

**Minutes of the Healthy Bees Plan
Project Management Board
13th Meeting, 20th April 2011
Teleconference**

Present:

Helen Crews	Food & Environment Research Agency [Fera] (Chair)
Liz McIntosh	Food & Environment Research Agency (Project Manager)
Marie Holmes	Food & Environment Research Agency (Secretary)
Andy Wattam	Food & Environment Research Agency
Brian Ripley	British Beekeepers' Association [BBKA]
Tim Lovett	British Beekeepers' Association
Bob Smith	Amateur Beekeeper
Dinah Sweet	Welsh Beekeepers' Association [WBKA]
Mark Tatchell	Chair of SEAG
John Home	Bee Farmers' Association [BFA]
John Howat	Bee Farmers' Association

Apologies:

David Bondi	Honey Association
Steve Sunderland	Scottish Executive
Huw Jones	Welsh Assembly Government [WAG]
Martin Smith	British Beekeepers' Association
Carl Reynolds	Chair of CWG [Carl Reynolds Ltd]
Wally Shaw	Welsh Beekeepers' Association

1. Welcome and introduction

The Chair welcomed attendees to the 13th meeting of the Healthy Bees Plan Project Management Board. The Chair welcomed new PMB members Carl Reynolds, Chair of Communications Working Group (CWG) and Mark Tatchell, Chair of Science and Evidence Advisory Group (SEAG), although apologies had been received from Carl Reynolds who was unable to attend this meeting. Both Chairs had been invited to become members of PMB in addition to their respective working group Chair roles as an outcome of the 12th PMB on 14th March which had been a review and planning meeting for Phase 2.

The main purpose of this meeting was to reach conclusions and agreement on key aspects of Phase 2 which the Board had worked on during the 12th meeting, including governance, priorities, plans for seeking sponsorship and the work-plan.

The Chair reported that the Bee Farmers Association (BFA) had emailed the Board just before the meeting, raising various concerns raised by their members about the impact of Healthy Bees implementation on bee farmers. The Chair agreed that the meeting would consider these points under Any Other Business, although Fera would probably also need a separate follow on telecon with BFA.

2. Review of draft minutes from 11th and 12th PMB and progress with actions, plus highlight report (PMB13/1)

Sign off note of 11th and 12th meeting for posting on BeeBase

11th – Bob Smith queried the ‘foundation beeswax’ section (page 2, paragraph 4) and it was suggested that this should be changed to ‘raised concerns on the purity’.

12th - Bob Smith suggested that this note not be posted on BeeBase and that a one page structure of the meeting would be posted instead. The Board agreed.

ACTION – Chair and Project Manager to re-write 12th meeting notes as a short summary for BeeBase.

The Board were content with the remainder of the minutes which the Secretary would post on BeeBase.

ACTION: Marie Holmes to arrange for minutes to be amended and posted on BeeBase.

Actions from 11th meeting

SEAG had a sub-group identifying priorities for research. Work was in progress and anticipated reporting back to PMB in the near future.

Tim Lovett said the BBKA was revising their research concepts document and that there may be overlap with SEAG’s priorities which could lead to duplication. Tim agreed to the Chair’s request for the Board to see the revised BBKA concepts document when ready in about 3 weeks time.

Mark Tatchell commented that overlap between PMB’s assessment of research priorities and the BBKA’s concept document could be an advantage if specific research proposals, which both PMB and BBKA endorsed as high priority, were submitted to funding bodies. These bodies might look more favourably on such applications, than if submitted without endorsement. The Chair agreed that endorsement of research proposals by BBKA and PMB would help strengthen any applications for funding. Mark also stressed that it would be important for the BBKA’s revised document to prioritise the research ideas and to have them peer reviewed. The Project Manager added that it would be important for the priorities to be presented as costed proposals rather than ideas or concepts.

ACTION – Tim to circulate revised research paper to PMB for comments.

Highlight Report

The Project Manager invited the group for any comments or questions on the highlight report and whether they were happy with it. There were no comments.

3. Phase 2 – governance (PMB 13/2)

Paper 13/2 set out suggestions of proposed governance and working arrangements capturing the discussions at, and steer from the 12th PMB meeting on 14 March. The Project Manager highlighted that the paper proposed splitting HEG into 2 groups/teams: a core delivery team and an advisory group. The rationale for this split was for the core delivery team to be responsible for delivering the courses in cases, NDB short courses and good practice templates. The core team would also ensure the embedding of the course in a case materials and NDB short courses into local association training programmed during 2011/12. This was an important year for Fera to start to see a return on its investment in these new materials and courses – embedding them as key features of local training programmes was essential this year.

However, the Project Manager reported that Martin Smith had now set up a BBKA/NDB delivery group, which he was chairing. The first meeting had been held at the BBKA's Stoneleigh Spring Convention. During a brief discussion, it was unclear whether this was the first meeting of a new group or an informal one-off meeting. Bob Smith, who had attended the meeting, felt that it had been a one-off meeting. Dinah Sweet who had also attended confirmed this was a progress meeting of a small delivery group. It wasn't clear what the future of the Group and its work was.

ACTION – Project Manager to discuss with Martin Smith and encourage him to regularise the group and for him to report back on its meetings to PMB.

The Project Manger asked for views on whether HEG should be left as it was or split as suggested in the paper. There was some support for splitting HEG as suggested, and including a representative from Martin's group on the advisory group and vice versa. Bob Smith suggested Ken Edwards and Ged Marshall to join Martin's group. The consensus was that HEG's future depended on the outcome of the Project Manager's discussion with Martin Smith. The Project Manager would report back to the Board on the outcome of that discussion and her further consideration of a workable solution for HEG.

Extension of membership

The Group were asked about the planned extension of the Board to the Honey Association, beekeeping suppliers and medicines manufacturers. After a brief discussion, it was agreed that rather than extending the current membership on a permanent basis, it was preferable to invite representatives from these organisations to specific agenda items at meetings where their involvement was required. Brian Ripley was concerned that increasing the numbers of those around the table was not

consistent with another suggestion to reduce numbers. Bob Smith said that if we wanted 'buy in' from those attending occasionally, it would be important to brief them well in advance, including their contribution to the work of the Board and to direct them to the PMB HBP area on BeeBase.

Mark Tatchell thought that the numbers involved in SEAG seemed large including multiple representation of organisation. He suggested that groups might run more efficiently and productively with one person representing each organisation rather than many. The Chair agreed that it made sense to review numbers on the working groups and that this might help focus the groups on 'doing' rather than 'meeting'.

ACTION – Working Group Chairs (Mark Tatchell and Carl Reynolds) to look at membership of SEAG and CWG respectively and consider the possibility of streamlining. The PMB Chair would consider HEG membership.

A brief discussion followed about the Project Manager's role at PMB meetings. She represented both Fera/HBP and Defra Policy, as Defra had devolved Policy to Fera. The Chair said that she and the Project Manager would be explicit when delivering any comments during meetings on behalf of Defra which was one of the many stakeholders on the Board. Although decision making by the Board was by consensus amongst its members, Brian Ripley recognised that at times the Board might not support a proposal/action/advice, and yet might have to proceed on the basis of Defra's views. This would be fine, as long as Defra was fully aware that they were proceeding without the Board's support.

ACTION - The Project Manager would review the governance paper to reflect discussions today and the future direction of HEG. She would also reflect the role of Fera's CEO in the governance paper given his accountability to Defra for implementing the Plan, although this addition would not affect the Board's work.

4. Update on contract with BBKA and NDB on education project

The Project Manager reported that contract came to an end on 31/3/2011 and felt that the contract had gone very well and a lot had been achieved in the time. The final deliverable under the contract – an evaluation report of the BBKA training events and NDB courses - had been received last week, and subject to sign off of this report the final payment would be made.

(In Martin Smith's absence) Bob Smith updated the Group on progress with the BBKA course in cases and training events. The contract had secured the delivery of the white, yellow, red and green courses. Uptake on the white and yellow had been extremely good and sales on the yellow had been strong. The red and green courses were soon ready to be put on sale. Over 500 people attended 8 regional training sessions organised by Bill Cadmore. Planning for further training events during the summer and continuing into the winter was underway.

Bob Smith suggested that the 500 whom we had trained was an important future resource and BBKA should keep in touch with them to encourage them to offer training to beekeepers. It would be worth analysing where they were based, so we

can see strengths and weaknesses of geographical coverage, and reinforce any gaps.

Tim Lovett expressed concerns that there had been a poor turnout at an education session at the Spring Convention, suggesting there was still much work to be done on impressing the course in a case to their membership and education groups. Tim Lovett is considering how best to get the message to local membership and this could include roadshows to which Associations and Divisions would be invited. Bob Smith agreed that the profile of the new materials did require raising amongst the local associations.

ACTION – Tim Lovett to work up future plans for engaging local associations in consultation with Bob Smith and others and report on progress to the Board.

Bob Smith also reported back on the NDB short courses. The NDB were contracted to deliver 7 short courses on 14 occasions and these were completed by mid March, also 2 further courses were completed but yet to be delivered. There was a suite of 7 courses with plans for a further 3. The courses had been delivered to 140 students (with 92 different attendees). He felt that attendees at these events should also be actively encouraged to go out and train, as well as all those whom Fera had funded to do 7303 or equivalent train the trainer courses. Bob Smith noted venues in Wales were difficult to obtain. Dinah Sweet had some ideas and would be in touch with Bob Smith to discuss.

The NDB would be running further courses starting in July and would advertise the programme in BBKA news and Beecraft.

5. Draft progress report from Phase 1 (PMB 13/3)

The Project Manager welcomed any comments on the progress report and noted that this would form the basis of the January-March quarterly newsletter for the Healthy Bees Plan. Bob Smith suggested that the newsletter should also include an alert on Asian Hornets. The Group were invited to send any further comments by phone/email to the Project Manager.

ACTION – All to send comments on the draft progress report to the Project Manger by 29th April 2011.

6. Priorities for Phase 2 (PMB 13/4 & 13/5)

Priorities

The Project Manager asked whether PMB 13/4 was a fair capture of what we wanted to achieve in Phase 2 and expressed that this was a starting point reflecting current priorities and stressed that it would be reviewed regularly as it progressed. During a brief discussion, it was noted that items 7-19 had been ranked in priority order based on discussions at the 12th meeting. There was some debate about the ranking

method, although the Board accepted that it was fair attempt to collate the scores given at the 12th meeting. The Chair invited the Board to offer any comments on the items in the paper and their rank order and send them to the Project Manager, so that we could have an agreed list.

ACTION – All to rank and submit to Project Manger. Also if the Board had any more suggestion for Phase 2 activities, these should also be sent to the Project Manager by 29th April 2011.

Work-plan

The work-plan - PMB 13/5 - was a first draft at setting out the priority activities plus those continuing from Phase 1 into a workplan. The Board had agreed at the 12th meeting, that we should proceed with one workplan for Phase 2, covering all the work, rather than 3 workplans as in Phase 1.

The Chair asked whether the format was helpful and would this help the Board identify what was hoped to be achieved. Brian Ripley said it gave a useful list to follow. Bob Smith suggested that the description of the activities should be expanded possibly in an annex.

ACTION – Project Manager and Marie Holmes to develop the plan further into a complete draft and send to PMB for comments and endorsement by mid May.

Communications plan

The Project Manager introduced the communications plan (PMB 12/05 and 12/06) which had been briefly considered at the 12th meeting, and invited comments on this as a sensible approach to organising and managing our communications work. Brian Ripley, supported by Tim Lovett, agreed that it was good to capture the detail in this way and that this was an acceptable approach.

The Chair concluded that the Board was content with this approach for managing communications activities in Phase 2.

7. BeeBase Co-ordinator – progress with recruitment

The Chair provided an update on recruitment of this new post. The post was submitted in the business plan which Defra had agreed. Early voluntary redundancy (EVR) was underway across Defra/Fera and due to this, the post required a strong business case as it was a new post, which was further complicated through the fact it was a fixed term appointment for 9 months. A secondment had been suggested as a good way of filling the post due to the constraints posed by the EVR scheme. If the post were to go to an external recruitment process, Secretary of State approval would be required. An internal trawl would have to be conducted regardless. The job description was being finalised. IT expertise would be part of the requirement. Bob Smith said that if BeeBase were to become the authoritative source then communications expertise should also be an essential. The Chair confirmed this was

in the job description. The Chair will circulate the job description to the Board when it was signed off.

8. Plans to secure additional funding/sponsorship to support education and research in Phase 2 (PMB 13/6)

One of the elements of Defra's Phase 2 business case was to secure additional funding from external sources to support HBP implementation, particularly to support education and research. Possible funders included the food industry. Rather than pursuing this by setting up another working group, the intention was now for Fera to proceed with a couple of representatives from PMB and SEAG. The Chair noted the concerns expressed by the Board about this during the 12th meeting, and invited and further views from the Board on proceeding with this element of Phase 2.

Brian Ripley said that he did have concerns about this, particularly the reaction of potential sponsors/ funders who were unlikely to welcome government approaching them for sponsorship. However, given Defra's interest, it would be better for PMB to be involved than not. If this were to go ahead he felt that the best way forward was for SEAG to come up with a number of well thought out applied research ideas that would capture the imagination of potential funders and invite those funders to a seminar and inform them about the challenges facing bees and how they could help. They could then be invited to contribute to a fund which also covered education and other ideas supported by the Board. This would work best as the Board seeking such support, not Defra.

The Chair welcomed Brian's comments and invited any further views from the Board.

Mark Tatchell suggested that the Board looked at funders with shared objectives ie, aligned as far as possible with the HBP. He noted that in the past there have been successful collaborations where both small and large business have come together to fund work and deliver joint objectives. This could mean reviewing the objectives of the HBP to include objectives of potential funders.

Bob Smith agreed with Brian Ripley's view of supporting this in the best way possible, and stressed that it should cover education too.

ACTION – Project Manager to review the document in light of the comments made and circulate to the Board for endorsement during May.

9. Estimating winter losses (PMB 13/7)

Item not fully discussed as Wally Shaw not present. To progress in the meantime any comments on paper PMB 13/7 should be sent to Belinda Phillipson (SEAG secretary) copied to the Project Manager. SEAG should consider this paper and report back to the Board.

ACTION – All to send comments to Belinda Phillipson copied to the Project Manager by 29th April 2011.

10. Code of practice produced by Honey Association (PMB 13/8)

There was not sufficient time to discuss this paper due to the additional item under AOB.

11. AOB and date of next meeting

John Home reported that the members of the BFA had raised many concerns at their recent AGM including questioning why the HBP had not so far been of benefit to commercial beekeeping. He hoped the Board could reply to the questions that he had circulated by email. The Chair would respond to the questions separately, however this was an opportunity for PMB to offer comments. John stressed that item 10 (on GM Pollen in honey) was urgent and needed immediate follow up.

ACTION – Project Manager to address the questions posed through a follow up teleconference with the BFA.

ACTION – All, any comments to the questions please send to John Howat and the Project Manager by 29th April 2011.

Date of next meeting - aiming for end of July when we would invite VMD to attend. Any specific issues in between would be via email/teleconference.

Fera
April 2011