



Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes

Environmental Records Centre

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Charging Policy

Aims

1. To implement a charging system for the work undertaken by BMERC staff in processing wildlife information enquiries and data searches.
2. To implement a charging system that is:
 - fair and equitable,
 - easy to understand and
 - rational.
3. To set out a hierarchy of charges based on the nature of the relationship with the enquirer and level of service provided.
4. To provide transparency in the calculation of charges to clients

Policy

The Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Environmental Records Centre (BMERC) has adopted a charging policy for all data-related services. The charges are based on the type of client and the scale and complexity of the work being undertaken.

The Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR) covers the supply of environmental information. Under EIR, public authorities are required to make available environmental information on request. The Regulations allow BMERC to charge a reasonable amount for making the information available to applicants.

BMERC uses these charges to recover the costs of processing the enquiries and presenting the data to clients.

The charges do not in any way result in the transfer of data ownership or copyright.

BMERC's charges are subject to an annual review.

All data services are subject to terms and conditions will not commence without the written agreement of the requesting individual or organisation. This will include an agreed price, a specification of outputs and service standards, conditions of use and a deadline for service delivery.

BMERC chargeable services

BMERC undertakes these main types of data services:

- **Data searches** – the provision of species records, habitat and site information (including maps of these features) which relate to specific locations or search areas.
- **Commissioned projects** – the undertaking of wildlife information management tasks of a greater time and geographic scale.
- **Service Level Agreements** - longer term agreements with partner organisations to supply data on a regular or ad hoc basis.
- **Data Exchange Agreements** – the exchange of species records habitat and site information with local or national groups, usually these will be an exchange of species records with recording groups. There is normally no charges associated with these agreements as they are for mutual benefit.

Clients, services and associated charges

The categories of clients and the associated charges for services are as follows (see also table in Appendix 1 for figures and Appendix 2 of SLA and other partners):

1. Commercial data users

This category of client includes environmental consultants, solicitors, other commercial organisations, developers and utility companies.

- **Data searches** will be chargeable at the commercial rate.
- **Commissioned projects** will be chargeable at the commercial rate.

2. Service Level Agreement Partners

These partners are considered to be all of the local authorities and agencies with which Service Level Agreements and Memoranda of Agreement with BMERC have been established.

- **Data searches** will be undertaken without charge unless they are of an extent and scale which warrants charges being applied. Decisions on whether searches are chargeable will be made in discussion between BMERC and the partner. Any urgent requests will be charged at the rate quoted in the agreement.
- **Commissioned projects** will be charged at the agreed partner rate.

3. Non-commercial organisations

This category includes conservation charities (e.g. BBOWT, RSPB), statutory agencies, Government departments (e.g. Ministry of Defence) and non-departmental public bodies (e.g. Centre for Ecology and Hydrology).

- **Data searches** will be undertaken using partner charging rates at the discretion of BMERC. This will range from free searches for those organisations with data exchange or service agreements with BMERC through to searches undertaken at partner rates.
- **Commissioned projects** will be charged at the agreed partner rate.

4. Recorders

This category includes naturalists or environmental groups whose recording is undertaken on a voluntary basis.

- **Data searches** will be carried out free of charge, regardless of whether the individual or group is a major data provider or if a data exchange agreement is held with them. If appropriate, any material costs generated through the data provision service (e.g. postage, photocopying) will be recovered or a donation warmly welcomed depending on the scale of the service (daily / hourly).
- **Commissioned projects** will be charged at the agreed partner rate.

5. Landowners or their agents

- **Data searches** will be carried out free of charge for private landowners, farmers or their agents where the searches relate to their own properties (or sites managed by them) and the results of the

searches will be used for management plans of benefit to biodiversity. If appropriate, any material costs (e.g. postage, photocopying) will be recovered. Any other data searches (for example, in support of applications for stewardship schemes) will be charged at the commercial rate.

- **Commissioned projects** will be chargeable at the commercial rate.

6. Other enquirers

This category includes academic researchers, schools, parish-based groups (not covered in Category 4) and members of the public.

- **Data searches** will be carried out free of charge. If appropriate, any material costs generated through the data provision service (e.g. postage, photocopying) will be recovered or a donation warmly welcomed depending on the scale of the service (daily / hourly).
- **Commissioned projects** will be charged at the agreed partner rate.

Service standards for data searches

All data searches will be completed within a standard response time, as agreed with the BMERC Steering Group. Variations on this performance standard may be negotiated with the client as circumstances dictate.

Service Level Agreement and paying service clients will take priority over other enquirers in terms of service delivery. Equally, data agreement holders (those who lodge copies of their data with BMERC for general use) will take priority over non-contributing service users.

Service requests from students or academics associated with research projects that bring substantial benefit to the Records Centre may take priority over other education-related enquiries.

Charging variations for data searches

Priority enquiries, where a faster turnaround time is requested, will be charged a premium rate of 1.5 times the standard charge.

Where very few or no records are found as result of a preliminary search, the charge for the service may be reduced by 50% or waived at BMERC's discretion.

Additional Information

Initial time spent by BMERC in negotiating service requirements and output deadlines for either data searches or commissioned projects with clients is non-chargeable.

Charges are invoiced following completion of the data search or the commissioned project objectives.

Changes in the rates of charges will be agreed with the BMERC Steering Group and published on the BMERC web site www.bucksmkerc.org.uk.

Other than in exceptional circumstances, charges will be maintained throughout a business year and will be effective for that business year.

Details of data search enquiries and other service agreements will not be passed on to any third party.

Commercial data searches are subject to standard [terms and conditions](#) which are published on the BMERC website.

Appendix 1

Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Environmental Records Centre charging policy

BMERC operates a hierarchical system of charges for wildlife information services, based on type of client to whom services are being provided. As a principle, the services to local residents, local naturalists and local landowners, teachers, students, Parish Councils and environmental charities are subsidised through funding from those better able to pay for wildlife information services. In addition, regular users of wildlife information services may enter into a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with BMERC, guaranteeing priority service and a reduced hourly and daily charge.

The following rates are accurate as from 12th November 2018 and will be charged plus VAT. Changes to these being applied as detailed in the **Additional Information** section on page 4.

	Category 1. Commercial data users	Category 2. Service Level Agreement (SLA) partners	Category 3. Non-commercial organisations	Category 4. Recorders	Category 5. Parish Council's parish plans only
Service Level Agreement work	No charge if work is within outputs of SLA	No charge if work is within outputs of SLA	No charge if work is within outputs of SLA	N/A	N/A
Hourly charge for data searches	£105.00 +VAT / hour, with up to 50% surcharge for less than ten days notice**	Usually no charge if work within outputs of SLA to £85.00 +VAT / hour depending on extent and scale, with up to 50% surcharge for less than ten days notice**	From no charge to £85.00 +VAT / hour, with up to 50% surcharge for less than ten days notice**	No charge**	N/A

	Category 1. Commercial data users	Category 2. Service Level Agreement (SLA) partners	Category 3. Non-commercial organisations	Category 4. Recorders	Category 5. Parish Council's parish plans only
Daily charge for data searches	£450.00 +VAT, with up to 50% surcharge for less than ten days notice**	From no charge if work within outputs of SLA to £325.00 +VAT / day, with up to 50% surcharge for less than ten days notice**	From no charge to £325.00 +VAT / day, with up to 50% surcharge for less than ten days notice**	No charge (but material costs may be recovered)**	N/A
Commissioned projects	£450.00 +VAT / day	£325.00 +VAT / day***	£325.00 +VAT / day***	£325.00 +VAT / day***	£50.00 +VAT
Data licences	As agreed*	As agreed within terms of SLA*	As agreed*	None****	N/A

* Data licences cover the repeat use of large dataset, usually for one year and usually supplied electronically. Charges based on time required and associated terms.

** Priority service for different service users:

- SLA and paying service users will take priority over other enquirers.
- Data agreement holders (organisations and individuals which lodge copies of their data with BMERC for general use) will take priority over non-contributing service users.

*** BMERC does not currently have the capacity to carry out large scale, data-related tasks at no charge; large amounts of work for data agreement holders and other non-commercial users will be subject to charge.

**** Data use for data agreement holders will be subject to written agreements defining third party use of data and copyright.

Appendix 2

SLA / MoA / Funding Partners

Buckinghamshire County Council

Milton Keynes Council

Natural England

Environment Agency

Wycombe District Council

Aylesbury Vale District Council

South Bucks District Council

British Waterways

BBOWT