

**Summary Note of the Bee Health Advisory Forum  
17<sup>th</sup> Meeting – 16 March 2016  
Nobel House, London**

**Present:**

Richard Watkins (Chair)	Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra)
Kevin Beattie	
Matthew Dray	
James Smith	
Louise Mount	
Marie Holmes	Animal & Plant Health Agency (APHA)
Mike Brown	
Diane Steele	
Nigel Semmence	
Giles Budge	Fera Science Ltd
Margaret Murdin	British Beekeepers' Association (BBKA)
John Hendrie	
Margaret Ginman	Bee Farmers' Association (BFA)
John Heard	
Ivor Davis	National Diploma in Beekeeping (NDB)
Jane Jones ☎	Welsh Government (WG)
Wally Shaw	Welsh Beekeepers' Association (WBKA)
John Bowles	
Anna Burrows	Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD)
Chris Hartfield ☎	National Farmers' Union
John Hill ☎	British Bee Veterinary Association (BBVA)

**Apologies:**

Andy Wattam	APHA
Steve Sunderland	Scottish Government (SG)
Norman Carreck	International Bee Research Association (IBRA)
John Mellis	BFA
Ken Basterfield	NDB

**1. Welcome and introductions**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Introductions were given by each member of the Forum. The Chair also welcomed Margaret Murdin and John Hendrie from BBKA who would be replacing David Aston and Tim Lovett on the Forum. Welcomes were also extended to Giles Budge of Fera Science Ltd and Matthew Dray of Defra's Plant Health Evidence team who would be providing an update on the Apiculture programme count.

John and Margaret introduced themselves their role, and BBKA visions. Both had been in-post since January, main aims was to connect better with their members, partly for analysing training and education needs and to inform what BBKA could do for members. There was significant 'churn' in memberships with approximately 3,500 – 5,000 per year leaving and a similar amount joining. The loss of experienced beekeepers presented a problem with few trainers available for the new starters. Training to address intermediate beekeepers was a priority as there was a shortage in this area. There was a programme of husbandry training coming up including disease and a queen rearing and stock improvement programme.

Giles also provided an introduction. Fera was part of Defra until April 2015 when it became a 75/25 joint venture between Capita and Defra who were a government services company. A long term supply agreement was put in place on transfer to safeguard bee health, diagnostics, science oversight and surveillance. Giles' role was as Head of Crop Science but his role had changed more recently to move back toward the bee health area. Giles was also a part time academic and Senior Lecturer at Newcastle University.

## **2. Minutes of last meeting & Highlight report**

Actions arising from the 16<sup>th</sup> meeting were discussed.

Actions 1 & 2 – Complete.

Action 3 - (consider whether bee sector could mirror horticulture sector with mutual recognition across Europe). Mutual recognition procedure was included in the new EU directive, VMD would be pushing the Commission to take into account and there was a sufficient simplified version already in new directive - 90 days reduced to 30 days.

Action 4 – (reply to Rosie Hamer if Forum members would like to join the animal health law working group). The Chair said he would contact Pamela Thompson who was the lead on this work with any expressions of interest. Margaret Ginman and John Hill both expressed an interest.

**ACTION 1:** All to contact Richard if interested in participating in working group.

Action 5 – Complete.

Action 6 – (David Aston to forward to Richard Watkins questions posed by BBKA members regarding neonicotinoids). Richard would ask David for this information and when received liaise with Margaret Murdin on responses.

Action 7 – (request approximate costs associated with mutual recognition from VMD finance team and send to John Mellis when known). Finance team had been stretched but Anna would try again.

## Highlight report

The Chair invited comments on the report which had been circulated prior to the meeting.

*Risk 1 – Insufficient project team resources.* Risk to remain the same (amber) until more was known on final budgets.

*Risk 2 – Lack of progress with extending range of authorised medicines.* A question was raised regarding dissemination of MAQ strip data which NBU was gathering and why this wasn't being shared wider? This was because it was a commercial contract where NBU were contracted to gather data. Anna Burrows advised when there were issues found by animal owners or vets they were to report to NBU or VMD who had an analytical team.

*Risk 3 – Delay in commencement of 2016/17 education programmes.* This risk to be heightened as budgets wouldn't be confirmed until end of March. Once confirmed an internal process will occur that involves a bid being put forward to the uncommitted spend committee for approval, and also a pre-procurement approval form. Once complete, Marie will liaise with Defra/APHA procurement department on placing bids on the Bravo open tender system.

*Risk 4 – Risk to continuation of HBP and BHAF due to NPS.* NPS and HBP are in different departments and are managed by different budget lines. There are no plans to abolish either.

## Issues

*Issue 1 – Stakeholder aspirations exceeding budgetary constraints -* No comments.

*Issue 2 – Lack of corporate funding when IPI and other work are moved into practical beekeeping –* No comments.

*Issue 3 – Bumblebees imparting pathogens to honeybees -* No comments.

*Issue 4 – Apiculture programme matched funding -* Marie explained that UK government could only match fund up to 50%. We therefore can't spend more than the equivalent of the Commission support for beekeepers on each measure.

## **3. National Apiculture Programme**

Louise Mount provided an update to the Forum on latest developments with the National Apiculture Programme. The new programme for 2016 to 2019 was submitted on 15/03/16. Louise thanked all for their comments and input into the consultation. Policy should have a decision from the Commission by 15/06/16 to start 01/08/16 until 31/7/2019. The programme is split over 3 years and all Member States (MS) have the option to apply for money.

UK have applied for a combined UK programme to include technical advice, measures for hive invaders and re-stocking. Each programme had a degree of flexibility and regulations allowed

changes throughout the 3 years. Minor changes could be adjusted in-house whereas major changes would need Commission approval. Early indications from the Commission suggest we're likely to get a similar amount but this was dependant on how many other MS apply for the programme.

It was suggested to put together a schedule of key dates and commit to a timetable for discussions. The BFA expressed they would like a stand-alone meeting with Policy to discuss further which was agreed.

**ACTION 2:** Louise to put together a timetable for Apiculture Programme discussions including key dates in the process.

**ACTION 3:** Richard to provide dates to BFA for discussions.

Q) *EU funds on hobby beekeepers (page 3) - what proportion of the hives did bee farmers manage?* Bee farmers were defined by the commission of those who manage over 150 hives, they may or may not be members of the BFA and it would include both.

Matthew Dray provided an update on estimating overwintering hives on BeeBase explaining the 3 stages of estimating overwinter hives. The emphasis was to work out the number of overwintering hives which formed part of the calculation for obtaining money from the Commission. Each MS were asked to provide a way of obtaining these numbers ensuring we had a proportionate response. The approach was to start with BeeBase as it was a good and available resource plus additional information from associations. Questions raised included:

Q) *Have the 'unknown unknown's' been estimated?* No, from the data available it wasn't appropriate to do so. Survey methodology used previously weren't deemed sufficiently robust.

Q) *Colony estimates in the UK were always around 250,000. Did early indications suggest this figure to remain the same?* It was difficult to say before the full analysis however, BeeBase had 180,000 registered at the start of the exercise, and the final number was expected higher than this.

Q) *How many beekeepers registered on BeeBase were also members of BBKA?* Estimation was approximately 80%, this was based on information provided by the Random Apiary Survey. A tick-box was introduced 4 years ago which specifically asks the question when registering whether beekeepers were a member of an association. Given the high annual churn in BBKA membership, it was likely that any comparison in the number of beekeepers using BeeBase BBKA membership 'flag' and the existing BBKA membership numbers would underestimate the number of beekeepers. In addition, this underestimate would increase as the time since the membership 'flag' was added to BeeBase increased. More information on the historic churn in BBKA would be useful.

**ACTION 4:** Margaret Murdin to share churn information with the Forum at the next meeting.

Q) *Given that only beekeepers with email have been contacted in the hive survey, is there an assumption that beekeepers without email have similar numbers of colonies to those with email?* Yes this is one of the assumptions of the hive count. Analysis of the data from the husbandry survey, where beekeepers are contacted using a postal survey as well as using email, could be a useful way of testing this assumption.

**ACTION 5:** Matthew and Giles agreed to meet to discuss this assumption.

Q) *How much did the pilot cost?* This information was not available.

Q) *How likely was the survey method to be accepted by the EU?* UK wasn't privy to what other MS did. However, the Commission were asked whether they were producing guidelines on acceptable methodologies and they've left it to each MS to decide. We should know in due course what other MS were doing.

#### **4. Update on the 2014/15 bee husbandry survey**

The NBU conducted a national survey yearly to obtain information on current honey bee husbandry practices. The data gathered allowed for monitoring of trends in UK beekeeping and to help with beekeeper training. There was a 30% response rate for the 2014/15 survey – similar to previous years. The paper provided was a simple summary and a full statistical analysis would come later in discussion with Fera.

Q) *What was the purpose of communicating the survey result? Was it to inform beekeepers for them to change their practices?* The objective was to help NBU in its work on education and training to target information better. It was also set up to provide information for [Coloss](#) and to provide an overwinter figure for losses.

Concern was expressed over the fact that  $\frac{3}{4}$  of beekeepers kept hybrid bees or had no idea which breed of bees they kept. Also the training percentages showed little uptake.

The BFA felt majority of the responses were from the small-scale beekeepers. John Heard suggested BFA could repeat this survey with their members which would be a valuable piece of work. This was warmly received and noted that David Bancalari used to distribute and collate to provide back to the NBU in previous years.

Q) *2% of queens appeared to be purchased outside of the UK. Did this tie up with import licenses issued?* Not necessarily, as a beekeeper buying from UK sellers may have answered 'bought from UK' even though the purchased bees may have been imported by the seller.

## **5. NBU contingency exercises**

Nigel Semmence provided an update on NBU contingency exercises. 2 were held per year in differing regions. Each exercise lasted 2 days and generally had a Small hive beetle and Asian hornet theme.

2016 exercises:

- No announcements would be made prior.
- Fake apiary created to ensure no inadvertent implication of a genuine beekeeper.
- The planning team would place fake SHB in hives for inspectors to discover.
- A positive ID would signal the start of the exercise. This would also stress test laboratory procedures.
- Local RBI would attempt to book a room for the Local Disease Control Centre and contact local associations for their help.
- All exercises would be run using the incident command system with specific roles such as Command Officer, Press Officer and daily morning briefings.

Would like to conduct a small exercise in collaboration with wildlife colleagues on how quickly they could get to an Asian hornet nest site with the necessary resources (such as cherry pickers and driver). APHA had visited France to see how they dealt with Asian hornet.

Q) *How long did the molecular identification of SHB take?* A matter of hours as the methodology was established as were set turnaround times, SHB should be confirmed within the day of receipt.

## **7. AOB**

### **Update on SHB outbreak in Brazil**

There was an initial report of SHB in Brazil – North West of Sao Paulo. This was first intercepted in March 2015 and was only formally reported to OIE in February 2016. There was very little information available. Mike had contacted EURL who were going to do some investigations and circulate findings to reference laboratories.

The Commission had written to the NBU on the importance of following import rules due to the Brazil interception and the outbreak in Italy.

### Clarification of 2016 BHAF meeting dates

Marie clarified the dates of 2016 BHAF meetings, which were;

30<sup>th</sup> June - Nobel House London (11:00-15:00).

29<sup>th</sup> September - Foss House, York (11:00 – 15:00).

8<sup>th</sup> December- Nobel House, London (11:00-15:00).

### BFA update

Margaret provided an update on what apprentices had achieved through the apprenticeship scheme that Defra partly supported via the education funding. Highlights included:

- Defra provided £5,544 for support of the DASH scheme and £23,674 towards the apprenticeship scheme.
- 6 apprentices were entering their 3<sup>rd</sup> year.
- 4 apprentices were entering their 2<sup>nd</sup> year.
- 3 potential apprentices were lined up for current intake. 11 satisfied entry for this year and a recruitment campaign was planned for this year.
- 5 apprentices were sent to New Zealand over winter to gain international beekeeping skills.

Q) *What was the qualifying criterion for apprentices?* Open to 16-24 year olds. However, there was a plan to take all ages as there was such a large interest from varying ages in last summer's campaign. BFA were working to get the scheme accredited.

The Chair concluded the meeting by thanking everyone for their attendance and valued input.

**Date of next meeting:** Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> June, Nobel House, London (11:00-15:00).

## Table of Actions

<b>No.</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Assigned to</b>
1	Contact Richard if interested in animal health law participating in working group.	All
2	Put together a timetable for Apiculture Programme discussions including key dates in the process.	Louise Mount
3	Provide dates to BFA for discussions regarding their role in the hive count and husbandry survey.	Richard Watkins
4	Provide BBKA membership churn information at the next meeting	Margaret Murdin
5	Meet to discuss ways of testing the assumption that beekeepers without email have similar numbers of colonies to those with email.	Giles Budge/ Matthew Dray