

## Healthy Bees Plan

### Summary note of 1st Meeting of the Science and Evidence Advisory Group (SEAG)

12<sup>th</sup> February 2010 - Nobel House, London

Present:

Dan Basterfield		Chris Hartfield	
Mike Brown		Stephen Martin	
Giles Budge		Liz McIntosh	
Norman Carreck		Belinda Phillipson	Secretary of group
Robin Dean		Wally Shaw	
Bernard Diaper		Mark Tatchell	Chair

Apologies: Francis Ratnieks

#### 1. Welcome and introductions

The Chair welcomed the group and invited all group members to briefly outline their background and what they hoped to get out of SEAG. Members' aspirations for the work of SEAG included ensuring that honey bee health policy was underpinned by sound science, translation of scientific developments into practical beekeeping to advance knowledge and skills, and identifying gaps in evidence base.

The Chair emphasised that members should come with a perspective and expertise rather than a mandate from a specific organisation. In considering the work of the Group, the Chair suggested that actions should be practicable and achievable, so that sound science is channelled into beekeeping to advance knowledge and skills and to sustain agriculture.

The Chair suggested that items 3 and 5 should be tabled for discussion together and the Group agreed.

The Chair also suggested that Belinda or Liz should phone those unable to attend to provide a read-out of the meeting. **ACTION:** Belinda or Liz.

The Chair also agreed to the proposal for notes from the other Healthy Bees implementation groups (Project Management Board, Husbandry and Education Group and Communications Working Group) to be circulated to SEAG members. **ACTION:** Belinda.

#### 2. Healthy Bees Plan

Liz McIntosh gave a brief overview of the Healthy Bees Plan (HBP) which is underpinned by the work of the three advisory groups, SEAG, CWG (Communications Working Group) and HEG (Husbandry and Education Group). She explained that the HBP covers 10 years but was currently funded until March 2011. Fera would put a new business case to Defra in autumn 2010 for further funding to continue implementing the Plan. Fera would report to Defra on progress with implementing the Plan as part of the new business case. Outputs achieved by SEAG (and the other implementation groups) would be included in the progress report.

Group members raised a number of queries including concerns that the role of SEAG was simply to ensure ongoing funding for Fera. In addition, there could be a conflict of interests and intellectual property issues during discussions in SEAG on research ideas, although it was recognised that such discussions were likely to be high level and not necessarily on specific methods.

3. Role of SEAG, and
5. Interdependencies with CWG and HEG

The Chair introduced the Terms of Reference (TOR).

The Group agreed that they would consider results from all research that may have relevance to the UK situation, for example the output from the COLOSS programme. The Group agreed the TOR, subject to modified wording to reflect UK situation. **ACTION:** Belinda Phillipson to modify wording of TOR.

The Group also considered the current balance of members' expertise and whether anyone was missing. Additional members could include other researchers, medicine manufacturers, biodiversity experts, Natural England. However the Group already had a good balance of expertise and was quite large. Therefore it was suggested and agreed that other people would be asked to provide input and attend meetings as required.

The Group considered ways of working. Whilst the Chair was content with the proposal for SEAG to meet 3 times per year, he suggested that SEAG's work was unlikely to be covered during these meetings. The Group agreed to the Chair's proposal to form sub-groups of SEAG's members to convene outside the meetings to address specific issues and to produce a paper/recommendations for SEAG to consider at their next meeting.

The Group also considered the interdependencies with HEG and CWG. They noted that one or two members were already members of CWG and could act as a 'bridge' with SEAG. [Another option would be for the Chairs of each group to meet to keep in touch with the work of each group.] The Group agreed to consider further how to develop links with Scotland and Northern Ireland. **ACTION:** Belinda to identify possible contacts in Scotland and N Ireland who would wish to be kept abreast with SEAG's work.

The Chair highlighted the issue of capturing information about ongoing relevant research. The Group discussed some of the regular science conferences, for example Apimondia, but these often covered work that had been completed. The Chair proposed that there should be a round table discussion at each SEAG meeting where members covered research that they were aware of. The Group agreed. **ACTION:** Belinda to include as routine item on future agendas.

4. Workshop session to identify priorities and key areas of work

Belinda Phillipson introduced this item the purpose of which was to carry out a brain storming session to identify activities and from these identify priorities for SEAG's workplan. The Group were asked to consider the science and evidence needs with respect to policy for the following 3 areas; (i) more effective management of pests and diseases; (ii) biosecurity to minimise risks from pests, diseases and undesirable species; (iii) the science and evidence base.

As an overarching principle it was suggested that a holistic, multi-factorial approach should be adopted to address issues.

The BBKA research concepts document was also raised as a source of ideas but as this was to be discussed separately later in the meeting was not considered further during this session.

Earlier Wally Shaw had suggested that one action for the Group could be to consider gaps in our knowledge. For example oxalic acid was likely to be used as a treatment for some time but the mode of action was only poorly understood. This did not come up again during the workshop session but could be considered as a work area.

The following ideas were generated during the workshop.

<b>More effective management of pests and diseases</b>	<b>Biosecurity to minimise risks from pests, diseases &amp; other threats</b>	<b>Science and evidence base</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scientific basis for IPM</li> <li>• Better understanding of pests &amp; diseases</li> <li>• Clear understanding of incidence and relevance of various pests and diseases</li> <li>• Better beekeeping</li> <li>• Identify best practice</li> <li>• Nosema and SHB risk assessment</li> <li>• More medicines available</li> <li>• Results from random apiary survey</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prioritise risks</li> <li>• Pest risk assessment</li> <li>• Horizon scanning and identifying risk points</li> <li>• How to deal with threats that are coming or problems that we don't handle well currently</li> <li>• Domestic biosecurity including hygiene (learn from other sectors)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using networks</li> <li>• Peer reviewed papers</li> <li>• Keep it simple</li> <li>• Regular science monograph</li> <li>• Promulgation of research</li> <li>• Ask the scientific community about ideas/research</li> </ul>

The Group only had a short time to identify key areas of work.

**ACTION:** Therefore it was agreed that Liz McIntosh and Belinda Phillipson would look at the areas identified, summarise and circulate round the Group as the first draft of workplan for further input and development.

#### 6. Draft indicator paper

Liz McIntosh introduced this item explaining that the purpose of the indicators was to produce monitoring data for demonstrating progress with implementing the HBP. The draft indicators in paper PMB 1/3 had been developed with input from Defra statisticians who had also been involved in developing indicators for Defra's Animal Health and Welfare Strategy. It was presented to the Group for discussion and input on which indicators to recommend to the Project Management Board. The Group highlighted some difficulties with the wording used. For example for Outcome 1 – Impacts from pests, disease and other hazards are kept to the

lowest levels achievable, if the levels are already low only little or no effort will be required to get the lowest levels achievable.

For Outcome 2 – good standards of beekeeping and husbandry minimise pests and disease risks and contribute to sustaining honeybee populations, how measurable is ‘minimise’ since this will depend on the original level that is set. The Chair noted that there were also a large number of indicators in the paper. The Chair suggested that a sub-group of SEAG should be formed to comprehensively review the indicators.

**ACTION:** Giles Budge, Norman Carreck and Dan Basterfield agreed to form a sub-group with Liz McIntosh and Belinda Phillipson to consider the draft indicators and present revised indicators at the next SEAG meeting.

#### 7. BBKA research concepts

Norman Carreck introduced this item giving an overview of how the document was drawn up and the peer review process that was used. The list of research concepts was intended to be of interest to all beekeepers, and a decision had been taken by the authors not to prioritise the ideas. He noted that Defra’s response to this document (posted on Defra website in July 2009) was felt to be negative.

The Group discussed whether the concept document covered all the areas of interest. Giles Budge explained that the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board published their priority research needs, which was very useful for researchers applying for funding. The Group agreed that one of their key areas of work would be to agree priorities for future bee health research. The Group noted that as a starting point for identifying future priorities it would be useful to map across current research projects, the projects to be funded under the Insect Pollinator Initiative (decisions in mid 2010) and the areas in the BBKA research concepts document. Priorities should include pathology, hygiene, nutrition and the wider environment.

**ACTION:** SEAG to start work on identifying priorities at the next meeting.

#### 8. AOB and date of next meeting

There was no AOB and the date of the next meeting which is likely to be after Easter will be finalised by email. A further meeting would held in September with the intention of one of the items on the agenda to be the (preliminary or interim) results from the Random Apiary Survey. **ACTION:** Mike Brown to report back to the April meeting of SEAG on what Survey results would be available for the Group to consider and review at the September meeting.

<b>Action Number</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Person(s) responsible</b>
1	To provide group members unable to attend a meeting with a read-out of the meeting.	LM/BP
2	To circulate notes from other Healthy Bees Implementation groups to SEAG	BP
3	To modify wording in the ToR	BP
4	To identify possible contacts in Scotland and Ireland who should be informed of SEAG's work	BP
5	To include as a routine agenda item a round table update of current bee research	BP
6	To consider the work areas identified from the workshop and use to develop a draft workplan	LM/BP
7	To form a subgroup to consider the draft indicators	LM/BP/GB/DB/SM/NC
8	To consider research priorities at next SEAG meeting	All
9	To report on when results from RAS will be available for consideration by SEAG	MB

Healthy Bees Project Team  
Fera

22<sup>nd</sup> February 2010