

Establishment of an Association for Local Record Centres

An association for Local Record Centres was established at the National Federation for Biological Recording (NFBR)'s LRC conference in Edinburgh in November 2005. The creation of the Association was met with unanimous support of all LRC representatives present. This paper sets out to define the structure and role of the association. It also identifies potential ways of working and priorities which should be worked into the association's first business plan.

This document sets out proposals for the establishment of the Association and is designed (in conjunction with the attached questionnaire) to gather views from record centres to help inform the establishment of the Association.

1. The name

Two names have been proposed of the Association. You are asked in the Questionnaire which you think is more appropriate for the Association.

“Association of Local Biodiversity Information Centres (ALBIC)”

- This name identifies to the outside world that the Centres involved are Local and relate to Biodiversity (the current term LRC is unclear to anyone who isn't "in the know") and to clearly place the Association within the biodiversity field.
- This name reflects the names used by Centres – which are very diverse but usually reflect the local nature and the subject matter covered (although sometimes using other terms such as wildlife, biological or environmental). It allows for local Centres which have a wider remit than just biodiversity to comfortably be part of the Association
- This proposed name of the association does not suggest that its member organisations should change their name to match that of the association nor does it suggest a change in the definitions, uses and roles currently in existence local Centres, but neatly encompasses them all.

“Association of Local Records Centres (ALRC)”

- This name recognises that most relevant organisations, agencies, education establishments and authorities refer collectively to Local Records Centres or LRCs.
- Current and proposed national and regional guidance for various regulations, planning policy statements and strategies, schemes and initiatives refer specifically to the role LRCs, something that has been requested and negotiated for over many years. Examples include: PPS9; SEA; Regional Spatial Strategy and FEPs.
- Funding and Grant bodies such as HLF also refer to LRCs and many have only just got familiar with the concept of LRCs and the work they do, particularly with regard to community support and project work. Similarly other associations are familiar with the term LRCs and this includes the Association of Local Government Ecologists (ALGE). ALGE have produced various guidance documents and training workshops that refer to LRCs.

- Some centres are under increasing pressure to extend their remit to include environmental matters such as monitoring for climate change and some already include geodiversity as part of their remit and are not restricted to biodiversity.

2. Aims and Objectives

Mission statement: The Association will represent the interests of local biodiversity record centres in the UK promoting standards and services in biodiversity data collation and provision.

The Association's objectives are:

- To promote and encourage the completion of a UK-wide network of local biodiversity records centres
- To promote and develop good standards of practice in the collation, management, dissemination and analysis of biological records
- To promote local records centres regionally, nationally and at a UK level to potential users and suppliers of data and
- To provide full representation of the UK with country specific solutions with equal emphasis on the individual countries requirements
- To develop and promote accreditation schemes for biodiversity 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 practise

3. Membership

Full membership of the Association will be open to all organisations within the British Isles that actively work as local records centres¹.

Associate membership of the association will be open to:

- Organisations striving to become local record centres
- Organisations that work closely with LRC and have an interest in their development

Individual membership will be considered at a later stage – see section 3.3 below.

3.1. Full members

All LRCs will be encouraged to become full members. Membership will need to be assessed by a membership committee who will seek information from potential members against a series of guidelines. The Membership committee will then approve or reject applications for membership on behalf of the association. If accreditation is brought in then membership could be available to all fully accredited LRCs without further assessment.

¹ This will be assessed at the time of application through a simple self assessment questionnaire and by peer review of an existing association full member. This will not be the equivalent of full accreditation but ensure a minimum standard of operation.

3.2. Associate members

Potential associate members will also be assessed by the membership committee although there should be a presumption of inclusiveness. Organisations working closely with LRCs, or relying heavily on them will be encouraged to become Associate Members (e.g. Natural England, CCW, SEERAD, Local Authorities)

3.3. Individual membership

At its inception the Association will not offer membership to individuals. However in the long term the Association will consider the need for individual membership in conjunction with programmes for staff and volunteer professional development programmes and may introduce individual membership and possibly personal accreditation schemes.

3.4. Benefits of membership

Full members will:

- Be represented by the Association on relevant organisations and groups at a regional, national and UK level
- Automatically be able to nominate staff and volunteers to receive email bulletins and be members of all the Association electronic discussion fora
- Contribute to development of standards
- Receive quarterly newsletters and updates
- Have priority bookings for workshop and conferences
- Have reduced fees for training session and workshops
- Nominate officers and committee members to work on their behalf
- Vote at AGMs on matter of policy and finances

Associate members will

- Receive quarterly updates and newsletters
- Have priority bookings for workshop and conferences

3.5. Membership Fees

Both Full and Associate members will pay an annual subscription to the Association. This subscription should cover the basic costs of running the organisations, secretarial support for meetings, costs for committees, maintenance of a website and production of regular news bulletins/newsletters.

Based on an estimate of core running costs (see Annex A) annual membership fees (based on 2006/7 costs) are proposed as £235 for full member and £60 for associate members.

4. Role

In order to fulfil its objectives Association will need to develop and manage projects. These will be developed in line with a Business Plan, but in the medium to long-term will incorporate work in the following areas:

4.1. Promotion

- Promoting the role of LRCs and the services they provide
- Promoting the benefits of high quality, reliable biodiversity data

4.2. Creating standards

- Developing and implementing a system of LRC Accreditation
- Sharing good practise
- Developing and promoting standard policy statements
- Defining core LRC services (linked to accreditation)
- Developing guidance on charging policies
- Providing guidance on data management issues
- Supporting collaborative working between LRCs
- Promoting a move towards standardised data services and products

4.3. LRC funding

- Promoting statutory funding by Local Authorities
- Developing and promoting nationally agreed service level agreement templates
- Consolidating commitments from funding bodies (national minimum suggested)
- Seeking commitment for core central Government funding
- Negotiating national service level agreement on behalf of all/groups of LRCs

4.4. Staff

- Developing guidance on salaries, terms and conditions
- Promoting and facilitating communication (staff forums, meetings/conference, technical forums)
- Promoting regional forums
- Coordinating relevant training for core LRC staff (administer training programme)
- Promoting continuing Professional Development for all LRC staff
- Promoting inclusion of appropriate units in relevant training courses

4.5. Representation

- The Association should be a member of the NBN Trust, NFBR and BRISC
- Representing LRCs to other relevant bodies and acting as a collective voices on relevant steering groups and fora
- Acting as a central point of reference for national bodies wishing to work with LRCs (Ordnance Survey, Environment Agency etc.)
- Acting as a first point of contact for any consultation exercises that may affect LRCs and or their work.

5. Operation

This section describes how the Association will be run.

5.1. Steering Group

During the establishment of the Association a Steering Group will work on behalf of LRCs to oversee the establishment of the Association. Once the Association is formed then this group will be replaced by a body elected by the founding members. The Steering group's membership is given in Annex B. The Steering Group will

- Oversee the establishment of a legal entity for the Association
- Prepare a development plan for the first 2 years of the Association
- Undertake consultation to establish priorities for the newly formed association
- Promote membership of the Association

The Steering Group will disband once the Association is formed, although it is envisaged that many of its members represent founding members of the association and may be on the Association's Board.

5.2. Association Board

The Association Board will be elected by the membership, with members of the Board standing for a fixed (two-year) period before requiring re-election. The Board will have specific places for representatives from throughout the UK. The Board will elect a chair and treasurer who will have special responsibilities.

The Association Board will:

- Be the legally-constituted body for running the Association
- Ensure effective representation to other bodies
- Determine matters of Association policy
- Develop and oversee projects to deliver the Association's objectives
- Be responsible for administering the Association's finances
- Act as representatives of the Association as and when required
- Identify and establish additional committees as needed
- Elect officers with specific responsibilities as needed

The Association chair will chair Board meetings and act as the main spokesperson for the Association.

The Association Board members will not normally be remunerated for their time spent on Association Board business but will have all their expenses met. Board members will be expected to commit at least 8 days a year to Association business.

5.3. Secretariat and core activities

The Association will employ a permanent secretariat who will carry out the core activities for the Association. It is envisaged that this secretariat will be an officer employed for two days a week, be employed by an LRC on the Association's behalf and based either at an existing LRC or from a home-office.

Core activities will include:

- Administering membership
- Maintaining and updating website
- Providing administrative support to the Association Board and any other committees
- Acting as a central point of contact for the Association
- Bookkeeping and banking
- Coordinating events including workshops, conferences and training programmes
- Coordinating promotion of the Association and Centres
- Coordinating responses to consultations

6. Finances

The Association needs to become clearly established in order to enable it to seek funds from third parties (i.e. outwith its immediate member base). Funding is therefore looked at in two phases.

6.1. Funding December 2006 - March 2007

During this period the Association will not be able to establish significant support or run major projects for LRCs. This period will focus on establishing the association, seeking new members and developing projects and seeking funding packages

Funding during this initial period will be very limited and is likely to come only from those LRCs able to become members in the early stages. Founding member LRCs will therefore be asked to pay a full year's membership fees for the six month period. This should raise an initial figure of approximately £3,000 which should be used to cover initial company establishment costs (including establishing a web presence) and employing someone to prepare a business plan funding proposals/application for the next 2 years.

6.2. Funding April 2007 - March 2009

Funding will be sought for a development officer for the Association. To make this a viable proposition for third party funders the Association will need to put in a proportion of the total costs – it is therefore suggested that the core activities of the association (i.e. the Secretariat) are incorporate in this Development Officer role enabling the Association to use membership fees to contribute to the total two year costs. The approximate total cost of the Development officer for two years is £65,000. The Association will be able to contribute approximately £20,000 to this leaving a total of £45,000 to be sought in grants (70% project costs)

It is envisaged that funding will be sought from CCW, DoE (NI), Natural England, NBN Trust and SNH) During this period it is envisaged that further funding will be sought for additional projects – such as establishing an accreditation scheme.

7. Work Programme

The work programme has been divided into two stages:

7.1. August 2006 - January 2007

This period of work is managed by the Association Steering group and all work is carried out by Steering Group members.

Key tasks:

- Consult with potential Association members over the role, remit and form of the Association
- Prepare a draft constitution for Association
- Seek founding members of association
- Legally establish Association
- Establish an Association bank account

7.2. December 2006 - March 2007

This period of work is managed by the Association Board and work carried out by Board members and contractors.

Key tasks:

- Promote awareness of Association to key partners (Board members)
- Promote Association to its potential member base and recruit new members (Board)
- Establish initial web-presence for Association including member's forums (contractor)
- Prepare development plan for April 2007- March 2009 (contractor)
- Apply for funding for delivering Business Plan (contractor/Board members)

Annex A Estimated Annual core running costs

Association core costs	Annual expenditure	
Staff costs	£8,400	Officer employed 2 days a week
Office costs	£1,500	Contribution to home office costs or LRC costs.
Committee costs	£2,600	4 Committee mtgs annually - est cost @ £650
Business costs	£1,000	Annual returns to Companies House, registration with DPA, insurances, accountants fees etc
Web/printing costs	£1,500	
Total	£15,000	
Estimated number of members		
Full members	60	
Associate members	15	
Suggested membership fees		
Full members	£235	
Associate members	£60	

Annex B Steering Group

Henri Brocklebank (South East England)
Philippa Burrell (South East England)
Charles Copp (South West England)
Tim Corner (South West England)
Nicky Court (South East England)
Martin Harvey (South East England)
Sara Hawkswell (Scotland – south)
Steve McWilliam (North West England)
Mandy Rudd (London)
Nadine Russell (Scotland - north)
Darwyn Sumner (East Midlands)
Roy Tapping (Wales)

Steering Group Structure/Modus operandi

The Association Steering Group has one purpose - to establish an Association for Local Records Centres. The Steering Group will pass management of the Association to its Board upon formation. It is envisaged that the Steering group will operate for no longer than 6 months (August 2006- February 2007)

- The Steering Group is made up of a broad representation of individuals working with LRCs who are committed to ensuring the establishment of an Association. These individuals have primarily been self nominated. Membership of the Group is dependant upon a commitment to the establishment of the Association and being able to contribute effectively to the Groups work.
- The Steering Group will elect a Chair and a Secretary.
- The role of the Chair is to set a work programme, encourage Steering group members to take on activities, ensure work is completed in a timely manner and ensure appropriate consultation as necessary (both within the Steering group and the wider LRC community) They will also set agendas for meetings, lead meetings and, if necessary, represent the Association to outside organisations.
- The role of the Secretary is to act as the central communication conduit ensuring that all Steering Group share views and progress on work and to ensure that relevant records are kept of decisions made.
- The Steering Group will carry out its work primarily through individuals leading on work and liaising with other Steering group members via email/telephone.
- When necessary the Steering Group will meet to ensure that consensus can be built on key issue and to enable group working.
- The Steering Group will take decisions based on building board consensus within the Group. This will include consulting with the wider LRC community as appropriate. Where there is not consensus then decisions will be taken by a vote within the Steering Group. The Chair will ensure that sufficient discussion has taken place and ensure that all Steering Group members are given the opportunity to vote. Decisions will be taken if a 60% majority of the active Steering Group members are in support.