ALGAO-UK HER Committee
Held on 2 October 2013 at Birmingham and Midland Institute
9 Margaret Street, Birmingham.

Present:

Dave Batchelor (DBat)	English Heritage
Dave Barratt (DBar)	Derbyshire County Council/ALGAO
Mark Bennet (MBt)	Lincolnshire County Council (Minutes)
Alison Bennett (ABt)	Essex County Council
Suzy Blake (SBl)	Staffordshire County Council/FISH
Stuart Cakebread (SCa)	Greater London HER – EH
Sally Croft (SCr)	Cambridgeshire County Council
Paul Cuming (PC)	Kent County Council
Lucie Dingwall (LD)	Herefordshire Council
Rob Edwards (RE)	Cheshire Shared Services
Louise Ennis (LE)	Council for British Archaeology
Paul Gilman (PG)	Essex County Council (Chair)
Jane Golding (JG)	English Heritage
Sarah MacLean (SMc)	English Heritage
Chris Martin (CM)	Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust
Graham Tait (GT)	Devon County Council
Ben Wallace (BW)	Warwickshire County Council
Chris Webster (CW)	Somerset County Council

1. Apologies
Alice Cattermole, Gail Falkingham, Susan Hamilton, Pete Iles, Stephanie Leith, Susan Lisk, Rebecca Loader, Fiona MacDonald, Melissa Seddon, Ken Smith.

2. Minutes of meeting of 22 May 2013
Item 4:- Powgs National Park should read Brecon Beacons National Park.

3. Matters Arising
BW mentioned some concerns that had been raised about the on-line system for dealing with historic environment input into Environmental Stewardship applications. He has been in contact with Vicky Hunns about this. It might be useful to have Vicky Hunns attend a future meeting to give an update on progress.
Action BW to consider this as a possible future agenda item.

Item 6:- A standing slot for an update on this committee during the HER Forum meetings will be implemented from the next meeting.
Item 7:- the timetable for the 2014 content and computing survey is with Fiona MacDonald.

i. Impact of budget cuts on HERs

MBt – *Lincolnshire*: local authority is beginning to look at becoming a commissioning council.

ABt and PG – *Essex*: budget cuts at district level are having an impact with a reduced number of requests for services. One district is pulling out entirely and will not be paying for any future service. If anyone has information on similar situations please let ABt know. The reorganisation of the authority in the move to become a commissioning council means that Environmental Services will disappear next week and historic environment services will come under a new grouping, Trading Services.

PC – *Kent*: one district is not willing to pay for the service although discussions are on going. The authority is continuing down the route of becoming a commissioning council.

SBl – *Staffordshire*: the service is in the midst of a tendering process for environmental services. The successful tenderer will take over the staff. If the service remains in the council considerable savings will need to be made.

RE – *Cheshire*: there is a major reorganisation of the council on going. At the moment heritage services are divorced from development management. A decision has yet to be made on possible out sourcing.

GT – *Devon*: cuts are expected but their size is not known

SCa – *London*: EH reorganisation means that the HER will be with a self supporting charity run by a commission as part of the designatory advisory service. There are discussions continuing on further cuts. There is an EH consultation going out from DCMS at the end of this month.

LD – *Herefordshire*: the HER is part of the Archives Service but the rest of the archaeology and heritage service is still undergoing a restructure and review of scope of service. Archives is being restructured next year.

BW – *Warwickshire*: the strategic commissioning review is continuing, possibly looking at a trust model. A risk and benefit analysis of keeping the service in house has been undertaken; a number of different threads are being followed up and so the position is currently uncertain.

CM – *Wales*: most funding is from central government and so the budget is still stable. There may be cuts next year and the position regarding the funding from local authorities is uncertain. Some piecemeal funding is arriving through Environmental Stewardship.

CW – *Somerset*: the heritage service is going to a trust. The trust will be set up as a business next year and it will then seek charitable status. In addition, budget cuts next April will possibly result in loss of staff.

DBar – *Derbyshire*: there is no indication of specific cuts as yet but the authority has made major savings.

SCr – *Cambridgeshire*: a new charging policy is now active.

DBat – *English Heritage*: it is proposed that the organisation will split below top management, the property area will keep the EH name. The regional team structure will not be affected by this split but may be affected by a 10% funding cut. Proto-organisations should appear next year. The properties will be managed by a charity but EH ownership and guardianships are not affected.

ii. OASIS

SCa – the next OASIS meeting is next week

GT and SBl reiterated the need for OASIS managers to decide what they are doing and why. HERs already do monument records very well. The grey literature library is the element with the most benefit for HERs.

BW felt more feedback was needed on what was proposed and on their thoughts on where they were heading.

DBat considered that it would be useful to go back to basics and build up from there and to identify what they are good at. EH as a funding body have asked for this.

DBar asked whether there was the intention of discussing the new on-line form with the HER community. DBat said that there was.

RE noted that in his experience much of the OASIS form is either not completed or not completed properly.

SCa suggested that more training in completing forms would be useful for some organisations.

DBar felt that HERs needed to be inputting into the project design.

GT acknowledged the useful information from JG on EH research reports. He asked whether such EH reports will be uploaded to OASIS. At the moment the forms are completed but the reports are not uploaded. JG said she would check.

iii. Role and membership of the ALGAO HER committee

This item was passed over to be covered in item 12 below. At that point in the meeting time constraints resulted in a very brief discussion.

iv. Advice note on using HER data

DBar noted that any further comments should go to PG and Stewart Bryant. The aim is to circulate this note to anyone who wishes to use HER data for a research project.

PC felt there was a critical need to get information back into HERs and this needs to be built into projects.

CM asked if this advice note could be used for Wales. It should also mention BHUG.

Send suggested wording to PG so he can amend draft and pass on.

Action PG

DBat added that EH might find it useful to incorporate into their systems as well.

SMc suggested it could also go on the HER forum.

4. CBA First World War Commemoration Project

LE introduced this item. A community project commemorating the centenary of the First World War by enabling public recording of places associated with the First World War and its Home Front. It will include an element of community capacity building that will raise awareness of HERs. The project will use standardized data and produce a First World War recording toolkit. It will be promoting HER data and encouraging the return of data to HERs.

LE asked for any feedback on the form and the guidance that had been circulated prior to the meeting.

SCa suggested a date-of-use as well as a date-of-construction field.

CW thought that it would be useful to note which fields were essential and which optional.

PC noted that a code for a site rather than a name might be worthwhile.

SBl said that it was important that the community groups talk to their HER(s) early on.

LE thought that a search for First World War flagged sites might be needed.

GT pointed out that it might be useful to speak with BHUG and the HBSMR users group.

MBt noted that not all HER data is searchable through GIS.

PG mentioned the First World War thesaurus and the need to talk to the FISH group about this.

LE said that the project covered 1914 to 1918 and so war memorials were not covered. Information on these would be sent to the War Memorials Trust.

There followed a discussion on data formats.

GT felt that if forms were to be updated and then re-submitted to HERs then some metadata would be needed to allow HERs to identify these records.

RE highlighted the need to look at the architecture of data exports particularly with regard to multiple relationships within the data such as multiple sources for a single record.

LE noted that sample databases might be provided to groups to help those who have not recorded such information before. Such a sample database might have a future use for other projects. There will be training workshops in conjunction with the dissemination of the toolkit to community groups and universities. This might well require some assistance from local HERs at the workshops. There might be one a year in a county perhaps. CBA regional groups would also help.

RE said that there might be some issues from region to region on what help HERs can provide.

5. HER Benchmarks

DBat introduced his discussion paper that had been circulated prior to the meeting. It proposed the development of an outcomes/outputs framework for HERs to assist in the future development of benchmarks and linking these to the HER audits.

RE said that it was difficult sometimes for an HER to prove that it met the benchmarks although he felt that audits were useful and gave good measurements of the current state of an HER.

DBat thought that the both the benchmarks and the audit process needed updating and the relationships between the two needed sorting out.

RE replied that he had to provide proof to managers that the HER met the benchmarks; he wanted to make sure that any benchmarks and the linkages to audits were robust enough to do this.

JG said that this exercise should try to identify outcomes in terms of the benchmarks rather than the other way around.

CW asked two questions: what are the roles of benchmarks? What are they for?

BW felt that there were the nearest thing to a national standard for HERs. They were something to point at to show a local authority what it is they need for an HER. They help in arguments for resources.

PC suggested that you need to know how to use them, there are some things for which they are not suitable.

DBat wondered whether it might be appropriate to look at the benchmarks according to type of HER and so have a standard HER set, a standard set for HERs with a coast, a standard set for urban HERs and other non standard extra sets for other situations. If benchmarks are linked to the outcomes that an HER is aiming to achieve then there could also be closer links to the audits. The outputs that an HER service offers are in turn connected to the processes undertaken by an HER so if an HER does not undertake a particular process it can be argued that they do not achieve particular outputs.

EH would be able to endorse the benchmarks but it is uncertain whether there would be the resources to monitor an HER's achievements, in other words to independently verify the benchmarks.

CM noted that if there was no independent validation it can call into question the benchmark assessment exercise.

DBat said that benchmarks need to be actively curated, to be reviewed and changed as necessary. The HER staff need to be involved with this.

LD asked whether there was a role for IfA in this. They do peer assessments in certain areas. Validated benchmarks would be useful to give them status and so add weight to arguments for maintaining an HER in response to threats to the service.

DBar agreed that this would be a useful mechanism and compared it to IfA's system of registered organisations.

PC suggested that as historic environment services varied from authority to authority then it might be difficult to have fair comparison between areas.

DBat said that one would need to compare HERs that are aiming to produce similar outputs.

SMc agreed that it would be difficult to audit one HER against another.

DBat thought that over time the collection of more information would help identify particular HER profiles across the HER community.

PG suggested a separate meeting to discuss further. Perhaps set up a further structured discussion on the HER forum and then move onto a meeting.

GT thought that the item should be included as an agenda item at the next HER Forum meeting.

PG thanked DBat for his attendance and for the discussion paper.

6. HER local engagement group

BW reported on the Cambridge meeting. There were presentations on First World War projects and on the North Yorkshire Moors smartphone app by exeGesIS SDM.

They are still trying to attract more people to the meetings particularly from the North.

Terms of reference are in preparation and the draft terms will come to this committee before going to the executive committee.

There will be an item at the HER Forum looking at ways to help HERs with local engagement.

7. Report from EH HDM/ALGAO HER Liaison Meeting

DBar reported that the last meeting was in June. They have been working on an exchange of letters between EH and ALGAO outlining how they will work together in the future, documenting the various committees and meetings that there are and how these work together, to build and strengthen the relationships between the organisations.

There have been discussions on 'national importance' and how HERs might help. There are discussions about developing a project to look at definitions of 'national importance'.

Templates for the different policies that an HER might have are to go onto the HER forum file store.

IFP[2] is now a wiki-document to encourage contributions. The second phase is to do a major update of those pages that are out of date. A funding bid was rejected and so there is a need to re-open discussions with EH about moving this forwards.

8. FISH

SBl reported. The updated website is now available and a new FISH terminology site that replaces Inscription.

There are moves to get software developers involved in thesaurus development at an early stage.

The next meeting is in November.

9. HBSMR user group meeting report.

There has been no meeting since the last committee meeting.

10. BHUG meeting report

No report. Given Nick Boldrini is on sabbatical there has not been much to report.

11. HER Forum

CW reported that the last meeting was successful. It had been decided to have one meeting each year to the North and to the South alternately and the other meeting in Birmingham.

The next meeting is in York.

12. Future Chairmanship and Secretary of HER Committee
PG said that his job was moving him further and further away from HER work and so he was stepping down as the chairman of the committee.
BW offered to take over the chair.
DBar said he would take this to the executive committee for approval/confirmation.
MBt said that this seemed an appropriate time to see if there was another volunteer who wished to take over as secretary.
GT said that he would be happy to take over and will do so from the next meeting.
There was a very brief discussion of the role and membership of the committee.

13. Country updates, items not already covered.
Scotland: no further items.
Wales: CM reported on the consultation that has been published on the production of a Welsh Heritage Bill. The Bill is expected in 2015.
The merger of Cadw and RCAHMW will occur in 2014 creating an organisation that will probably be an executive agency of the government.
The HER's android application has been produced and will be launched on the 7 November. It gives access to HER data.
England: no further items.

14. Any other business
SCr spoke of the consultation on the guidance for the NPPF that is on the Planning Portal and asked if there would be a comment from ALGAO.
DBar said that discussions had taken place on this but that as many consultation responses as possible would still be useful. This is guidance but there will be other opportunities to respond to further guidance. It is badged as EH guidance as the old PPS5 guidance is being reworked for this.

SCa raised the recent e-mail from exeGesIS regarding HERMES (aka Shep). He suggested that there were fairly fundamental issues here and knock on effects that need discussion. For example there need to be guarantees that an HER is not locked into it if they sign up.
CW thought that exeGesIS were moving fairly quickly on this. He noted that HER searches can include data other than just monuments including events, designations, HLC etc.
SCa pointed out that the currency of HER data was a concern. Data on the Heritage Gateway is not being updated by all HERs.
It was suggested that exeGesIS be invited to the next committee meeting. [This has been done.]

GT mentioned the status of greenbacks now that NHLE is the official list. Can greenbacks now be disposed of? EH legal team have commented that it is at the discretion of the local authority and it was suggested that this be shared over the HER forum. [This has been done. Martin Newman posted information on the HER forum on 7 October 2013.]

15. Date of next meeting
Wednesday 29 January 2014 at EH West Midlands Regional offices in Birmingham.

Abbreviations

ADS	Archaeology Data Service
AIP	Archaeological Investigations Project
ALGAO	Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers
AMIE	Archives and Monuments Information, England
ASPIRE	Archaeological Standard Protocol for the Integrated Reporting of Events
BIAB	The British and Irish Archaeological Bibliography a CBA service
BEFS	Built Environment Forum Scotland
BHUG	Bespoke HER Users Group
CBA	Council for British Archaeology
CoSLA	Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
DCMS	Department for Culture Media and Sport
DEFRA	Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs
DPC	Digital Preservation Coalition
DSU	Data Standards Unit (part of EH)
EH	English Heritage
EHKOS	English Heritage Knowledge Organisation System
ELS	Entry Level Stewardship (part of DEFRA's Environmental Stewardship Scheme)
FISH	Forum on Information Standards in Heritage
GIS	Geographic Information System
GLADE	Grey Literature Access, Dissemination and Enhancement
HBSMR	*Historic Buildings, Sites and Monuments Record* (name of exeGesIS software)
HDM	Heritage Data Management
HECAS	Historic Environment Countryside Advisory Service
HECTOR	Historic Environment Communities Tracking Original Research
HEIRNET	Historic Environment Information Resources Network
HELAC	Historic Environment Local Authority Capacity (partnership initiative linked with HELM)
HELM	Historic Environment – Local Management (EH initiative)
HER	Historic Environment Record
HERALD	see OASIS2 (below)
HLS	Higher Level Stewardship (part of DEFRA's Environmental Stewardship Scheme)
HPR	formerly Heritage Protection Review now Heritage Protection Reform
IfA	Institute for Archaeologists
IFP^2	*Informing the Future of the Past* second edition
IHBC	Institute of Historic Building Conservation
INSPIRE	Infrastructure for Spatial Information in Europe
ISKO	International Society for Knowledge Organisation
LPA	Local Planning Authority
MDA	Museum Documentation Association (technically MDA is now the organisation's name and is not an abbreviation)
MEDIN	Marine Environment Data and Information Network
MIDAS^2	*Monument Inventory Data Standard* second edition
MLA	The Museum, Libraries and Archives Council
MoD	Ministry of Defence
NHLE	National Heritage List for England
NHPP	National Heritage Protection Plan (EH)
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
OASIS	On-line Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations
OASIS2	New version of On-line Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations. The project is called HERALD
PAS	Portable Antiquities Scheme
PPG	Planning Policy Guidance
PPS	Planning Policy Statement
RCAHMS	Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland
RCAHMW	Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales
SHINE	Selected Heritage Inventory for Natural England
SLA	Service Level Agreement
SMR	Sites and Monuments Record
SNHD	Selected National Heritage Data
SPIRE	Spatial Information Repository
UK	United Kingdom
XML	Extensible Markup Language