

Doncaster Local Records Centre 'Framework document'

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This document describes the status, structures and operating arrangements of Doncaster Local Records Centre (DLRC).

1. The work of the LRC

- 1.1 Doncaster Local Records Centre (DLRC) has evolved over the last century thanks to the efforts and expertise of local naturalists, in association with Doncaster Council. Over 100 years of biological recording has resulted in the LRC becoming the central point for the collection, validation, interpretation and historical recording of local environmental records. Its role and functions remain fundamentally the same, as defined below:
- 1.2 Doncaster Local Records Centre is ***'a not-for-profit service run in partnership for public benefit, which collects, collates, manages and disseminates information of known quality relating to wildlife, wildlife sites and habitats for the Doncaster Borough.'***
- 1.3 Specifically, DLRC collects, validates, manages and makes available detailed information about plants, animals, wildlife sites and habitats and geological sites within the Doncaster Metropolitan Borough administrative area. This also includes access to a physical archive including a Herbaria, taxidermy specimens and an invertebrate collection, which is maintained at Doncaster Museum (see 'where the LRC operates' below). DLRC functions may also include the commissioning and practical collection of environmental data, interpretation of biological records, training and educational outreach work, as part of an enhanced service.
- 1.4 DLRC does not hold local archaeological records -although these may be present as incidental site data-, these are available from the South Yorkshire Archaeological Service. The DLRC does not hold or maintain a current record of local badger sightings, setts and activity, which is available from the South Yorkshire Badger Group. Please refer to DLRC's policy on how it deals with confidential or sensitive data. DLRC does manage site data for Local Geological Sites, but additional geological and geomorphological data (both of historical nature and for non-designated sites) may be available from South Yorkshire Geology Trust.
- 1.5 The main aim of DLRC is to work in partnership with a range of stakeholders to store and maintain an up-to-date picture of the health and character of the borough's wildlife resource for present and future generations. The dissemination, interpretation and use of this data by data contributors and enquirers is an important tool in

recording and monitoring environmental change, informing wildlife conservation and management efforts, environmental education and research and shaping development plans and proposals.

- 1.6 Examples of LRC work areas include:
- Development, implementation and monitoring of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan, Botanical atlas, and Doncaster's Audit of priority species.
 - Supporting the business of Doncaster's Local Site's Partnership
 - Informing strategic land-use planning and specific development management proposals
 - Conservation project development
 - Environmental study and research
 - Other environmental data enquiries
- 1.7 The 2009 South Yorkshire Local Record Centre Harmonisation Study reported that Doncaster LRC, proportionally, has the most up-to-date records (less than 5 years old) and receives the most chargeable data requests a year, of the South Yorkshire Local Record Centres.

2. Where the LRC operates

- 2.1 Doncaster is the largest metropolitan borough in the country, covering 226 square miles, and hosting a rich diversity of geology, habitats and species. Over a 1/4 million pieces of information regarding Doncaster's biodiversity are stored on DLRC's electronic 'Recorder' database, managed and maintained by the Biological Records Officer based at Danum House, St Sepulchre Gate, Doncaster, DN1 1UB. The database is held on a standalone installation on a secure computer and is password protected. The database is backed-up to a secure server. Paper originals are held in a private office at Doncaster Museum and this archive has recently been catalogued with support from Doncaster Naturalists Society. Some of these can be accessed by special arrangement with Doncaster Museum Service.
- 2.2 Information can be accessed by contacting the Biological Records Officer (weds - Friday) or by prior appointment at Doncaster Museum. All data requests, contributions and enquiries should, in the first instance, be directed to the Biological Records Officer. Please note that the majority of information stored at Danum House is in electronic format and includes personal data as part of the full data record. It is not possible to view this data either independently or accompanied at a workstation and a specific data request should be completed in accordance with DLRC procedures.

Data requests can be completed via:

- an e-form accessed through the DLRC webpages;
- An email request sent to;
brc@doncaster.gov.uk
- A postal request sent to;
Mr Bob Marsh - Biological Records Officer, Directorate of Regeneration & Environment, c/o Colonnades House, Duke Street, Doncaster, DN1 1ER

Telephone enquiries about the service should use; 01302 734891

- 2.3 A wealth of supporting literature and reference materials and specimens are also maintained at Doncaster Museum. Some of these can be accessed by special arrangement with Doncaster Museum Service.
- 2.4 To support and facilitate the sharing of data with local contributors and users of the Museum Service, the Biological Records Officer holds regular open sessions at the Museum. These provide an opportunity for local naturalists to have support in accessing and providing records both to the database and the Museum archive.
- 2.5 As set out above, a number of local services and stakeholders work together to form Doncaster's Local Record Centre, and this includes occasional support and data exchange with organisations and individuals from outside of the Borough. Most notably the Doncaster Local Record Centre is committed to becoming a member/shareholder of the Yorkshire and Humber Environmental Data Network Community Interest Company. The YHEDN Company's objective is to promote the understanding and protection of the environment and furthering the collection and availability of environmental data for the North of England, by, amongst other means:
- enabling, supporting and maintaining an information technology system to provide access to environmental data;
 - enabling and promoting the consolidation and sharing of environmental information; and
 - promoting the maintenance of accurate environmental information.

The benefits of being a member of the YHEDN are:

- Access to continued IT system development that will improve data collation and interpretation for environmental and spatial planning functions,
- Involvement in the development of best practice standards for data administration and use,
- Involvement in the development of the national accreditation system, which is likely to become the benchmark for quality environmental decision making,
- Wider access to funding including sources currently unavailable to individual centre.

3. How the LRC is constituted

- 3.1 Doncaster Local Records Centre is a resource hosted and supported by Doncaster Council, whilst a partnership based steering committee advises on its operation and direction. As part of the hosting arrangement Doncaster Council provides office space and resources as well as technical (data management, GIS, IT), financial, legal and personnel and other support.
- 3.2 The steering committee oversees the operation of the DLRC and is an unincorporated partnership between Council officers and key conservation partners i.e. representatives from Natural England, the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust and Doncaster Naturalists' Society.
- 3.3 A number of environmental organisations and researchers contribute data and information to the Centre and in return, (along with Doncaster Council and the DLRC Committee) have free access to all non-sensitive information held by DLRC. This allows them to, amongst other things, put their records into a regional context (see DLRC's '**Data Access and Exchange**' and '**Confidentiality**' policies).

- 3.4 As a member of the YHEDN CIC, Doncaster LRC will in time contribute data to the NBN Gateway through the YHEDN, and similarly data available to the YHEDN will be shared with Local Record Centres. DLRC as a Constituent body/Shareholder of the South Yorkshire Electoral college, will have representation on the YHEDN CIC through an appointed representative. The appointed representative is the South Yorkshire Biodiversity Coordinator. DLRC will therefore have an input and vote in the YHEDN's work at partner meetings, through the South Yorkshire representative. The establishment of the YHEDN CIC regulates the current relationship between Local Record Centres within the region, as shareholders of the Company. However, the Shareholders are not in partnership with each other, nor are they agents of each other. The business description of the YHEDN permits it to engage in all aspects of regional data supply and collation without affecting the ability of the Local Record Centres to operate at a local level.

4. How the LRC Partnership operates and is accountable

- 4.1 The Biological Records Officer is responsible for the day-to-day up-keep and management of the electronic database, and dissemination of data, whilst the Museum Service is responsible for the LRC resources on their premises.
- 4.2 The Biological Records Officer will work in accordance with all relevant Doncaster Council policies and procedures (including DLRC policy statements). The Biological Records Officer and their work will be overseen through the existing management arrangements of Doncaster Council, and the Council will remain accountable for all official business of DLRC.
- 4.3 The Biological Records Officer's manager will chair a committee ("the Steering Committee") the remit of which will be to review and discuss current LRC policy and any issues arising. The Steering Committee will meet on a regular basis (approximately annually). This meeting will include an annual review of DLRC's work programme and business, and potential future priorities and work streams. An up-to-date list of committee membership, official roles/posts and responsibilities will be maintained.
- 4.4 The committee may make recommendations to Doncaster Council (the host organisation and signatory to the YHEDN Partnership) in relation to DLRC. The Council will inform the Steering Committee of their actions in light of any recommendations, including the reasons for any recommendations which are not taken forward.
- 4.5 DLRC policies and procedures will be published on the web pages and include:
- Data Access and Exchange Policy
 - DLRC Charging Policy
 - DLRC Confidentiality Policy
 - DLRC Data Validation Policy and Procedure
 - DLRC Legacy Data Statement
 - DLRC Data Transfer Statement
 - DLRC Data Transfer License (Individuals)
 - DLRC Data Transfer License (Organisations)
- 4.6 Responses to data enquiries will be provided in accordance with Freedom of Information request guidelines and Doncaster Council's Customer Service Charter.

- 4.7 The Steering Committee will nominate a member to liaise between DLRC and the YHEDN, and who will be responsible for reporting back to the committee.
- 4.8 The DLRC aims to work towards becoming accredited by ALERC (Association of Local Environmental Records Centres). This organisation has recently issued the final report of the "Development of a Local Records Centre Accreditation System". This document details the LRC Accreditation Project, funded and supported by Natural England and ALERC, and lays down procedures and standards that LRCs should aspire to in order to provide a high and consistent standard of practice and service to private and public bodies who require environmental information (mainly in the form of biological and site information records) as part of the planning process. To pursue this it will be necessary to become a member of ALERC, which would entail an annual fee of £200. ALERC membership would enable DLRC to be assessed for good practice, be advised of shortcomings, and methods to improve these, and to be granted accreditation to the ALERC scheme when qualifying criteria are satisfied.

5. How it communicates and reports

- 5.1 DLRC will utilise available resources to communicate its business and services to the wider public, clients and internal stakeholders. This includes the use of web pages on the Doncaster Council website to provide information about its services, the data held, current policies, priorities and procedures.
- 5.2 The website also includes an e-form to submit data to the LRC, although the LRC will accept records in alternative formats as long as the mandatory data is provided to validate and complete the record.
- 5.3 The LRC will provide support to establish satellite copies of Recorder with key data contributors to facilitate the exchange of information.
- 5.4 The LRC will aim to tailor its response to enquirers to meet their data requirements, and have regard to the findings of any future Equality Impact Assessments.
- 5.5 The LRC will aim to maximise communication of its services through Local Authority Services and the work of its Partners.
- 5.6 As part of an enhanced LRC function, the LRC may undertake outreach work (presentations, training, workshops etc) to raise environmental awareness and communicate and promote its role and work.
- 5.7 DLRC will exchange data with the YHEDN, to be shared with the NBN Gateway.
- 5.8 There will be a regular meeting of the DLRC steering committee.

6. How it is funded

- 6.1 The DLRC staff, service support and accommodation are funded by Doncaster Council, and supported by the voluntary skills and expertise of its partners. The fees that the service generates are utilised to contribute towards the collection of new data, particularly with respect to maintaining an up-to-date evidence base for designated sites. The fees are also used to contribute towards the proactive dissemination of data, i.e. by making some data available through electronic means.

These costs are largely met by Doncaster Council, however the fee income helps support the continuation of key aspects of this service as identified above.

- 6.2 Following a review of the DLRC charging policy, a revised fee schedule will be implemented as soon as practicable in the 2011-12 financial year. The LRC will publish a charging policy which will be subject to regular review.

7. Drafting, reviewing and using the framework document.

- 7.1 This framework document will be updated as required, including amendments resulting from the consideration of any recommendations by the Steering Committee.