



*Dorset Environmental Records Centre  
Trust Company Limited*

**Annual Report 2006/2007**

Registered Charity Number 900287

Company Number 2447393

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

## **Chairman's Report for 2006/2007**

This year is my 6<sup>th</sup> year as Chairman of DERC and it was my great privilege to launch the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary party held at the village hall in Morden in June 2006, and meet the first Chairman, Paul Ensom. The event was delightful, a proper English summer's day, with good food and all the friends and past and current employees of DERC in one place. It was wonderful to be in the company of so many like-minded people and it reminded me too of how things had changed in the 30 years - there were so few people actually employed in the conservation movement then. In 1976 I was employed on Brownsea and then moved to Durlston in 1977 and sent in my first records on cards. These days, I must admit the recording process is all a bit above my head and the range of projects DERC is now involved with is staggering. This last year, for example, DERC has been involved with nearly 60 contracts including the wild asparagus project, hedge and lichen surveying, the Dorset Fish Tales pilot project, and woodland and saltmarsh surveying. The DERC team, Carolyn, Alison, Bryan, Rhiannon, Jon and Danuta took this all in their stride and should be congratulated on the continuing high quality service they provide to their clients. We are currently working in a difficult financial climate and this last year has shown a drop in the income of the organisation as a result of outside forces, but it is a reminder of the fragility of DERC and its dependency upon grants and contracts. I would like to thank all the outside organisations that have been generous with their funds this year and I can pledge too that DERC will continue to support them with the very best of database management.

### **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.

### **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. 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.

### **Workshops and Training Courses**

During the year DERC ran a comprehensive set of workshops open to members of the public and covering a variety of subjects. These included Trees in the Landscape, Wildflower Meadows, Insects in the Garden, a very well-supported Coastal Grazing Marsh day at Cogden beach and Abbotsbury, a Beetle Identification day at Piddles Wood and a Marine Molluscs day at Charnel, Kimmeridge. Details of workshops may be found on the DERC website, [www.derc.org.uk](http://www.derc.org.uk).

## **The Record Resource**

During 2006/07 we have continued testing the new Windows-based Recorder 6 database. Importing new data from Excel spreadsheets to the Windows version is a quick and simple process and linking the database to the GIS system has also been trialled. A day's training on advanced techniques including alternative methods of reporting on the database was received from Recorder Re-seller, Sally Rankin, and was very useful and informative. Work is now ongoing to prepare the data that we have received for import, and prepare standard reporting tools to use when the system is fully 'live'.

## **Requests for Data**

During 2006/07 the Record Centre has seen a small increase in requests for information about species or habitats in the county, finally logging over 260 requests. About 20 of these have been specifically for data relevant to Farm Environment Plans, but the majority have been for ecological consultants or Agreement holders.

## **Dorset Marine Biodiversity Database**

During the year there has been an emphasis on finding funding for project work. Natural England provided grants for two pilot projects, "Dorset Fish Tales" and "Are my rockpools changing?" The first of these, Dorset Fish Tales, is an innovative project to record accounts of fishing off the Dorset coast from local fishermen. The final recordings will be played at the local Heritage Coast Centres. In contrast "Are my rockpools changing?" looks to the future and the way to promote recording of species likely to be influenced by possible changes in our local climate. If successful the results from these pilot projects may be used as part of a larger funding bid.

The final contract for the year was initiated by the Dorset Coast Forum (DCF). Data from the Dorset Marine Database has now been made available to Forum members (in a simplified format) through the DCF web-site. It is shown as a series of mapped layers showing nationally rare and scarce species, protected species, climate change species, biodiversity action plan species and habitats, invasive aliens and so on. Anyone wanting more information on any of the records shown is encouraged to contact DERC directly.

## **Dorset Biodiversity Information System**

During the year DERC has launched a new system for providing wildlife data to planning authorities. Recent records for protected species have been collated into a single GIS table with information on who to contact for advice and hot-links to online advice notes. By providing the data in this format, local authorities can view the records over a base map and alongside other information, such as conservation areas, floodplain zones and historical information.

DERC can now provide a package of information including the wildlife layer and boundaries for sites (Sites of Nature Conservation Interest, Regionally Important Geological Sites, Local Nature Reserves and Conservation Verges). This new scheme is called the Dorset Biodiversity Information System and we hope it will make it easier for Local Authorities to use biodiversity information within the planning framework.

## **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 228, more incidents recorded than at any other site), times (e.g. a total of 232 fires have been started between 4.00 p.m. and 6.00 p.m.) or days (e.g. at a total of 338, more incidents have occurred on a Sunday than any other day of the week).

## **Geology**

In 1977 it was determined by the statutory nature conservation agencies of the day that a national audit of geological interest was needed. This review would select the sites that best display the earth science interest of the British Isles and would be taken from sites already designated, or under consideration for designation, as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). This would form the Geological Conservation Review (GCR) and would be the basis for Britain's statutory site protection for geological and geomorphological interest. During 2006 DERC digitally mapped the GCR sites for Dorset and East Devon. This consists of 93 individual 'blocks', which range from 0.2 km up to 37.8 km in length.

Jo Thomas is currently writing a book on the building stones of Dorset. Using data supplied by Jo, DERC have digitally mapped over 1700 quarries and pits showing where the different types of building stones have been quarried in the past. DERC has also produced a series of 17 maps of Dorset displaying this data for inclusion in Jo's book. During 2007 DERC will be working on the production of another series of maps for Jo showing the different types of building material used in each of the Dorset parishes. A set of interactive GIS tables will also be produced during 2007 that show this information for use by the planning authorities and other interested parties.

## **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**

Most 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 Squirrell	(on behalf of Natural England)
Sarah Welton	(Dorset Wildlife Trust)

#### **Employees**

Carolyn Steele	Records Centre Manager
Alison Stewart	Environmental Database Manager
Bryan Edwards	Surveyor
Danuta Kochanowska	Marine Database Officer
Jon Corkill	GIS Officer
Rhiannon Rogers	Finance and Administration Officer
John Hunnisett	Surveyor – Soft Cliffs contract

## **Finances:**

DERC made a loss of £10,246 in the year to 31 March 2007. Copies of the Report of the Directors and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2007 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 grants and 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 activities in the year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2007 continued to provide a good and reliable information and survey service with no significant changes or developments during the year. At 31<sup>st</sup> March 2007, reserves held by the company were £103,747 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.