

Healthy Bees Plan
Summary Note of 7th Meeting of the Communications Working
Group (CWG)
25 July 2011 – Teleconference

Present:

Carl Reynolds	Chair
Liz McIntosh	Food & Environment Research Agency (Fera)
Rob Chilton	
Marie Holmes	
Gay Marris	
Richard Ball	
Tim Lovett	British Beekeepers' Association (BBKA)
Matthew Isted	Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD)
Bob Smith	Beekeeper
Brian Clark	Welsh Beekeepers' Association (WBKA)

Apologies:

Helen Crews	Food & Environment Research Agency
Alison Wilson	
Sharon Blake	British Beekeepers' Association (BBKA)
Claire Waring	Bee Craft
Trish O'Donnell	Defra Strategic Comms
Robin Dean	Bee Farmers Association (BFA)
Dan Basterfield	
Amy Byrne	Welsh Assembly Government (WAG)

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Chair welcomed attendees to the 7th meeting of the Communications Working Group including a welcome to Matthew Isted from the Veterinary Medicines Directorate's (VMD) communications team, who would be joining CWG temporarily to work together in devising and implementing a comms campaign on medicines (as per Activity 7 of the Healthy Bees workplan for 2011/12).

2. Comms plan for CWG during 2011/12 (CWG 7/1)

Rob Chilton introduced the comms plan and had four questions to put to the Group on the plan which were;

- Was the content appropriate for the ongoing and new campaigns?
- Was there anything missing from the comms plan?
- What channels (if any) were missing?

- General views on the volume of communications and scheduling

Rob requested feedback from the channels on how realistic it was to move to those timescales. Tim Lovett said it was important to share copy and that by doing so more could be communicated.

ACTION – All, by 05/08/2011 – Forward any comments not covered below to Rob Chilton on the 4 questions posed regarding the comms plan.

The CWG distribution was currently through Bee Craft, BBKA News, WBKA Newsletter, BeeBase and local association newsletters. There was also the other option to contact daily media on the wider PR activity. Tim suggested colony loss and Asian hornet would be of interest to the wider public and could be potential topics. Bob Smith suggested extending the comms channels to include beekeepers who have taken up the various Healthy Bees and/or BBKA and/or NDB training offers over the last 12 months.

ACTION: Rob Chilton and Marie Holmes to incorporate Bob Smith's suggestion on extending the comms channels, taking into account any data protection issues.

There was a discussion on what should be included in the beekeeping press from the comms plan. Richard Ball noted that some of the best practice templates could be quite lengthy and in cases where the topic and messages were very important, that they could be broken down into a key summary to make the messages more succinct rather than using inserts in magazines, particularly as weight and space was an issue for most of the beekeeping press. It was decided that there would be a separate teleconference between Fera comms and BBKA to clarify priorities, content and implications for BBKA News planning and operations. To include lead times, seasonality issues and how to reflect key messages from HBP campaigns in general copy/editorials in addition to specific articles.

ACTION: Liz McIntosh, Marie Holmes, Rob Chilton, Tim Lovett and Sharon Blake to meet via teleconference in August before the next CWG meeting (and possibly the next meeting of the BBKA News Editorial Board due in August) on the draft HBP comms plan.

The Chair summed up that the Group would continue to use trade and technical routes for technical issues and for general awareness, but also to keep up-to-date with news stories in the general press.

3. Medicines campaign

Liz McIntosh introduced the PMB work-plan where the medicines campaign was listed as an activity (number 7), and outlined that this was an opportunity for CWG to input into the VMD medicines comms plan. Matthew Isted said he had recently joined VMD and in terms of their comms priorities for bees, VMD were planning on producing a leaflet in early 2012 on authorised medicines for varroa and would like to tie that topic in through Suitably Qualified Persons (SQPs) at the same time as the

mechanisms were in place for trained SQPs. Matthew noted that the VMD did have channels of communication with vets, but not beekeepers, and were keen to improve the methods of achieving those links and any creative ways which this could be achieved.

Richard Ball stressed that it was important to get across the key message to beekeepers that they should be using approved medicines and keeping records about medicine usage. Articles on this in the beekeeping press would be a help. The plans for SQPs and associated reclassification of medicines would need a separate set of articles in the press and/or leaflets.

Tim Lovett said that medicines had formed a substantial part of output through BBKA News during 2010 through collaboration with Martha Spagnuolo-Weaver of VMD. Tim noted that a common misconception amongst beekeepers was that it was possible to buy medicines through the internet from any country, which resulted in unauthorised medicines for this country being brought in. Tim felt beekeepers needed educating but felt that SQPs needed to be defined further. It was suggested that a good aid to beekeepers would be the provision of a simple medicines record card, whilst illustrating the importance of records management when using medicines. This could be distributed through the beekeeping press as an insert which would need to capture the essential information to encourage its use. The Group agreed that this was a good idea.

ACTION: Liz McIntosh and Matthew Isted to consider ideas for the comms campaign on medicines, e.g. medicines record card, and to report back options to CWG at the next meeting.

4. Three NBU best practice factsheets (CWG 7/2-4)

Richard Ball introduced the three most recent best practice factsheets which were; feeding bees, varroa management and bee improvement. Richard was planning on dividing the feeding bees factsheet into three sections as it was a long document and would still be relevant once split, he also recognised that the varroa factsheet was also long but the subject matter warranted it.

ACTION: All, by 1/8/2011 – Forward any comments on the three best practice factsheets to Richard Ball focusing on tone rather than detailed drafting.

5. Gap analysis – comparison of BBKA members which are registered on BeeBase

Giles Budge introduced the work that he and the Regional Bee Inspectors had been conducting to better understand the total numbers of registered beekeepers across England and Wales. The final version of the gap analysis would be distributed to CWG for information during w/c 1/8/2011.

ACTION: Giles Budge to finalise summary document on results of, and conclusions from gap analysis and send to Marie Holmes for circulation to CWG.

Bee Inspectors had been collecting data for approximately two years to put together a sharing policy with local associations. What was found was that despite a huge effort by the inspectorate, many county associations did not share data (45/64), and some had not responded to requests from Bee Inspectors to address data sharing policy (17/64).

Other findings from the research included;

- The regional percentage of BBKA members registered on BeeBase varied between 67% and 98.5%
- This exercise had resulted in an estimated 2291 beekeepers becoming registered on BeeBase
- Assuming a scheme of complete data sharing by the BBKA was in place, BeeBase would receive 1965 new registered beekeepers annually
- The large number of BBKA members that remain unknown to the NBU seriously compromises the ability of the NBU to control notifiable disease and to contain any future incursion of an exotic pest.

Brian Clark stated that the WBKA have a progressive data sharing policy. It was acknowledged that this was a good policy and one which we would encourage all associations to use. Giles suggested supplying text to local associations to enable them to copy and paste into their membership forms. Tim Lovett offered to raise the issue of low levels of BeeBase registration in 45 of the local associations at the next BBKA trustees meeting in September with the aim of identifying how the BBKA trustees and executive could help improve the numbers registered on BeeBase.

ACTION: Tim Lovett to raise the issue of low level registration at the next BBKA trustees meeting.

ACTION: Marie Holmes to send draft text to Tim Lovett ahead of the next BBKA trustees meeting. The draft text would be for Local Associations to use on their membership forms to explain that their membership rules include the sharing of members details with the NBU for registration on BeeBase. Marie to send draft text to Tim Lovett for the September BBKA meeting.

6. Update on BeeBase co-ordinator role

In preparing for Phase 2 the Group wanted BeeBase to become the authoritative source for beekeepers and on this basis bid for and obtained funding for a BeeBase co-ordinator to support the work of CWG and the National Bee Unit on working and improving BeeBase. Unfortunately recruitment hadn't been possible to date due to constraints imposed (freeze on external recruitment). There was a potential candidate in mind and the possibility of taking on a Fixed Term Appointment was being explored. As it was halfway through the financial year there were surplus funds which were allocated to this role on the basis of a full year. Liz McIntosh asked the Group for any suggestions on part re-allocation of the Co-ordinator funds which were unlikely to be spent in 2011/12.

ACTION: All, by 5/8/2011 – Forward to Liz McIntosh any suggestions for part re-allocation of BeeBase Co-ordinator funds

ACTION: Liz McIntosh to keep CWG up-to-date on progress with the BeeBase Co-ordinator role as soon as available.

7. Upcoming activities/events from the Group (CWG 7/6)

As time was short at this point on the agenda it was agreed that everyone would look at paper CWG 7/6 to see what communication activities were completed since the last meeting of CWG in February. There was a discussion on natural beekeeping and Richard Ball also offered to develop an article for the beekeeping press on the merits of moveable frame hives in response to the upsurge in natural beekeeping.

ACTION: Richard Ball, by next CWG meeting, to develop an article on moveable frame hives.

8. AOB and next meeting

The next meeting is due to be held in London in late September/ early October.

ACTION: Marie to send Doodle Poll to Group with potential dates during September.

Healthy Bees Project Team
Fera
26 July 2011