

**Final Minutes of the Healthy Bees Plan  
Project Management Board  
17<sup>th</sup> Meeting, 03 April 2012  
Defra, Room 210, Ergon House, London**

**Present:**

Helen Crews (HC)	Food & Environment Research Agency [Fera] (Chair)
Liz McIntosh (LMc)	Food & Environment Research Agency (Project Manager)
Jane Sharkey (JS)	Food & Environment Research Agency (Secretary)
Belinda Phillipson (BP)	Food & Environment Research Agency (for item 10, via telephone)
Tim Lovett (TL)	British Beekeepers' Association [BBKA]
Martin Tovey (MTo)	British Beekeepers' Association
David Aston (DA)	British Beekeepers' Association
Dinah Sweet (DS)	Welsh Beekeepers' Association [WBKA]
Wally Shaw (WS)	Welsh Beekeepers' Association
Margaret Ginman (MG)	Bee Farmers' Association [BFA]
Bob Smith (BS)	National Diploma in Beekeeping (NDB)
Steve Sunderland (SS)	Scottish Executive
Huw Jones (HJ)	Welsh Assembly (via telephone)
Mark Tatchell (MTa)	Chair of SEAG
Chris Hartfield (CH)	National Farmers' Union (via telephone)
Ken Edwards (KE)	Chair of HEG (via telephone)
Nigel Robins (NR)	Beekeeping representative (education and training expertise)

**Apologies:**

John Howat (JH)	BFA
Carl Reynolds (CR)	Chair of CWG
Andy Wattam (AW)	Fera
Murray McGregor (MMc)	BFA

**1. Welcome and introduction**

The Chair (HC) welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked all for their hard work and input into the Gateway review. HC then acknowledged the new faces around the table, Martin Tovey – BBKA President, David Aston – BBKA Chairman, Margaret Ginman - BFA General Secretary and Nigel Robins who had been the Chair of the Gateway Review team. HC had invited Nigel to attend the meeting given its focus on the Gateway recommendations and also with an invitation to join the Board given that he was also a beekeepers with education and training expertise. The meeting would discuss this invitation as part of a wider discussion on Board membership. Ken Edwards (HEG Chair) would join the meeting later by telecon.

**2. OGC Gateway Recommendations (PMB 17/1)**

HC gave an overview of the report which had reviewed implementation of the Healthy Bees Plan, looking at the plan and progress with deliverables. Commissioned by Defra, the review was a necessary part of the business plan for the next 3 years funding of implementing the HBP. MG asked where the funding came from for the review, HC replied that funding came from Defra for the OGC review with staff from other govt departments undertaking the review. No external consultants has been involved.

The purpose of this item was to review the recommendations, noting those which had already been addressed and seeking the Board's input to help address the other recommendations.

***Recommendation 1 – prepare a Benefits Realisation Plan and update the business case***

HC reported that that this recommendation had been addressed in January and the benefits plan had been included in the business case which had been submitted to Defra's Local Approval Panel in February. The benefits plan set out benefits to be gained by implementing the HBP including the beekeeping community and the environment. In March final approval came

through from Defra for funding for next 3 years. The Board recorded their thanks to LMc for her work and efforts put into preparing the business case especially in time of Government cuts.

NR commented that the benefits realisation plan would need to be actively managed so the benefits were realised as implementation of the HBP continued.

LMc confirmed that the budget in the business case and items for expenditure were as set out in paper PMB 17/7 circulated for this meeting.

**Action LMc to circulate Benefits Realisation Plan to members of the Board who were invited to provide any comments to LMc by end April.**

Recommendation 2 – review current set of progress indicators and consolidate into a shorter set of outcome – focused measures

HC reported that she, MTa, LMc and BP had reviewed the indicators during January (by telecon) and had consolidated them as recommended into a shorter set of outcome focused indicators. These had been included in the business case.

BS expressed his concerns about the indicators which he thought should be improved to include targets to aim for. HC noted his concerns and suggested that the end of year report based on the indicators might help illustrate their usefulness.

**Action LMc to circulate draft end of year report based on the indicators.**

HC invited MTa for an update on SEAG's discussions about indicators and in particular the key indicator on colony losses. MTa confirmed that SEAG regarded colony losses as the no. 1 indicator if looking at the success of the Healthy Bees Plan. The key issue was on how losses should be measured given that there were various sources of data including baseline (BBKA) figures from before the Healthy Bees Plan and data gathered since then (as the BBKA survey had been running for several years). However, comparison between, and making sense of these data sets to assess trends was not straightforward given differences in the way the surveys had been set up and the data collected.

MTa had discussed with BBKA, Fera and Fera statisticians in November to identify how to do trend analysis of losses over time, taking into account confidence intervals and differences in survey construction etc. However, no agreement had yet been reached on how to proceed to monitor changes in colony losses.

BS commented that colony losses are one of the drivers for the Healthy Bees Plan and suggested taking a pragmatic approach by simply using the BBKA survey. DS said that the Inspectorate collected data on winter losses and suggested that a random sample be taken from these data. However, it was noted that Inspectorate data couldn't be used as they were from a risk based approach. However the NBU has been undertaking annual husbandry surveys over the last 2/3 years; these are sent to a random sample of beekeepers on BeeBase.

DA reported that BBKA would be undertaking a trend analysis of their 5 year data set on losses and would put this into the public domain. He agreed that this could be used for Healthy Bees Plan progress. HC suggested that the BBKA should peer review their trend analysis before it is published. DA commented that this would be for BBKA to decide.

TL suggested that the Board should ask the natural beekeepers for their data on winter losses.

**Action Look at COLOSS survey – LMc to check with Selwyn Wilkins at NBU about this data.**

WS commented that he remains critical of self selecting surveys and would prefer randomised surveys along lines of NBU husbandry survey.

Further comments from the Board:

- To consider merits of further Random Apiary Survey to assess colony losses;
- Look at trends through the life of HBP and pull out the big things that affect trends;

- Training and husbandry = strong hives over Winter and bees come through to the next season;
- Competent beekeepers = colony survival.

**Action LMc to produce a summary note for PMB on winter loss surveys. PMB to send comments and points for clarification to LMc by end of April.**

Recommendations 3 – consider the makeup of the PMB and Recommendation 4 - review the activities and plans of the working groups to ensure clarity over actions, assess and monitor progress

Introducing recommendation 3, HC considered that the current membership of the Board at 17 people was rather large and asked the Board for their comments regarding a rationale of 12 members, although all 17 could receive papers. She also asked for views on whether to change the chair of the board as HC had been chair for nearly 3 years.

The following comments were made:

MG – strong views that numbers are kept to 12, too many attendees and business doesn't get done.

HJ – thought places had been given up, Welsh government have dropped one place.

DA – commented that as the papers for these meetings were not published, members could not circulate the papers to others on the BBKA executive and therefore BBKA needs to field a number of reps to attend HBP for views to be put across.

HC – commented to clarify, that the papers and issues weren't restricted and could be seen by others on the BBKA Exec before meetings.

CH – attended as a representative and discussed papers and issues with colleagues before meetings. He suggested reviewing Terms of Reference to check if there was any weighting of representation which might affect any votes taken (if the need arose).

MG – briefed and discussed with colleagues before attending meeting.

MTa – need more collaborative working.

BS - was disappointed the Head of NBU was not a member.

Summing up, HC concluded that the general consensus was that the Board was quite large and we should consider changes.

**Action HC to email all on the Board to seek views and feedback on the size and makeup of the board and whether to change the chair of the Board. The ToR to be reviewed by the Board once feedback received.**

4- review working groups

Introducing recommendation 4, LMc commented that during 2011/12 we had already moved from 3 workplans – one for each of the working groups – to 1 workplan recognising that this would provide a better focus and improved oversight by the Board. The current workplan indicated which activities were being led by the working groups and was reviewed by the Board and the working groups at their meetings. In response to this recommendation, we now circulate the Highlight report to each working group as well as the Board.

The following points were made in discussion:

- Effective communications could be improved by having one person from CWG as a member of each working group;
- SEAG should report to the Board and HEG and CWG could merge;
- Single and consistent messages are key to HBP and CWG's role was key in pushing out these messages;
- messages needed packaging and consistency, to be simple and easy to follow and understand;
- CWG was essential to delivery as the bee press editors were around the table and agreed a month by month plan;
- One approach could be CWG to slim down to the bee press editors and Gay Marris;
- Need to be careful not to dictate to beekeepers about improving their beekeeping.
- PMB has a responsibility to agree and promote a minimum set of standards and best practice for beekeepers.

Summing up the discussion, HC noted that there was agreement that CWG was crucial for getting out key messages from PMB and working groups.

**Action** LMc to circulate HBP Comms plan to PMB. HC's letter to the Board would also invite comments on the working groups. HC would also discuss with Carl Reynolds – CWG Chair – about how to improve the effectiveness of our communication activities.

### 3. Sign off notes from 16<sup>th</sup> meeting/ OGC recommendation 5

**Action** PMB members asked to review draft note from 16<sup>th</sup> meeting and send any comments/ amendments to LMc by Friday 13 April. Subject to any comments received the notes would be posted on BeeBase – update, no comments received.

#### OGC recommendation 5

Introducing Gateway recommendation 5, HC commented that the risk log needed to be actively managed. NR commented that risk logs were dynamic tools with active ownership to eliminate or reduce risks, including lessons learned. The current log needed to move towards articulating the risks, steps being taken to reduce risk and who was leading. NR agreed to work with LMc on the revision of the current log.

**Action** HC and LMc to revise risk register with input from NR and circulate to members of PMB.

### 4. Education and training - Gateway recommendation 6 and 7(PMB17/2)

#### OGC recommendation 6

Introducing Gateway recommendation 6, LMc reported that paper 17/2 set out HEG's advice to PMB on how this recommendation could be taken forward. NR supported HEG's recommendations. BS asked for clarity on why the focus of this recommendation was 'beginners training' as he would prefer more focus on improvers as these were the people who were lost after the first couple of years of beekeeping and should be retained. NR responded that the Gateway recommendation was intended to focus at least at first on evaluating beginners' training (including by use of course in a case and improving trainer competence through NDB short courses and also generic 7303 training) and but could be expanded later to include improvers and higher levels. MT commented that BBKA wanted to look at the churn rate – they had 6,000 new members last year but also lost 3,000 out of 23,000 members. An additional 12,500 beekeepers were not members of BBKA/associations. KE suggested that we could learn from those associations with high and low retention rates by mapping divisions/ groups which keep beekeepers and those which don't. A random survey of people leaving associations would make sense to understand why they leave and whether they continued to keep bees outside an association. HC suggested that the inspectors might be able to provide input on retention rates and reasons for churn. HJ added that the inspectors in Wales could also provide an estimate of, and reasons for churn.

**Action** BBKA to keep PMB informed of their plans to investigate churn. HC to ask inspectors for input on churn.

#### OGC recommendation 7

Introducing this recommendation on improving transparency to PMB of NBU's inspection and education services and improve coordination of education work of PMB and NBU, HC suggested that because neither Mike Brown nor Andy Wattam were available for this meeting, we should instead consider this recommendation at a future meeting at Fera, York, when the Board could also view a live session on Beebase. It was agreed that whilst all inspection and education work was recorded on BeeBase it was not transparent to all; in addition, it would be important to set out the full picture of all training activities.

**Action** Agenda items for a future meeting at Fera, York would include - consider recommendation 7 ie, improve coordination of education work across PMB, NBU and other groups such as BBKA's Delivering Education Group.

#### OGC recommendation 8

HC briefly covered Gateway recommendation 8 which would be addressed later this year when the outcome of the policy review was known.

### 5. Work plan for phase 2 - review of progress with implementing activities in the workplan

LMc gave a brief overview on progress with the current workplan (2011/12) with a focus on those activities with poor or limited progress. The following comments were made in discussion:

- [activity 6] TL reported that he had been discussing with VMD the recent loss of Fumidil B from the bee medicines market and had written to Ministers about BBKA's concern over its loss particularly as beekeepers no longer had any treatments against Nosema;
- DS, supported by WS commented that beekeepers could manage Nosema well enough through husbandry, regular comb changes and also through selecting bees which were resistant to it – ie, there was no need for a medicine;
- MTa commented that focusing on individual pests and diseases was not helpful as the ultimate aim was healthy bees which could be secured by addressing various risks to reduce losses;
- [activity 7] TL reported that he had worked with VMD to produce a BBKA medicines leaflet in A6 card format with simple messages which had been agreed with VMD. BBKA would print and send copies to suppliers to issue with bee medicines shortly;
- [activity 13] MG reported on the Healthy Bees Plan's contract with BFA to develop an apprenticeship scheme and to attract sponsorship for bee farming apprentices. The contract had recently been awarded and work was underway. MG would hold regular progress meetings with LMc and would report on progress to the PMB.
- [activity 8.1] HC reported that (in the absence of a paper PMB 17/4) she would provide a breakdown of the Healthy Bees Plan spend on BeeBase development in 2011/12 and the changes which this budget had funded – this would be ready for the PMB meeting in July at Fera, York. The Healthy Bees Plan-funded BeeBase co-ordinator role had been advertised (looking to make BeeBase more user friendly for beekeepers). Fera had also submitted a proposal to Defra looking for £130k capital to upgrade BeeBase and were still waiting to hear the result.

Summing up, HC noted that the Board were keen for advice and recommendations on managing Nosema to be developed/updated for beekeepers.

#### **6. Review of impact of bee health education and training provided by NBU, BBKA, NDB over 3 years of HBP funding**

It was agreed that this item (which was an agreed action from the December meeting) would be taken at the July meeting of PMB at Fera alongside consideration of Gateway recommendation 7 (on education and transparency of NBU's education programme).

**Action** Add this item to agenda for the July meeting.

#### **7. BBKA's recruitment of an education coordinator for 2012/13**

DA reported that the BBKA Exec had given the go ahead for the BBKA to recruit one coordinator. Interviews would take place on 23/4. This would be a pilot role for one year; the role may need to be refined depending upon membership wants/ needs. DA/MT would report back on progress after 6 months of operation to PMB. The BBKA had taken into account HEG's views in developing the role of the coordinator/job specification.

#### **8. NDB's proposal for 2012/13**

It was agreed that this item would be taken at the May telecon meeting of PMB when we would consider the workplan for 2012/13 and the future governance.

#### **9. Work plan for 2012/13**

It was agreed that this item would be taken at the May telecon meeting of PMB.

#### **10. Small Hive Beetle contingency plan, escalation scenarios (PMB 17/8)**

BP joined the meeting for this item which was a report back on comments made by the PMB in December on the draft plan for Small Hive Beetle (SHB) and also on the escalation scenarios which had now been sanity-checked with the NBU. Having sanity-checked the numbers, we could debate the absolute numbers of apiaries to be monitored but the principle remained that the numbers would be large and would mean moving from eradication to control/ containment quite quickly. BS commented that he agreed entirely with the philosophy that the numbers would be large but suggested that the numbers of apiaries presented in the escalation scenarios did need to be calculated on the right basis based on appropriate circles. BP agreed to amend contingency plan to include circles around the SIA as proposed by BS.

WS stated that SHBs fly and may be more attracted to bumble bee and other species, and this should be acknowledged in the contingency plan sub heading of secondary hosts). It was discussed that SHB may prefer bumble bees to honey bees; the only place where SHB is kept under quarantine in the UK was at NBU where they also had bumble bees. MTa added that depending upon where initial infestation found there may be an argument for restricting movement which would give time

for beekeeping world to learn more about the spread. BS suggested that the plan needed to be clearer about how it applied to *Tropilaelaps* given that it was a generic plan; this could be reinforced in the Executive Summary.

**Action BP to check evidence on whether SHB prefer bumble bees or honey bees and the implications for contingency plan; and to emphasise in the Exec summary that the plan is generic and covers other exotics.**

#### **11. Asian Hornet response plan; policy review**

Introducing the Asian hornet response plan which would be posted on BeeBase shortly, LMc reported that this was not a notifiable pest of honey bees. Fera had developed a pragmatic response plan with Non-Native Species Secretariat (NNSS) as this hornet may predate on other species not just honey bees. In the light of NNSS project board's recommendation, the government would do its best to stop this pest become established but if lots of nests were found then government would cease this eradication programme and provide advice to public and beekeepers on how to manage this pest. NNSS were working on posters and leaflets and provided an email address for people to report sightings. Visits by bee inspectors will be generated by queries received about possible sightings but pest controllers would undertake destruction of nests. In the short term the government would pay for any destruction and advice re traps in hives.

BS commented that he was disappointed that nothing had gone forward on this subject last season; minutes of the last meeting stated the need to be pro-active with traps in hives. TL commented that as government was likely to cease eradication policy in the face of many and widespread nests, a more preferable course could be not to raise expectations that we will try to stop it establishing and instead just expect beekeepers and others to deal with it locally.

#### **Policy review**

Introducing a brief update on progress with the review of bee pest and policy which had started in July 2011, LMc reported that the review included Devolved Administrations, bee farmers, hobby beekeepers, NBU and an independent scientist and was making good progress. By July 2012, Fera should be ready with draft recommendations to issue for public consultation. The review team had worked through the individual pests and diseases, including exotics and Asian hornet. Discussions in April and May would look at prioritisation and what to share and when with stakeholders, when to go to consultation and what goes to public consultation. LMc said that the Board would be briefed about the recommendations at their July meeting after which they would be invited to 'sanity check' the draft consultation paper including the questions posed, as the final stage of finalising the consultation paper. The consultation would run for 4 months from end July to November. A stakeholder workshop was proposed towards the end of consultation period (Oct/ Nov). LMc gave a brief overview of possible changes to EFB policies, although noting that possible options and recommendations would be subject to Ministers' views. HJ commented that from the Welsh Government 's perspective, they were looking to potential impacts of the ongoing review of the EU animal health law, were looking to the inspectors to 'work smarter', and wanted keepers to take greater responsibility for their bees. MTa commented that voluntary approaches should also be part of the programme to deal with pest and disease risks.

**Action at the July meeting (at Fera, York) LMc would brief PMB about the options and recommendations for future disease control policy, after which they would be invited to comment on/sanity check the draft consultation paper before it was issued.**

#### **12. AOB**

The board discussed AOB proposed by BBKA. Following the recent publication of a couple of papers on neonicotinoids on honey bees and bumble bees, TL would like PMB to put pressure on CRD for a critique of these recent papers and whether their views on bees and pesticides had changed. LMc read some briefing notes from CRD on this new research. BBKA asked why this can't be made public for more transparency and they would be happy to post on their website.

**Action LMc to check with CRD if they would be willing to make a public statement about their views on recent research on bees and pesticides.**

**Date and time of next meeting – telecon 16 May 2012 14:00 – 16:00**

Fera

30 April 2012