



Annual Report 2019-2020

Introduction

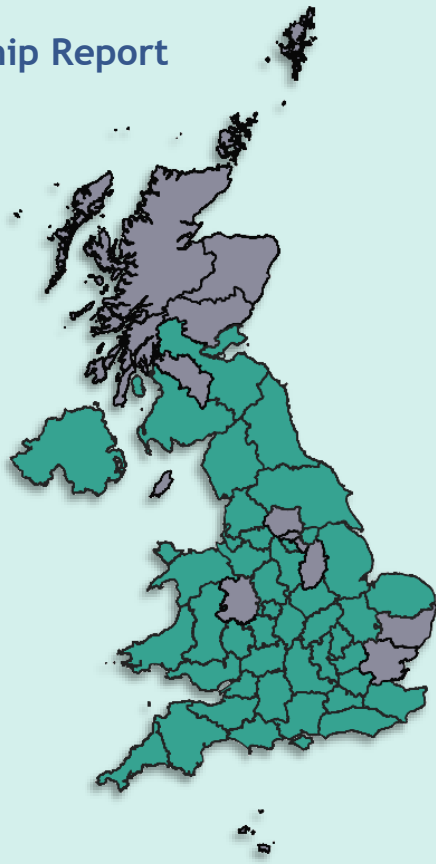
Formed in 2009, ALERC is an association between Local Environmental Records Centres (LERCs) in Great Britain. The Association aims to provide a central voice for the views and concerns of the Records Centre community, whilst building a support-based network of knowledge and advice to meet the needs of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

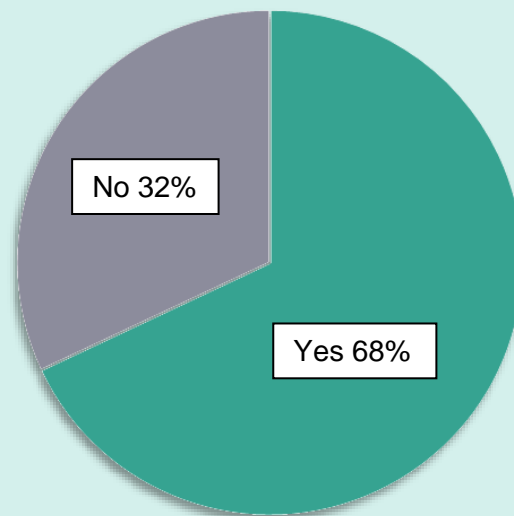
Association Objectives

- To promote and encourage the completion of a UK-wide network of Local Environmental Records Centres (LERCs).
- To promote and develop good standards of practice in the collation, management, dissemination and analysis of biological and geological records.
- To promote LERCs 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 LERCs and their staff.
- To encourage and facilitate networking between LERCs to enable exchange of ideas, collaborative working, developing joint tools and sharing good practice.

Membership Report



LERCs as members of ALERC*



*Advice from the Scottish Biodiversity Information Forum and Biological Recording in Scotland has meant that the boundaries in Scotland have been consolidated and formalised, meaning that there now more LERCs that could become ALERC members than previously.

Chair's Report

Drafting this report in the second half of 2020-21, and looking back at the period from 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020, has the rather curious perspective of looking back at a different time.

The launch of a new ALERC website in 2019-20 represented a major step forward for ALERC – a modern and professional 'shop window' for our sector. This became an especially important channel for communication in late March 2020, as the UK went into lockdown due to the global coronavirus pandemic, when we needed to get the message out that LERCs were putting in place measures to ensure continuity in services.

I feel quite nostalgic now, remembering a year of events we took for granted then: a successful ALERC conference, workshops in Yorkshire and the South East on developing LERC services to support new policy initiatives such as Biodiversity Net Gain, and all the in-person interactions at the NBN conference which help to keep us connected, as a Network.

From the strategic point of view, 2019-20 saw ALERC facilitating an important conversation with our members about provision of national and multi-regional LERC services – beginning to look at whether there is potential for closer working with NBN Trust in this area. In late 2019 ALERC was invited to participate in the SBIF Advisory Group – an important opportunity to share our member's expertise in providing regional and country-level services (in Wales and Northern Ireland), and running the LERC accreditation scheme.

The ALERC conference in 2019 generated valuable feedback from members on strategic priorities for ALERC, which has fed into continuing work on an ALERC Strategy – this subsequently slowed down somewhat, while we've been dealing with challenges that came along during 2020, but has all been captured and will help to set ALERC's future direction.

ALERC National Coordinator Report

As with last year, working with partners was a key part of ALERC's work in 2019-20. The Bat Conservation Trust's Partnership for Biodiversity in Planning reached its end and it was good to be part of the final event, explaining the role of LERCs to 40 people, mostly ecological consultants and local government ecologists. It was also good to be able to organise ALERC input into [practice advice](#) which was pulled together by the BCT and published by the Royal Town Planning Institute.

Internally, we have collectively started the process of updating the ALERC Strategic Action plan, which runs until the end of 2020. Many thanks to all of you who inputted into the exercise to gather views about ALERC and then discuss those views at the conference. The conference itself received very positive feedback, so thanks for making it so good. Areas where there is the most room for improving the conference feedback are around the venue, so a new venue has been found. Unfortunately we won't get chance to use it however because the 2020 conference will be online, but more of that in next year's report.

I was pleased to be asked to co-facilitate a knowledge exchange session at the NBN conference in November. The session looked at copyright and intellectual property rights and concluded that whilst it is probably the case that individual records aren't legally copyrightable, best practice should dictate that recorders are treated as the owners of the records they generate.

Other highlights of the year included the Net Gain event in Yorkshire, where the LERCs of the region came together to find out more about how Net Gain is implemented in Warwickshire and about the support LERCs can offer to local authorities. There was also the chance to talk to the British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquaria about the services LERCs offer and how they can be accessed.

ALERC Member Services Work Area Reports

LERC Business Development and Accreditation

Business Development Group members: Ian Egerton, Mandy Rudd, Eric Fletcher, Adam Rowe, Simon Pickles, Camilla Burrow, Deb Muscat and Tom Hunt.

Accreditation Group members: Hannah Cook, Camilla Burrow, Mark Wills, Jackie Ulllyett, Charlie Barnes and Tom Hunt.

A major piece of work in this area was the survey of LERCs regarding the potential for working with the NBNT and whether this can yield new business if the NBNT is able to provide a platform for regional and multi-regional service provision between LERCs. 36 LERCs responded to this survey, which is a good response rate. Work on this will proceed throughout 2020-21 with a pilot project for a specific region expected.

Work in the area of net gain has continued, particularly with regard to a British Standard for net gain. LERCs are mentioned in the draft of this and it is expected that there will further work to do in 2020-21 to ensure that their role is properly defined and the wording is correct.

It was a quiet year for accreditation and no new LERCs were assessed. Kent and Medway BRC passed accreditation for a further five years.

Communications and Influencing

Groups members: Mark Wills, Clare Blencowe, Steve Whitbread and Tom Hunt

2019-20 was particularly notable for the launch of the new ALERC website in July. Having completed a review of the content and usership of the website in the previous year, we progressed to developing a new website that better suited the needs of users, was clearer and more engaging. It also uses case studies to advertise the services offered by LERCs. As a result of the website renewal process, a lot of the archived documentation that built up over time was moved into the Knowledge Hub library and so we now also have a growing and organised library stored in Knowledge Hub.

Another useful tool for advertising LERCs is the pop-up banner that was created for the closing event of the BCT's Partnership for Biodiversity in Planning project. The banner was displayed in the Houses of Parliament and at subsequent events such as the NBN conference.

Right at the end of the financial year came the pandemic and communications took on a new level of importance. The key was to find a form of words that informed the likes of ecological consultants that whilst changes to LERC's working practices had changed and there may be some disruption of services, they were still very much in a position to efficiently deal with data requests.

Technical Development and Data Standards

Group members: Ian Carle, Wolfgang Ritter, Jennie Mitchel, Sam Neal, Steve Whitbread, Andy Foy and Tom Hunt

Improving the service to the Environment Agency was an important item of work in this work area. The XML report for Recorder 6 produced by HERC and kindly shared to ALERC members has been a very useful tool for this.

Another work area was to approach the proprietor of MapMate to find out what his plans were, if any, to update the product. The answer was he thought that enough MapMate users are satisfied with it and therefore no changes are needed right now. This means that it will continue to be based on a very old version of Microsoft Access and not moved to a newer version.

ALERC Board of Directors and Officers (serving during 2019/20)

Name	LERC	Officer Position	Main Work Area and Responsibilities
Clare Blencowe	Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre	Chair	Governance and Administration (group chair), Communications and Influencing
Adam Rowe	South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre	Vice-Chair	Technical Developments and Data Standards, NBN Atlas Steering Group ALERC board recruitment
Mandy Rudd	Greenspace Information for Greater London CIC		Business Development
Mark Wills	North & East Yorkshire Ecological Data Centre		Communications and Influencing (group chair)
Steve Whitbread	Harrow Council (previously of NBRC)		Technical Developments and Data Standards, Communications and Influencing
Sara Lovell	EcoRecord	Secretary	Governance and Administration (Secretariat)
Ian Carle	Herts Environmental Records Centre		Technical Developments and Data Standards (group chair)
Deb Muscat	Cumbria Biodiversity Data Centre		NBN Advisory Group, SBIF advisory Group, Business Development Group
Nicky Court	Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre	Treasurer	
Tom Hunt		National Coordinator	ALERC Work programme including conference, membership and accreditation



Treasurer's Report 2019/20

Expenditure		Income	
National Coordinator post: Employment and hosting	£35,058	Membership payments	£28,825
Meeting Room bookings	£251	Late payments (1)	£1,685
NBN Trust membership	£350	Conference fees	£2,760
Corporation tax	£0	Contracts	£5,006
Wildlife Link	£412		
Conference expenses	£2,426		
Accountants fees	£235		
Website hosting	£55		
Companies House Annual Return	£13		
Companies House Filing Accounts	£0		
Sub-contracting (2)	£720		
Total	£39,520		£38,276
Surplus / (Loss): (£1,244)			

(1) Membership/conference fees received for 2018-19

(2) Paid to DBRC for supporting external contract

Cash at bank

Opening Balance 01/04/2019: £16,833.17

Closing Balance 31/03/2020: £15,588.45

Net change: -£1,244.72

A full set of accounts will be available for inspection and will be filed at Companies House by December 2020.

Funding of the ALERC National Coordinator Post for financial year 2019-2020

Costs	Amount	Funding source	Amount
Employment of post: salary, NI, pension, redundancy provision	£29,755	Carry forward from 2018-2019	-£1,316
Travel & subsistence	£1,659	ALERC – from membership fees	£30,772
Conference fees	£0	Contract work	£4,286
IT Equipment & phone	£226.73		
Hosting	£2,100		
Total	£33,742	Total	£33,742
		Balance carried forward to 2020-2021	£0

Header image © Tom Hunt/RECORD

With thanks to all those whose Tweets we've used in this report.

Thanks to Andy Slater of EcoRecord for helping with the design of the report.

