

**Summary Note of the Bee Health Advisory Forum  
22<sup>nd</sup> Meeting – 12<sup>th</sup> December 2017  
London**

**Present:**

<b>Richard Watkins (RW) (Chair)</b>	Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra)
<b>Alison Wilson (AW)</b> 📞	
<b>Kevin Beattie (KB)</b>	
<b>Louise Mount (LM)</b>	
<b>Mike Brown (MB)</b>	
<b>Julian Parker (JP)</b> 📞	Animal & Plant Health Agency (APHA)
<b>Nigel Semmence (NS)</b>	
<b>Rebekah Clarkson (RC) (Secretary)</b>	
<b>Giles Budge (GB)</b>	Fera Science Ltd (Fera)
<b>Kirsty Stainton (KS)</b>	
<b>Margaret Ginman (MG)</b>	Bee Farmers' Association (BFA)
<b>Ged Marshall (GM)</b>	
<b>Paul McCullough (PM)</b> 📞	Welsh Government (WG)
<b>Dan Basterfield (DB)</b>	National Diploma in Beekeeping (NDB)
<b>John Hill (JH)</b>	British Bee Veterinary Association (BBVA)
<b>Steve Sunderland (SS)</b>	Scottish Government
<b>Anna Burrows (AB)</b>	Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD)
<b>Wally Shaw (WS)</b>	Welsh Beekeepers' Association (WBKA)
<b>Chris Hartfield (CH)</b> 📞	National Farmers Union

**Apologies:**

Margaret Murdin	British Beekeepers' Association (BBKA)
John Hendrie	BBKA
John Mellis	BFA
Norman Carreck	International Bee Research Association (IBRA)
Willem Roelofs	Defra
James Smith	
Belinda Phillipson	
Ivor Davis	NDB
Ken Basterfield	National Diploma in Beekeeping (NDB)
Simon Bilsborough	WG
John Bowles	WBKA

**1. Welcome and introductions**

The Chair welcomed everyone and confirmed who was dialling in. Introductions were given by each member of the Forum. New attendees included Ged Marshall, Chair of the BFA and the recently appointed APHA, Heathy Bee Plan Project Manager, Rebekah Clarkson.

This was the first BHAF to be run as a webinar using Defra's preferred system 'WebEx'. Uploaded papers and presentations could be seen simultaneously in the room and for offsite to whoever had connected and dialled in. PM had an issue as the WebEx site was not allowed on the WG system.

## 2. Highlight report and Minutes

- Highlight report –not discussed at this meeting. RC had invited NDB, BBKA and BFA to bring verbal reports to the BHAF to inform the highlight report. RW asked for the annual summary including updates on educational contracts and subsequent highlight reports to be brought to the next meeting.
- No amendments were brought to the meeting regarding the BHAF 21/09/2017 minutes.
- Actions from BHAF 21/09/2017 were discussed. All were complete except for 2, 3, 5 and 6, which have been kept on the action log.
- **Action 8 from 21<sup>st</sup> meeting**, ‘Confirm **Michael Gove statement** (21/07/2017) and application to the apiculture programme’ was discussed. RW confirmed the CAP statement should apply to the English and Welsh apiculture programme. This Government has pledged that when we leave the EU the £3 billion that farmers currently receive in support from the CAP will be matched until 2022. The commitment to the apiculture programme will be similar to the current commitment.
- WS asked if there had been any update on the Wax project (Action 1 from 20<sup>th</sup> meeting) June. Reinstated on the action log (at the end of the minutes).

## 3 EU Exit Summary of Members’ day 1 exit issues

- LM outlined the current stakeholder engagement plan detailing the order and timings and meetings to establish day 1 exit readiness for BREXIT. A paper summarising the BHAF’s EU concerns, recorded in July had been recirculated prior to the meeting. LM asked if any risks had been missed in the circulated paper. LM asked for the BHAF’s support answering a number of questions prior to the next meeting.

<b>Action</b>	Provide written feedback/answers to Bee EU Exit questions	BHAF 10/01/2018	
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LM agreed to review the BHAF’s EU concerns from previous discussions together with answers to the new questions.

<b>Action</b>	Collate comments, provide a product journey plan and include points relating to Trade raised which were raised at the meeting in June 2017.	LM	17 January
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<b>Action</b>	Arrange dates of next Bee Health Meetings (That are not BHAF)	LM	10 January
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#### **4 Commission Decision 2017/2174.**

Louise updated the BHAF regarding Commission Decision 2017/2174 amending the bee health certificate to allow queen exports from areas greater than 50km from a confirmed SHB outbreak which has been published in the official journal. This is a reduction from the previous 120km zone and only applies where surveillance is in place.

For the Italian outbreak, this will permit consignments of queen bees in small cages with a few attendant workers that have been inspected, wrapped in mesh and certificated by a vet to be exported from additional areas in Sicily. Please note that there have been no sightings in Sicily since the infected apiary was destroyed in 2014. The reduction followed risk assessments.

We are reviewing our surveillance plans to take account of the risk this change of approach presents and we will be updating our importer guidance in due course.

WS: Was concerned with the change and believes it is foolish to take risks with SHB. SHB only appears to be found when it is present in large numbers. We may not find out about it until after it has become established. A bee keeping responsibility and we should take it seriously.

GB: Ongoing surveillance means are defined in the decision. Confidence levels of 95% are maintained using different levels of surveillance, depending on the zone from the recorded outbreak. It is unclear how many bumble bees and feral colonies are checked to maintain the 95% confidence.

MG: Recently attended the Honey working party in Brussels to find a common ground regarding the position. There had been communication difficulties between the Italian Authorities and the beekeepers. This has contributed to the spread.

<b>Action</b>	Forward papers from Honey working party in Brussels to BHAF	MG	
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JH. Asked 'Is the incidence of SHB greater than is being reported?' Is SHB found in feral colonies? It has spread within Italy (Discounting internal Italian trade from north to the centre). There is some concern that SHB has spread further than the official line.

NS. Yes SHB has been found in several feral colonies in Italy. Approx. 50% of confirmed cases were in sentinel apiaries in 2017. Two healthy nucs are used in each sentinel apiary.

MB. NBU looked in detail at the number of inspections that have to be done. When assessing the risk of imports, country of origin is always correct and the address. In 2017, 9 imports came from Sicily.

GM: Expressed concern regarding Bee laundering. Bees going through a clean country get a certificate but then only require 25% post import consignment checks.

<b>Action</b>	Send bee base link to the Italian website detailing the Italian response. <a href="http://www.izsvenezie.com/aethina-tumida-in-italy/">http://www.izsvenezie.com/aethina-tumida-in-italy/</a>	RC	complete
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## **5 National Bee Unit Annual Report**

Mike Brown gave a detailed presentation on the 2017 season. A version will be circulated with the minutes.

## **6 Hive Count 2017 Season Progress update**

Nigel talked through the statistics of the responses so far (a paper was handed out and shown on screen) and requested the BHAF's assistance to encourage members to do the count.

Working Lunch 13:00 – 13:30

## **7 Asian Hornet (AH) Contingency Report**

Nigel gave an overview of the AH contingency response, all hornets found within 1km of nest. The hornet was covered by The One show and BBC spotlight clip.

Greater than 4500 suspect Asian hornet sightings were triaged in 2017 by NNSS and NBU.NS encouraged everyone to share the AH identification leaflet:

<http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/downloadNews.cfm?id=133>

Approx.50% of the beekeeper records within the outbreak zone on BeeBase were not up to date, with the incorrect apiary location recorded. Lessons identified are being collected and written up.

DB asked if resin coated AH are available for training and identification purposes. NS explained NBU is sourcing appropriate specimens for Bee Inspectors.

JH asked, Do Asian Hornets spit venom? No they don't spit but they can turn their abdomen and shoot venom forwards to retaliate when the nest is threatened. This behaviour has not been observed when catching or handling foraging hornets (away from the nest).

GB explained that the AHs from Tetbury and Woolacombe originated from the European Asian hornet population and was not a new ingress from Asia. The Tetbury example was inbred, whereas the Woolacombe queen had mated with 3-6 males and they are highly likely to be separate incursions.

## **8 Bee Farming Update from the Chair** of BFA

GM thanked everyone for the invite and generously postponed an update to ensure the meeting could end on time.

## 9 Queen Rearing Survey Timeline

A draft questionnaire had been circulated. KB invited members of the BHAF to make any further comments in the questions. Appropriate sample sizes for the survey would be discussed with members outside of the meeting

<b>Action</b>	Provide comments on queen rearing survey to KB	BHAF	31/12/2017
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WS expressed concern that the quantitative information from the questionnaire may be biased, but that the qualitative information may be extremely valuable. WS uses the a pamphlet to inform Welsh Beekeepers, the methodology was developed in 2010. WS explained there are difficulties when imported breeds are not compatible with local breeds. It is difficult to ensure a stable mating.

DB expounded that it would be helpful if the issue of 'successful breeding' and 'pedigree' could be separated. The ability to produce sufficient bees (without importing) does not necessarily mean that all bees have to be of an agreed pedigree. He suggested to let the market choose the pedigree of the bee.

Whatever the BHAF recommend, we are unlikely to stop imports but we can offset risk and improve queen production.

RW explained the aim is to create business case to support education. We need to identify the impacts queen rearing has on bee health. It may take time. The questionnaire will provide evidence to inform how and where we can make a difference.

JH said if there was a kite mark for registration of queens, who would audit this?

SS outlined how Scottish Stakeholders had set up a template for a certification scheme. Beekeepers did not think the extra cost was worthwhile as they had built relationships with customers who knew the quality and provenance of the Scottish product.

JH asked it would be useful to understand what other countries do?

BFA advised that a group are visiting Denmark and agreed to update the BHAF in the future.

<b>Action</b>	Share information from Denmark visit in 2018	BFA	
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WS: Shared a reference and abstract from Bailey, L., 1999. The quest for a super-bee. *Bee World*, 80(2), pp.55-60.

*'Highly intensive selection of the honey bee for any quality may decrease resistance to its wide variety of enzootic pathogens by decreasing its genetic variability. Maintenance of naturally*

*adapted regional strains, by traditional means, and management that least inhibits their essentially independent lifestyle may be more rewarding.’ Bailey (1999).*

**10 AOB/comms/news**

**10a) Terms of Reference (ToR)**

RC asked for everyone’s comments to review and refresh the document which had not been updated since 2009. RC to review comments and circulate a draft for the March BHAF meeting.

<b>Action</b>	All to review BHAF Terms of reference by 31/01/2017	BHAF	
<b>Action</b>	Prepare draft TOR incorporating comments to be discussed in March’s meeting.	RC	

**10b) Advance information on publication of Contingency Plans (English and Welsh).**

NS explained that the English and Welsh plans were about to be published on BeeBase and encouraged BHAF to read and spread awareness: (Links below for reference).

The new CP’s are on the contingency plan pages of BeeBase:  
<https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/beebase/index.cfm?pageid=206>

The Asian hornet CP is also on the Asian hornet BeeBase Page:  
<https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/beebase/index.cfm?pageid=208>

The Small hive beetle & Tropilaelaps contingency plan is also on:  
<https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/beebase/index.cfm?pageid=125>

<https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/beebase/index.cfm?pageid=92>

**10 c) Giles Budge.**

GB advised he is leaving Fera and will be moving to Newcastle University in March 2018. BHAF offered congratulations on Gile’s new role.

**10 d) Webinar feedback request.**

RC asked for feedback on how the webinar ran, from BHAF. It will be used to improve future webinars. There were access issues for PM.

<b>Action</b>	Send feedback to RC regarding webinar	BHAF	
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**11 Meeting closed 14:56**

