

**THE HEALTHY BEES PLAN  
HUSBANDRY AND EDUCATION GROUP (HEG)  
SUMMARY NOTE OF 3rd MEETING ON 10 SEPTEMBER 2010**

Participants (by teleconference):

Helen Crews (Chair)	Richard Ball (NBU)	Ken Basterfield	Mike Brown (NBU)
Kim Chadwick (Fera) Secretary	Ken Edwards	Ian Homer (NBU)	Geoff Hopkinson
Roger Lacey	Liz McIntosh (Fera)	Ged Marshall	

**Welcome and introductions**

1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the third meeting of the group and explained that, as a temporary measure, she had replaced Norman Houston following his retirement from South Staffs College. Helen formally thanked Norman for his contribution to the group.
2. Apologies had been received from Andy Wattam, Selwyn Wilkins, Serena Watts, Chris Deaves, Terry Gibson, Graham Royle and Margaret Thomas.
3. An additional item had been added to the agenda under AOB – Ian Homer’s paper on Bees In Schools

**Summary and actions from last meeting**

4. The note of the last meeting was agreed and has been posted on BeeBase. The actions from the last meeting were –
  - (i) Accreditation – Chris Deaves had met LANTRA and a further meeting was planned for October. However, there was unlikely to be any further progress this year.
  - (ii) Definition of improvers/experts – Liz McIntosh sought the views of the group and suggested that possibly this had been overtaken by the BBKA’s course in a case levels. There was some discussion about the BBKA’s course and concern was raised that it had been developed too quickly and had not been proven which presented a number of pitfalls, particularly regarding accreditation. It would have been preferable for the course to have been piloted and approved before being launched although it was appreciated why the BBKA had moved quickly on its introduction. It was considered that the course focussed too much on theory and not enough on practical learning. In addition, the courses did not appear to be curriculum-based which was a potential weakness, and a key element of any discussions on accreditation.

Liz McIntosh said that the courses in cases were a good development for the Healthy Bees Plan offering a more accessible approach to training and an attempt to standardise training across the country. The Chair recognised that

the course in a case had some shortcomings and it would be important to measure its success. Some discussions on how this would be achieved had taken place. However, it should be remembered that the course was only one part of the education jigsaw.

- (iii) Roadshow follow up – A document (HEG 03/01) had been circulated to the group on 13 July. Liz McIntosh explained that a further 20 roadshow attendees would be contacted shortly and the results would be reported to HEG in Oct/Nov. As regards future events, it was intended to make the local associations and the Bee Inspectors more involved over the winter. There had been some suggestions previously regarding charging for attendance at the roadshows and the group were invited to send their comments.

**ACTION:** HEG to send comments on charging for roadshow attendance

### **Business Planning**

5. Liz McIntosh explained a business case was being prepared for the next three years of the Healthy Bees Plan. There had been a meeting of a sub-group of the PMB to refine suggestions which would be shared with all the working groups in October. The case would then be signed off by the Defra owner and Ministers taking account of other Defra priorities. One point that had arisen in the preparation of the case was whether associations should be charging for training, including the course in a case.
6. A discussion followed with some members of HEG supporting charging as they felt that people would turn up if they had paid and, with the current high demand for training, the time was right to charge. A nominal charge would indicate value for money, whilst beekeepers may view a free course to be of dubious quality. Others were against charging, as they saw it as a possible barrier to attendance.
7. The overall tone of the discussion was that it would be better to charge, although this was not agreed by all members. There was currently a large demand for courses and therefore people would be willing to pay as it ensured they would be given a place. It also indicated some degree of vfm which a free course may not. It was possible that the charge could be linked to association membership. A charge would also make the courses easier to manage as there would be a good indication of the numbers likely to attend.

**ACTION:** Liz McIntosh would report HEG's views to PMB. She would also send HEG the fully developed set of proposals for the business case when ready.

### **Update on BBKA/NDB education programme**

8. Liz McIntosh reported that with PMB endorsement, Fera was to fund further levels of the course in a case with the BBKA and train the trainer courses with the NDB on specific modules. This was a jointly funded project between Fera, BBKA and NDB – Fera's contract to deliver the project was currently being negotiated with the BBKA (with the NDB is a sub-contractor). Fera was co-funding the BBKA to develop a further 3 levels which would take the course up to the 'proficient' level over the next six months and the NDB modules (7) on training skills for specific topics to ensure that the trainers were

more than one page ahead of their students. Producing options for the accreditation of the training was also included in Fera's contract which included a retention sum tied to delivery of these options. Liz invited volunteers from HEG to assist the BBKA in the development of these options – in response Ian Homer, Ken Edwards and Ken Basterfield agreed to be involved. Liz would also discuss with the BBKA including a requirement in the contract for HEG to be a sounding board for emerging products and NDB modules.

9. Ken Basterfield proposed that HEG had a role in identifying and developing beekeeping standards and proposed a review of HEG's workplan and priorities to ensure that that this work could proceed.

**ACTION:** Kim Chadwick will add the workplan to the agenda for HEG's next meeting.

### **Train the trainer programme**

10. Feedback had been sought from beekeepers that had attended courses in the first tranche of the programme. Kim Chadwick reported that the responses had been very positive and many beekeepers felt they had gained valuable skills that would benefit their training courses in the future. As HEG had agreed to the continuation of the programme, a letter had been sent to associations which had not nominated any beekeepers for the first tranche of the programme inviting new nominations. About 6 nominations had been received so far. It was suggested that all associations (including the BFA) be contacted to see if they had other beekeepers to nominate.

**ACTION:** Kim Chadwick to contact all associations and invite nominations.

### **Best Practice Templates**

11. Ian Homer presented his draft templates ( Disease Recognition, Handling and Examining a Colony, Apiary and Hive Hygiene) which had previously been circulated to HEG for comments. He had also written an article for BBKA news on the templates and it was hoped that this would encourage associations to use them. The templates were generally well received by the Group and it was suggested that they be developed into a portfolio of key information for beekeepers. However, it was possible that the content could be too overwhelming for new beekeepers and perhaps it would be preferable to introduce 'key messages' first and the details later. There was also some concern about the impact on the BBKA literature. However, Helen Crews reassured the group that Ian was ensuring that there was no duplication with the BBKA's material. A further 12 templates would be developed by Ian Homer and Richard Ball over the next 3-4 months, and drafts would be shared with HEG for comments and input which both Richard and Ian would find really helpful. The next HEG meeting would review available drafts.
12. Liz McIntosh said that the Healthy Bees Comms Working Group (CWG) and Fera Marketing Team were looking at the presentation aspects of the templates, and were preparing a draft format for CWG to review at its next meeting. If it was agreed to take the templates forward as part of a manual, an agreed format would be needed and this would be also be circulated to the Group.

13. Ken Edwards suggested that a short video incorporating the information would be useful and possibly Fera could organise a competition for beekeepers to produce something suitable. Ged Marshall supported the use of video clips on the internet linked to a series of key messages and more detailed information. Ian Homer agreed that information for beekeepers should reflect the findings of the PSP study which highlighted the need for different communication methods for different people.

**ACTION:** Kim Chadwick to agree timetable with Mike Brown for Richard and Ian to develop and complete the draft templates – aiming for full set to be ready by end of January.

**ACTION:** HEG to send ideas and suggestions to Kim Chadwick on designing a portfolio which would be discussed further with CWG and Fera Marketing Team.

### **PSP Report**

14. Liz McIntosh explained the background to the PSP study. The full report of the study had been published on the Defra website and a summary was available on BeeBase. The study produced three main messages – tailoring messages to different needs; clarifying good practice; and supporting training to make sure this is done. The report also highlighted that many beekeepers do not know about BeeBase. A leaflet, the Essence of Beekeeping, had been prepared which incorporated the key messages and this was available on BeeBase and would also be in the BBKA news. The Chair reported that the NBU had had a meeting with CWG to discuss the promotion of BeeBase. PMB and the BBKA were very supportive of BeeBase and an article promoting BeeBase would be in the next edition of BBKA news.

### **AOB – Bees In Schools**

15. Ian Homer presented his paper on Bees in schools and explained that the purpose was to try and look at beekeeping as a long term activity. It was proposed that the current beekeeping assessment and examinations be reviewed and mapped to a level within the QCF (Qualifications and Credit Framework) system – all examinations at senior schools fit into this structure – to encourage schools to include beekeeping within their curricula. The Chair reported that this proposal had been discussed at the PMB meeting in July and although had merit, it was not considered to be a high priority. There were also other aspects to consider including health and safety, location, and liability issues. Ian Homer undertook to go back to the commercial organisations who had indicated they may be willing to offer sponsorship to see if they would be able to take the project forward.

**ACTION:** Ian Homer to reflect on HEG comments and contact potential sponsors.

### **Next meeting**

16. The next meeting was proposed for the last week of November. The group would be contacted for their availability.

**ACTION:** Kim Chadwick to contact members for their availability for next meeting.

### **Healthy Bees Project Team**

**8 October 2010**