

**Summary Note of the Bee Health Advisory Forum  
8<sup>th</sup> Meeting – 06 February 2014  
Room 821 Millbank, London**

**Present:**

Helen Crews (Chair)	Food & Environment Research Agency (Fera)
Mike McGuinness	
Jane Sharkey	
Andy Wattam ☎	
Giles Budge ☎	
Richard Watkins	Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra)
Ged Kerins	
David Aston	British Beekeepers' Association (BBKA)
Tim Lovett	
Margaret Ginman	Bee Farmers' Association (BFA)
John Mellis	
Chris Hartfield	National Farmers' Union (NFU)
Dinah Sweet ☎	Welsh Beekeepers' Association (WBKA)
Wally Smith	
Bob Smith	National Diploma in Beekeeping (NDB)
Steve Sunderland	Scottish Government

**Apologies:**

Ken Edwards	Husbandry Adviser
Mike Brown	Fera
Irene Allen	Welsh Government
Amy Byrne	

**1. Welcome and introductions**

The Chair welcomed attendees to the 8<sup>th</sup> meeting of the BHAF and extended congratulations to David Aston, on becoming President of BBKA. The Chair then went on to explain her new role within Fera and the possibility of the Chairmanship being passed on; she also explained the current situation with the Future of Fera.

The Chair then invited Mike McGuinness to inform the BHAF about the outcome of the business case put to Defra. Mike confirmed that Defra had approved option 4 of the business case submitted and funds will be allocated for both 14/15 and 15/16 financial years. The meeting welcomed this news.

**ACTION 1:** Mike McGuinness to formally write to all members of the BHAF outlining the funding that has been agreed by Defra and to ask the group to submit their detailed plans to him for 01/04/2014.

**ACTION 2:** Mike McGuinness to check funding for current projects and report back to BHAF members.

## **2. Minutes of last meeting**

The meeting was asked if they had any comments on the draft notes of the 7<sup>th</sup> BHAF meeting. The following points were raised:

### **Outstanding issues from 6<sup>th</sup> BHAF meeting notes**

*Action 10* - Richard Watkins confirmed that 'Understanding Honey Bee Stakeholders' report was now with Defra Evidence team.

*Breakdown of spend* – Mike McGuinness agreed to chase this and seek clearance from Fera Finance Director to share, if approved he will circulate a response.

**ACTION 3:** Mike McGuinness to seek clearance from Fera Finance Director for approval to share HBP breakdown of spend and circulate response.

### **Update on actions from 7<sup>th</sup> BHAF notes**

- 1- Completed
- 2- Chair confirmed that there are no funds to financially support sub group working.
- 3 - Completed
- 4 - Completed – although BHAF colleagues anxious re timetable of the development of the plan and implementation.
- 5 - Ongoing – Arrange Policy Network with Devolved Administrations to feed into Implementation Plan – Richard Watkins
- 6 - Ongoing – convene small delivery group during January to pull all comments together and present results to wider BHAF – some members stated that they had met with Mike Brown, others have dates in the diary to meet.
- 7 - Ongoing – Helen Crews to speak with Richard Watkins and Mike McGuinness to involve beekeepers in conjunction with plans from stakeholders
- 8 & 9 - Completed
- 10 - Completed members sent through their feedback on lessons learned report but not yet received a summary.

**ACTION 4:** Marie Holmes to send summary of feedback on lessons learned report out to all BHAF members.

### **5. Business case planning for funding beyond 2015 – stakeholder option**

Bob Smith referred to his email of 18 Dec 2013 and felt that his concerns had not been subsequently registered. The Chair agreed that the concerns should be recorded in the minutes of this meeting. BS had questioned one statement in the business case under the heading:

*“Q – Was disease regulation less effective before the HBP? The NAO report described in terms of statutory responsibilities that there were insufficient resources for the NBU to deliver its work. The HBP was an injection of funds for SBIs. ”*

BS had re-read the NAO report and commented that it did not say that NBU had insufficient resources to fulfil its statutory responsibilities; it made the observation and recommendation

that “Beekeepers in the National Bee Unit’s Northern and Southern regions are less likely to be visited by inspectors than those in the South East. The work of inspectors is critical to detecting disease and spreading best practice among beekeepers. The Department should evaluate what capacity is needed to enable the National Bee Unit to provide a sufficient level of inspection and advice to beekeepers nationally to prevent disease occurring and reduce the risk of disease spreading”. BS felt that this recommendation to evaluate what capacity was needed was translated into the Random Apiary Survey (RAS) which said that the risk-based inspection protocols *were* effective in detecting the majority of cases of Notifiable Diseases. The current staff levels were sufficient. The RAS says they were.

Secondly, BS had challenged the particular phrase -“*The HBP was an injection of funds for SBIs.*” BS said that the execution of the ambitious 2 year RAS survey certainly required extra staffing and he felt comfortable that the HBP funds were used to resource that piece of work. However, the HBP was not launched solely as an injection of funding for SBIs, it has much more holistic aims, summarised in the first few lines of the HBP Executive Summary which says the overall aim (of HBP) is to achieve a sustainable and healthy population of honey bees for pollination and honey production in England and Wales via strengthened partnership working between Government and other stakeholders.

#### 7. VMD update on progress with medicines

WBKA confirmed they had taken unilateral action to prevent unauthenticated medicines on a trade stand at a recent convention and would like to see VMD medicines kept on the BHAF meeting agenda.

**ACTION 5:** Keep VMD medicines on BHAF meeting agenda.

#### 10. AOB

Issues log – concerns from BFA that top 3 risks have been sent through but not included in log, Chair asked BFA to re-send their email and she would discuss with both Richard Watkins and Marie Holmes and respond through BHAF.

**ACTION 6:** John Mellis to re-send email re top 3 risks.

**ACTION 7:** Richard Watkins and Marie Holmes to respond to BFA email through BHAF.

### **3. Highlight Report – including addition of any new risks**

It was agreed by members that the Highlight report is a very useful tool, should be a priority on the agenda and issues in red should be discussed. Changes on the report need to be highlighted and put on the agenda. It would also be helpful to have the document on a projector screen during the meeting to make live changes.

Risks 3 and 5 need urgent review (concerns that neither should be green) and changes made, revised version of highlight report to be send out with the minutes.

**ACTION 8:** Review risks 3 & 5 on highlight report dated Dec 13 – Jan 14, change and send revised version with minutes. – Marie Holmes, Richard Watkins

#### **4a. Introduction to Defra Plant Health Evidence and Analysis (PHEA) team and update from current evidence projects**

Ged Kerins from PHEA team introduced himself to the group and handed out hard copies of his presentation to those in attendance, further copies will be made available to those who listened on the phone and those unable to attend the meeting.

Ged gave an outline of the National Pollinator Strategy, evidence used, governance framework, who is involved with both the expert advisory group and strategic evidence group, R&D, comments from Honeybee – health stakeholders and monitoring of both honey bees and wild pollinators. There was much discussion and comment from the group, summarised below:

**BBKA** reflected on the makeup of the Experts Advisory Group and the representation of honey bees in this group. With reference to the monitoring of honey bees, associations have more detailed figures on the numbers of beekeepers and would be happy to release their own data with appropriate discussion but have concerns that they are not given credibility.

**WKBA** commented that there seems to be a quantum leap between the evidence on honey bees and other pollinators. Costs of beekeeping only apply to bee farmers, not a consideration for beekeepers.

**BFA** expressed concerns in the evidence gaps regarding the numbers of bee colonies and with that in mind are funding a project to count the numbers of bee hives, Margaret Ginman is the contact for this project.

**RW** welcomed the BFA project and looking at trends over time.

**NFU** stated that at a recent conference at Exeter University some of the drivers behind honey bee decline were market forces, costs too high and profit in honey too low, then varroa and other associated viruses. UK only produces 15-20% of the honey consumed whereas EU produce 60% of honey consumed. NFU would have liked to see Professor Norman Carreck on the Experts Advisory Group.

**BS** added that he found the presentation very useful and passed on his thanks to Ged, he went on to say that developing forage and habitat is important and not just monitoring.

Ged Kerins contact details are [ged.kerins@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:ged.kerins@defra.gsi.gov.uk)

**ACTION 9:** Ged to send copies of his presentation to members who dialled into the meeting and those unable to attend.

#### **4b. Update on bee health R&D work**

Giles Budge gave a brief overview via telecom of all the projects that the NBU and Fera are currently involved with.

**IPI Bee Disease** in conjunction with Bath, Newcastle and Warwick Universities looking at Foulbrood in the EU and America.

**IPI Agriland** in conjunction with Leeds University looking at agricultural land use changes affecting pollinators.

**IPI Pollination** looking at pollination on different commodities such as apples, strawberries, oil seed rape and field beans.

**Smart bees EUFP7** establishing a local breeding programme including 20 partners across the EU.

**VMD work on Varroa culturing** researchers from NBU, Aberdeen University and Dr Rob Weaver from Fera looking at Varroa physiology and breeding in lab conditions all year round to help market products and market a research tool.

**AFB genome track and trace** (Seedcorn project)

**Commercial work on RNAi** £46k to try to facilitate exchanges with scientific academia in UK and US. Controlling P&D work with Aberdeen University to identify gene types – Varroa.

**Commercial work on IAPV** working with New Zealand colleagues on import protocols for honey and hive products – want to know if activate IAPV, this work commissioned from NZ ministry.

**AFB studentship** partnership working with York University.

**EFB studentship** student from York University working in epidemiology now has a job with Fera, part funded by Bee Disease Insurance.

**New studentship with Liverpool University** understanding other pathogens affecting honey bee colonies with Professor Greg Hirst to discover if these pathogens are friend or foe to honey bees.

**Nutrition studentship** looking at different sources of nutrition to fight disease amongst bees.

Giles expecting to have research pages on BeeBase updated within next 2-3 weeks.

#### **4c. BBKA update on funded R&D projects**

David Aston informed the group that currently work is ongoing with University of Sussex around hygiene of bees, a project at Keele University involving 2 PhD students looking at the presence of pesticides in wax/ bee colonies and secondly trying to find artificial pollen supplements and a part funded project with Marine Biological Association looking at Deformed Wing Virus.

BBKA also respond to public interest in bees and are running two schemes

1. Adopt a hive
2. Friends of the honey bee

Monies generated from these schemes are ring fenced.

BBKA are in the process of revising and reviewing their Research Proposals document for sponsors. Support from BHAF members would be very welcome and BBKA's contact for this work is Tim Lovett, cc David Aston. It is hoped that the revised document will be available June/ July 2014.

#### **4d. BFA update on funded R&D projects**

Margaret Ginman explained that a counting hives study had been commissioned following tripartite meetings between the BFA, BBKA and the NDB. Margaret also said that the BFA is a partner in the EU Swarmonitor project along with Nottingham Trent University.

Steve Sunderland added SASA working on a wax sampling project looking at contaminants within wax and Chris Connolly at Dundee University working with SASA and SBKA looking at PCR work on Nosema studies involving Citizen Science and have trained 9 beekeepers in PCR/ analytical data analysing samples from around the country.

## **5. HBP Indicators and KPI's**

It was agreed that the current Indicators are based on the original HBP, a review of the indicators is required, need to have a measurable outcome, to be understood by all and have some meaning in terms of the outcome of the HBP. For 2013 figures all current indicators will be kept in the chart but for 2014 data new ones may be needed and an overhaul of the current indicators will take place. John Mellis and Bob Smith have provided written reports on the current indicators of progress. Mike McGuinness agreed to take this work forward and will look for dates to meet with members of BHAF to add data to this year's chart, review and update all KPI's and look at presenting this information in a different format if agreed. It is anticipated to have this work completed by end of March 2014.

**ACTION 10:** Mike McGuinness to meet with Andy Wattam, Margaret Ginman, Bob Smith and a BBKA rep to add current data, review and overhaul current KPI table and possibly supply in a different format.

## **6. Update on National Pollinator Strategy**

Richard Watkins gave the meeting a brief update on the current situation with the National Pollinator Strategy, which is due to be launched shortly, press release to follow. Richard agreed to provide BHAF members with a 'heads up' as soon as he is able to on the initiative.

It was also noted that representatives of BHAF met with Lord De Mauley last week.

## **7. AOB**

All agreed to scheduling a full year of meetings with some topics included.

**ACTION 11:** All to send through topics for meetings and secretariat and chair to agree provisional meeting dates and send out to all.

Actions table to be sent out in advance of full minutes.

**ACTION 12:** Secretariat to send out actions table in advance of full minutes.

Concerns from some members that responses are not received to questions asked outside of the meeting. The Chair indicated that a full meeting may need to be dedicated to having an open discussion that covered these topics and related items that arose once discussion was underway.

Date and time of next meeting to be arranged but agreed to hold meeting mid - April (before Easter).

Jane Sharkey 12/02/2014

## Table of actions

Action Number	Action	Person(s) responsible
1	Formally write to all members of the BHAF outlining the funding that has been agreed by Defra and to ask the group to submit their detailed plans for 01/04/2014.	Mike McGuinness
2	Check funding for current projects and report back to BHAF members.	Mike McGuinness
3	Seek clearance from Fera Finance Director for approval to share HBP breakdown of spend and circulate response.	Mike McGuinness
4	Send summary of feedback on lessons learned report out to all BHAF members.	Marie Holmes
5	Keep VMD medicines on BHAF meeting agenda	Marie Holmes
6	To re-send email re top 3 risks.	John Mellis
7	Answer and respond to BFA email through BHAF	Richard Watkins and Marie Holmes
8	Review risks no.'s 3 & 5 on highlight report dated Dec 13 – Jan 14, change and send revised version with minutes.	Marie Holmes, Richard Watkins,
9	Send copies of presentation to members who dialled into the meeting and those unable to attend.	Ged Kerins
10	Organise meeting to add current data, review and overhaul current KPI table and possibly supply in a different format.	Mike McGuinness, Margaret Ginman, Bob Smith, Andy Wattam and BBKA rep
11 11a	Send ideas for meeting topics to Marie Holmes Agree provisional dates for full year meetings schedule	All Helen Crews and Marie Holmes
12	Send out table of actions in advance of full minutes	Marie Holmes