline data collected.

Action 8: TH to draft letter to JNCC enquiring about the future of Recorder 6 (see action 30/4).

Action 9: Consider whether an audit of how the membership uses Recorder 6 is required.

Action 10: Consider consulting membership on whether there is a need for ALERC to lead on Recorder 6 maintenance and development depending on whether JNCC plans to continue to invest in Recorder 6 support.

4b. Work Plan

- Report circulated. No further discussion in addition to items mentioned in 4a.

4c. Accreditation

- No further discussion in addition to items mentioned in 4a.

5. Board of Directors – membership, recruitment & chair appointment (AR/MH)

- There was a brief discussion regarding how best to pursue recruitment of Directors based on the communications had to date. Benn Deed and Lindsay Bamforth have indicated they might be available, though arrangements for Lindsay to connect remotely are likely to be necessary (ie via Skype). Steve Whitbread has also expressed an interest in becoming a Director. The chair appointment was also discussed and MH indicated that he might be available to stand for another year. IE indicated that he would consider becoming chair should MH decide to step down.

Action 11: AR to invite Ben Deed, Lindsay Bamforth and Steve Whitbread to join the next ALERC meeting as prospective Directors.

Action 12: MW to email Board of Directors guidance paper on the use of the Directors email group.

Action 13: MH to decide whether he is available to continue as chair of ALERC for another year by the date of the next ALERC Directors meeting (May 2017).

6. ALERC memberships (TH/NC)

6a. 2016/17 renewals status

- There was an update on renewals status. Only 2 LERCs haven't renewed the membership to date.

Action 14: TH to clarify Lancashire's position regarding membership.

6b. 2017/18 renewals - fees/timings

- A discussion followed regarding fee increases and the need to timely circulation of membership renewal information as this is important to ensure the continuation of the ANC post.

Action 15: NC to look into fee increase options (incremental/staged vs full increases) and their impact on the ALERC 2017/18 budget.

Action 16: MH to draft a letter to circulate with membership renewal information, by the end of February.

Action 17: All to circulate an estimate of time spent on ALERC's business. MH to send a reminder if necessary.

6c. Essex WT application

Action 18: MH to contact Essex WT's CEO regarding their ALERC membership application.

6d. Dan Wrench (Shropshire)

Action 19: TH to contact Dan and propose individual ALERC membership.

7. ODI workshops

7a. ALERC/ODI workshop - feedback

- MR provided a summary of the workshop and key advice received from ODI. A report was produced and will be made available to the membership in due course (possibly via the website and forum).

Action 20: TH to make ODI report available to the membership.

Action 21: IE/TH to consider compiling an ALERC data set to be available via the Atlas platform as part of the ANC's work plan 2017/18.

Action 22: MR and AR to circulate how LERCs expenditure/core costs have been calculated by the SE LERC group and Welsh LERCs respectively. TH to encourage other LERCs to provide this (e.g. through regional networks) so that ALERC has a national figure for the cost of running the LERC network.

7b. ODI/DEFRA events (London, Bristol, Leeds)

- Directors may attend and will report back at the next meeting.

Action 23: Any ALERC director that attends, to report back at the next meeting.

8. NBN Atlas/EA data supply

- The possibility of the Atlas platform becoming a mechanism for supplying data to EA (which would mean keeping some form of access controls/enhanced access functionality) has been raised but not agreed by the NBN trust board. Access controls are at present only being built for sensitive species data.
- Some very crucial questions regarding open data licensing remain unclear, particularly regarding what constitute commercial and non-commercial use. Legal advice could be sought. Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership Manager, Fran Smith could be a good contact as they are looking into seeking legal advice on Open Data matters with support from RSWT.

Action 24: MR/AR to continue to liaise with the NBN trust to clarify the definition of commercial vs non-commercial use with a view to agree a definition.

Action 25: TH to contact GLNP regarding progress on legal advice received and report back.

9. Communication/Engagement (CB)

9a. Consultation responses (EIA/Infrastructure commission call for evidence/Welsh government consultation)

- A draft consultation procedure was circulated prior to the meeting. A discussion followed on how best to use ALERC's resources as this could become onerous. Making use of the Wildlife Link membership and draft/agree key messages that ALERC needs to convey in most consultations, were agreed as being important ways of making this process less onerous.

Action 26: Draft ALERC key messages to be used in consultation responses.

Action 27: SC to add the following agenda item: Communication – Priorities and opportunities.

Action 28: Consider producing a communications plan.

Action 29: Amend ALERC consultation procedure to reflect the outcome of actions 26-28.

Action 30: CB and AR to work on Welsh government consultation response.

9b. Engagement with NSS

- ALERC needs to prioritise gaining a greater understanding of the position of the NSS and LERCs regarding the Atlas. It was suggested that ALERC could seek to work with the NFBR on this.

Action 31: TH to look into the possibility of organising a workshop/meeting between ALERC members and NSS through the NFBR.

9c. NFBR conference

- The next NFBR conference is taking place on the 4, 5 and 6th of May 2017 (see item above).

10. ALERC forum and IT arrangements (MW)

- MW outlined the current status. The main issues are: (1) forum digest is no longer available; (2) current server/hosting arrangements through Sussex BRC need revisiting and options need to be identified (e.g. use RSS feed/Mail chimp as alternatives for comms. previously through forum digest, as well as looking into alternatives regarding server/hosting arrangements).
- MH suggested there might be a possibility of recruiting some students to help with putting new IT arrangements in place if there is a clear brief.

Action 32: MW to draft an ALERC IT needs paper before the next meeting (liaise with CB regarding planned server changes at Sussex BRC).

Action 33: TH to consider whether it would be useful to send an email to members with instructions on how to make better use of the forum in the meantime (i.e. searching functions/filtering new posts, etc.)

11. ANC post funding (MW)

11a. Current financial position/Bid-Rex travel

- MW circulated a report prior to the meeting. The in-year costs have been kept to a minimum but it is important to try and secure an adequate budget to cover not only salary costs but the replacement of equipment (e.g. laptop) and travel.

11b. Projection for 2017/2018

Action 34: MW to update ANC post budget and circulate once the figures for membership are available (see action 15 (NC)).

11c. Potential external contracts/projects

- Some contract work secured/planned: Bid-Rex and SER accreditation support (exact amounts to be confirmed but total income could be in the region of £1000-£1500). Ideas for projects and funding sources were briefly discussed: Esmee Fairbairn development fund to identify data/user needs followed by a bid to develop the tools to enable access/development of a local wildlife sites portal; HLF and tesco bags of help were also mentioned.

Action 35: MH to provide an estimate of the number of ANC days needed to deliver the Bid-Rex work, when the work is likely to take place and corresponding income.

Action 36: IE/TH to look into potential projects and funding sources.

11d. ALERC work plan/Director input/ANC capacity

- IE/TH to look at strategy and work plan and assess priorities/capacity.

Action 37: IE/TH to draft 2017/2018 work plan and circulate for comments.

12. AOB

12a EA data supply

- Recent communication regarding the new species data format being proposed by the EA was briefly discussed.