



*Dorset Environmental Records Centre  
Trust Company Limited*

**Annual Report 2010/11**

Registered Charity Number 900287

Company Number 2447393

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

## **Chairman's Report for 2010/11**

We all know that we are living in difficult times economically (something I have been alluding to I note since 2007) and it is with considerable regret that we have now seen this affecting our friends and colleagues at DCC and Natural England. Phil Sterling has given DERC nothing but his full support throughout his employment and fortunately for us all continues to do so even though he, like all his Council colleagues, has to find savings across his work. We have also had unqualified support from Natural England, in particular Nick Squirrel and it is with considerable sadness on my part that we have had to see the Government unpicking the national organisation and our Dorset team, for whom I have huge respect, at a time when they were operating so successfully.

However strong our staff and Trustees are, inevitably DERC is also subject to the vagaries of the economy, yet this last year has seen the organisation still moving on and ending the year in profit. This Report sets out DERC's aims, a worthwhile thing to do to remind us of our scientific role. So many groups now, rightly or wrongly, have to incorporate 'people and wildlife' into their thinking. Nature conservation is essentially a scientific pursuit, recording and managing our country's wildlife and DERC is at the heart of that process and is able to conduct its work within its constitution 'for the public benefit' as the Charity Commission guidance requests, without diluting the thrust of its scientific effort. Each year it is heartening to see the new directions in which this takes us and the continuing projects too that affirm the value of such long term initiatives.

Once again it is my pleasure to thank all our supporters, volunteers and staff alike for their support and energy this last year that makes DERC the rather special organisation it is.

**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, Dorset's Important Geological Sites Group and Dorset Flora Group.

DERC also contributes to publications and articles. 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, in particular Bruce Willatt and Jon Crewe, for their work during the year.

## **The Record Resource**

During 2010/11, DERC reached the milestone of two million species records entered into our Recorder 6 database. Alongside the routine annual updating with new records, the inclusion of large datasets from the Dorset Moth Group and Dorset Bird Club contributed to this total. The Dorset Moth Group data has been made available on the NBN Gateway via the Butterfly Conservation Moths Count Project. Dorset County Council IT Services finally managed to get the Recorder software functioning properly on the network servers, greatly improving the security and backup of the database, and making it available for querying by more DERC staff.

## **Requests for Data**

During 2010/11 the Record Centre responded to 210 requests for information about species or habitats in the county. The number of requests is made up of approximately 36% from commercial users, 23% from agreement holders and 41% from private individuals/conservation organisations. Much of our data is now provided directly to local authorities, statutory agencies and conservation organisations as GIS data through the Dorset Biodiversity Information System. This data may be used hundreds of times during the year.

## **Dorset Biodiversity Information System**

The Dorset Biodiversity Information System has continued to be developed as a way to provide data to local authorities and some of our partner organisations through GIS layers. GIS allows the user to look at species and site data over OS base maps or aerial photos. During 2010/11 we added a layer for Dorset Greenwood Trees – veteran and ancient trees identified through a Dorset Wildlife Trust survey. The tree symbols are hot-linked to an advice note on veteran trees prepared by Katie Pollard (DCC Natural Environment Team). All local authorities were updated with site boundaries for Sites of Nature Conservation Interest, Regionally Important Geological Sites, Local Nature Reserves and Conservation Verges.

## **Dorset Marine Biodiversity Database**

The Dorset Marine Biodiversity Database has undergone the usual updates in the last 12 months, including the annual Dorset Seasearch data, several sightings from members of the public as well the addition of some previous surveys commissioned by Natural England in the Portland and Weymouth areas. Data has been provided though DERC for local environmental impact assessments, preparations for bioblitz surveys as well several local enquiries regarding planning proposals. One new project to the area which will hopefully contribute a lot of information is Dorset Wildlife Trust's Welly Zone project. This three year project has been designed to encourage more shoreline recording by volunteers from their local stretch of coast. Several strands to the project are being promoted including timed searches, led surveys, strandline monitoring and general observations of beach quality and litter. With volunteers receiving training in species and habitat identification, DERC are hopeful that this project will produce a reliable and useful dataset that will be available on the NBN and DERC database for public use.

Another recent development for marine is the creation of a Dorset Marine and Coastal Biodiversity Action Group. DERC have a seat on this group, as do Dorset Wildlife Trust, Dorset Coast Forum, Natural England, the Marine Management Organisation and the newly formed Southern Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authority (SIFCA), amongst others. The aim of the partnership is to drive forward actions from the Dorset Biodiversity Strategy. A key action that the DERC Marine Officer will be working on from the strategy is the promotion of the marine database and the distribution of the marine catalogue. In addition the Marine Officer has been looking at ways of incorporating the data catalogues of other partners in the working group, to provide a overarching map of the available marine data relevant to Dorset.

Lastly, work has begun in collaboration with DWT, on cataloguing the marine photos supplied by Seasearch and DWT. The software for this process has been supplied through funding from Natural England. A photograph catalogue of marine species and habitats in Dorset will be hugely useful for reports and media produced by DERC and other partners, as well as providing a baseline for habitat comparisons in the future.

## **Dorset Flora Group**

Dorset Flora Group successfully organised a Wild Flower Week in May 2010 which was once again very well-attended by members of the public. The Dorset Heath newsletter was produced in Spring 2011 providing information about events, field trip reports, vice-county notes and other articles. DERC continues to provide administrative support for the group.

## **Dorset's Important Geological Sites Group**

Administrative support is provided by DERC for DIGS, which undertook monitoring and conservation work at several RIGS sites in Dorset in 2010/11. DIGS also comments on planning applications affecting RIGS sites and undertakes surveys and conservation work to maintain access to sites.

## **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. Canford Heath which has had, at 328, more incidents recorded than at any other site), times (e.g. more fires have been started between 5.00 p.m. and 6.00 p.m. (159) than at any other time) or days (e.g. at a total of 569, more incidents have been recorded on a Sunday than any other day of the week).

## **Integrated Habitat System (IHS)**

DERC is continuing the process of translating all its existing habitat data to IHS. This includes data from SNCI surveys, NVC surveys and the Priority Habitat inventories. Data from the most recent surveys are being used in the case of overlapping data. All data is being checked against the 2009 aerial photos in order to verify its accuracy and correct any obvious anomalies in the data. These anomalies may be in the form of changes in the original habitat (for example scrubbing over of grassland), or have originated in changes in accuracy of the Ordnance Survey material.

## **Public Benefit**

In 2010/11 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 2010/11 (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 promotes workshops and walks available to members of the public through local recording groups

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 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
Jon Corkill	GIS Officer
Rhiannon Rogers	Finance and Administration Officer
Kathryn Dawson	Marine Database Officer (seconded from Dorset Wildlife Trust)

## **Finances:**

DERC made a profit of £10,967 in the year to 31 March 2011. Copies of the Report of the Directors and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2011 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, Wessex Water 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 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011 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 2011, reserves held by the company were £141,529, 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 within the year to 31 March 2011.