



*Dorset Environmental Records Centre
Trust Company Limited*

Annual Report 2008/2009

Registered Charity Number 900287

Company Number 2447393

Registered Office:
Library Headquarters, Colliton Park,
Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1XJ

Chairman's Report for 2008/2009

It is with more confidence in the future that I write this report. We have all worried about our own economic situations, and for those involved with business or charities the future, this time last year, was not at all certain. However the 2009 year ends with DERC showing a modest but significant profit and as we are very much linked to funding from statutory bodies and other organisations sensitive to the wider economy, I think DERC has done very well indeed and feels much more secure than formerly.

I am delighted to see that the Flora Group flourishes with several successful field trips organised in the year and a healthy membership, proving the value of involving voluntary recorders in DERC's work. DERC's surveyor, Bryan Edwards was asked to produce a book about the coast and in June 'Wildlife of the Jurassic Coast' was launched, a valuable book that draws on Bryan's wide-ranging knowledge. He continues, in his own inimitable way, to be the backbone of the survey work and we are indeed fortunate to have him within the team. So much of DERC's work though goes unseen. Carolyn, Alison, Rhiannon and Jon work diligently as ever managing projects, inputting data, producing accounts etc. Much of DERC's work is just that – solid administrative work and data handling that happens without fuss or calamity, a sign of the quality of the staff that DERC has.

The following Annual Report shows a summary of DERC's work and its financial state – well done to all of those who have contributed to both and once again particular thanks to the Panel members and representatives of Natural England, the Wildlife Trust and the Dorset County Museum who always offer us such good advice and support.

Kevin Cook

Dorset Environmental Records Centre

Our aims are set out in the Memorandum and Articles of Association (1989). They are:

- to collect and provide quality biological and geological data for the county;
- to ensure that data can be provided quickly and efficiently;
- to provide a service to all professionals involved in conservation and planning within Dorset;
- to provide all amateur naturalists with support for field recording in the county,
- to provide a public service: the principal activities of the charity are to provide environmental services, education and training.

Local Recorders and Volunteers

The Records Centre provides a valuable link between local naturalists and professionals. Each year DERC answers numerous enquiries from members of the public, students, consultants, local authorities and government agencies, and each time depends upon information updated largely by voluntary recorders in our local community. In return the Records Centre provides a website and bi-annual newsletters to update everyone on recording issues and new finds, and provides administrative assistance for the Dorset Invertebrate Recording Group and the newly-founded Dorset Flora Group.

DERC also contributes to publications and articles and runs a series of summer workshops. We take this opportunity within our annual report to include a note of thanks for everyone who has sent in their records of sightings from the last year. DERC benefits from regular volunteer assistance and would like to thank all volunteers for their work during the year.

The Record Resource

Following our initial success with using the new Recorder 6 database last year, in 2008/09 we have continued to develop our skill in producing reports. Further datasets have been incorporated into the database, (over 60,000 records), including bryophytes. Work has begun in editing the format of the data to improve the appearance of the output now that we are familiar with how it handles within Recorder 6. We have put particular effort into updating the bat records.

Requests for Data

During 2008/09 the Record Centre has responded to 218 requests for information about species or habitats in the county. The number of requests are made up of approximately 30% from commercial users, 25% from agreement holders and 40% from private individuals/conservation organisations.

Dorset Marine Biodiversity Database

The DERC workplan includes provision for input of marine data into the database, and a satellite of Marine Recorder has been set up at Kimmeridge for volunteer input of marine data. Towards the end of the year Dorset Wildlife Trust employed a member of staff for a marine post which covers dealing with marine data input and data enquiries at DERC. DERC Trustees continue to promote DERC's interests in marine projects taking place in Dorset.

Dorset Biodiversity Information System

The Dorset Biodiversity Information System has been accepted by all the local authorities in Dorset. During 2008/09 the second version of the Wildlife Layer was released. This included new records for protected species and hot-links to advice notes for Bats, Nesting Birds, Badgers, Amphibians, Otter and Watervoles. In addition all local authorities were updated with site boundaries for Sites of Nature Conservation Interest, Regionally Important Geological Sites, Local Nature Reserves and Conservation Verges.

Workshops and Training Courses

During the year DERC ran a series of workshops open to members of the public and covering a variety of subjects. These included Trees in the Landscape, Hedgerows, An Introduction to Biological Recording, Urban Bats and Grassland NVC. Details of workshops may be found on the DERC website, www.derc.org.uk and in the DERC newsletter, which is incorporated in the Dorset Wildlife Trust magazine twice a year.

DERC Publications

“Wildlife of the Jurassic Coast” was launched by the Jurassic Coast Trust in June 2008. The book relates the wildlife to the geology of the coastline and includes many photographs and maps, giving an idea of what to look for along the coastal path and shoreline. The book has been very well received and copies are available from Dorset tourist information centres and bookshops.

Urban Heaths Partnership Project

The Urban Heaths Partnership project is derived from the EU LIFE project which ran from 2002 – 2005, and was established to help combat urban pressures on the internationally important heathlands in South East Dorset. The current partnership includes local authorities, emergency services, wildlife organisations and government bodies. DERC's role in the project is to manage the incident records coming in, to disseminate fire records from the Dorset Fire and Rescue Service (DFRS) to the partner organisations and to provide figures, reports and other requests for data from the partners.

There are many different types of incident which are detrimental to the heathland with the most common being fire, vandalism, fly-tipping, mountain biking, and motor cycling. The data collected on these incidents have been used to reveal trends and patterns in activity on the heaths. This is useful, for instance, in allowing wardening to be targeted to the most affected places (e.g. Upton Heath which has had, at 272, more incidents recorded than at any other site), times (e.g. a total of 278 fires have been started between 4.00 p.m. and 6.00 p.m.) or days (e.g. at a total of 482, more incidents have been recorded on a Sunday than any other day of the week).

Dorset Flora Group

DERC provides support for a number of local recording groups, including the Dorset Flora Group which was set up at the inaugural AGM in April 2008. There are currently over 60 members who have actively supported the events organised for the first year. These included field meetings at a number of locations in Dorset and a Christmas social event at which members displayed photos and exhibits.

Dorset Important Geological Sites Group

Administrative support is provided by DERC for DIGS, which undertook monitoring and maintenance of several RIGS sites in Dorset in 2008-09. DIGS also comment on planning applications affecting RIGS sites and undertakes survey work as and when required.

Public Benefit

In 2008-09 DERC Trustees paid due regard to the Charity Commission guidance on public benefit in overseeing the work undertaken by DERC during the year. DERC's principal aim as a charity is the advancement of public education in the natural history and geology of Dorset. The activities undertaken in 2008-09 (as listed above) demonstrate that DERC has been actively involved with local recording groups through promotion of their activities to the wider public and administrative support to co-ordinate the membership. In addition, DERC runs or promotes workshops available to members of the public.

DERC regularly adds biodiversity data to the NBN Gateway which is available to all through their website, <http://www.nbn.org.uk>. Data is also provided free of charge (other than for large projects) to certain sectors, including members of the public, students and researchers.

DERC structure, governance and management:

Governing document

The company is a registered charity, Number 900287, limited by guarantee and having no share capital. The company was formed on 29 November 1989 to continue the work of the Dorset Environmental Records Centre (DERC) and all assets were transferred to the company on 1 March 1990. The company was established under a Memorandum of Association, which established the objects and powers of the charitable company and is governed under its Articles of Association. In the event of the company being wound up members are required to contribute an amount not exceeding £1.

Appointment of Trustees

The directors of the company are also charity trustees for the purposes of charity law and under the company's Articles are known as members of the Trust. The Board of Management manages the affairs of the Trust, with the number of members of the Board being between 6 and 12. The Articles state that there are to be no less than two Board members representing each of Dorset County Council, Dorset Wildlife Trust and Dorset Natural History & Archaeological Society. New trustees are elected by invitation from the Board, who aim to recruit from a diverse background of related organisations and interests. The Trustees meet every quarter to oversee the work of the Records Centre and its continued development.

Trustee induction and training

Trustees are already familiar with the practical work of the charity and will have been invited to attend management meetings as an observer, prior to becoming a trustee. An induction pack for new trustees has been put together, and includes a copy of the Memorandum and Articles, the Charity Commission guide "the Essential Trustee" and the latest annual report and financial statements.

DERC Trustees and employees

Trustees

Kevin Cook	(Chairman)
Imogen Davenport	(Dorset Wildlife Trust)
John Newbould	(Dorset Natural History & Archaeological Society)
Mike Morris	(Dorset Natural History & Archaeological Society)
Katharine Pollard	(Dorset County Council)
Philip Sterling	(Dorset County Council)
Nicholas Squirrel	(on behalf of Natural England)
Sarah Welton	(Dorset Wildlife Trust)

Employees

Carolyn Steele	Records Centre Manager
Alison Stewart	Environmental Database Manager
Bryan Edwards	Surveyor
Jon Corkill	GIS Officer
Rhiannon Rogers	Finance and Administration Officer

Finances:

DERC made a profit of £3,467 in the year to 31 March 2009. Copies of the Report of the Directors and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2009 are available from the DERC office. The Report of the Accountant to the Trustees has been prepared by Scott Vevers Chartered Accountants, 65 East Street, Bridport, Dorset DT6 3LB. DERC's bankers are Lloyds TSB, Dorchester Branch, 1 High West Street, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1UG.

DERC wishes to acknowledge contributions received from Dorset County Council, Christchurch Borough Council, Bournemouth Borough Council, Poole Borough Council, Purbeck District Council, West Dorset District Council, East Dorset District Council, North Dorset District Council, Weymouth and Portland Borough Council, Natural England, Environment Agency and Dorset Wildlife Trust.

Reserves Policy

Dorset Environmental Records Centre (DERC) maintains a stable pattern of expenditure from month to month, the majority of its costs being staff salaries, tax and national insurance. However, a significant amount of DERC's income is from grants funded by other organisations, who themselves are subject to a fluctuating financial climate. Consequently, the Trustees consider that it is desirable to hold reserves at a level that will cover one year's expenditure to ensure retention of the staff who have the skills and local knowledge that are key to the ongoing work of DERC. DERC's Reserves Policy is considered at each quarterly Trustees meeting in relation to actual income and expenditure and the policy is renewed annually. Reserves are held by CCLA Investment Management Ltd, 80 Cheapside, London EC2V 6DZ.

DERC's activities in the year to 31st March 2009 continued to provide a good and reliable information and survey service with no significant changes or developments during the year. At 31st March 2009, reserves held by the company were £110,942, being in accordance with the above policy. All of the company's reserves are considered by the trustees to be unrestricted. However, some years ago the trustees earmarked funds of £8,000 to cover the future costs involved in producing DERC publications on the species and habitats of the county. This sum is treated within these financial statements as a designated fund within the unrestricted reserves.

Investment Policy

DERC's Reserves Policy states that it is desirable to hold reserves at a level that will cover one year's expenditure to ensure retention of the staff who have the skills and local knowledge that are key to the ongoing work of DERC. Therefore, it is DERC's policy to invest the moneys of the Trust not immediately required for its purposes in funds that:

- are in accordance with the Trustee Investment Act 2000,
- provide reasonable access,
- provide income at a competitive rate for current needs, and
- preserve or increase the value of investments for the future.

To minimise risk, DERC's investments will be invested by a specialist charity investment fund approved by the Charity Commission. DERC will choose an investment manager who pays due regard to ethical investments whilst maximising the return on capital.

Health and Safety Policy

The Trustees review and update the Health and Safety policy annually in the light of any incidents. It is a requirement that any incidents are reported to the Record Centre Manager; no incidents occurred in 2008-09.