

**Summary of the Bee Health Advisory Forum  
1<sup>st</sup> Meeting, 29<sup>th</sup> October 2012  
Room 602, Ergon House, Defra, London**

**Present:**

Helen Crews	Food & Environment Research Agency (Fera)
Richard Watkins	
Belinda Phillipson	
Andy Wattam (dialled in)	
David Aston	British Beekeepers' Association (BBKA)
Tim Lovett	
Wally Shaw	Welsh Beekeepers' Association (WBKA)
Margaret Ginman	Bee Farmers' Association (BFA)
Chris Hartfield	National Farmers' Union
Mark Tatchell	Science adviser
Nick Renn	Veterinary Medicines Directorate
Steve Sunderland	Scottish Executive
Ken Basterfield	National Diploma in Beekeeping (NDB)
Ken Edwards	Husbandry adviser

**Apologies:**

Bob Smith	NDB
Nigel Robins	Beekeeping representative
Huw Jones	Welsh Government

**1. Welcome and introduction**

The Chair welcomed attendees to the 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Bee Health Advisory Forum. AOB's were captured.  
AOB 1. Chris Hartfield raised the issue of bees and neonics.  
AOB 2. Chair to invite Belinda Phillipson to introduced Defra funded R&D project.  
AOB 3. Risk register.

**2. Minutes of 19<sup>th</sup> PMB**

The Chair highlighted the wording on the bottom of Page 5 about the Bee Health Advisory Forum and said that it should read as follows;

The Chair said that the PMB would expand its remit to become the Bee Health Advisory Forum with 10 to 14 representatives – BFA, BBKA, NDB, WBKA, NFU and working group chairs/subject experts. Scotland would continue to attend as an observer. It is expected that only one representative from each organization will attend. The representative may vary according to availability.

All actions from the minutes had been done or were on the agenda for discussion. The Chair said that the Forum actions will also be captured in a table.

**Action 1:** Ken Basterfield and David Aston were asked to forward their contact details to Kate Parker to establish a common contact point between NBU/BBKA and NDB.

**3. BHAF structure and purpose.**

**4. Terms of Reference**

The Chair introduced and said that Annex A highlights the role of BHAF in implementation of HBP. It was agreed that the Forum is wider than the HBP. The Chair said that it aligns better with policy and although ultimately decisions are made at ministerial level the Forum has scope for putting forward a stakeholder view even if it is not a consensus. The scope and steer of the Forum is different to the Healthy Bees Plan board and stakeholder views are extremely important for ministers. For example, the Forum can make decisions about how to spend money for HBP and can influence but ultimately policy decisions will be taken by ministers.

Margaret Ginman welcomed the increased transparency particularly with respect to the availability of grants and use of EU money.

It was agreed that the working groups will only meet if they need to consider specific pieces of work. It was suggested that in the diagram in Annex B all the stakeholders involved should be clarified. The role of R&D project steering groups should also be clarified.

**Action 2.** Bee Health Policy Team to amend Annex B.

There was a great deal of discussion about how a consensus should be sought from the Forum. The Chair suggested that ideally a consensus should be sought from the majority of people at the Forum which could then be sent to policy and upto ministers. Any non consensus views will also be recorded.

Richard Watkins pointed out that when a submission is made to Ministers it is compiled using all the evidence. It is good that this will be challenged by the Forum as some of the evidence maybe a difference of opinion. The question was posed about whether the Minister would be looking for ideas from the Forum and the Chair agreed that this is possible.

The membership of the Forum was also considered in depth with some members proposing that there are different levels of stakeholders. However the Chair highlighted that **all** stakeholders have an interest in bees being healthy and therefore that the BHAF should be run as a democratic voting Forum. The issue of different recommendations from different groups was considered. The Chair said that a recommendation could be made to the Forum who can then take a view with all views being recorded. The role of BHAF being involved in early decision making was welcomed.

Excluding the Chair, secretariat and observers there is scope for 11 organisations/ individuals. The papers for the Forum are not limited to the Forum and can be circulated more widely for comment prior to Forum meetings. The VMD were proposed to be observers rather than stakeholders.

The BBKA were not comfortable with only being able to field one representative and some people at the meeting were not clear where they fitted in the Forum. It was suggested that what people brought to the table mattered more than what organisation they represent and that some flexibility would be good. The Chair proposed that in general for each Forum meeting there would be one representative per organisation but on occasions depending on the agenda items it would be possible for more than one representative to be present as for today. It was pointed out that some Forum members could wear two 'hats' for example NDB and BBKA. The Chair also said that views from other members of an organisation could be

put forward by a representative. Andy Wattam asked whether this issue had come up in the plant health stakeholders fora. The Chair said that for these fora it is one representative per organisation.

On the basis of these discussions the Terms of Reference for the BHAF were agreed.

Margaret Ginman asked why beekeepers were not invited to meet the new minister in September. Not many members of the Forum were aware of this meeting. The Chair and Richard Watkins agreed to look into this. The Chair also suggested that the minister could be invited to the next BHAF meeting.

The Chair acknowledged and thanked Liz McIntosh for all her hard work and the papers.

## **5. BHAF workplan**

Activities are coded to working towards specific benefits.

Activity 1 (consultation on recommendations from the policy review and the government's response) and Activity 2 (plan to phase in policy changes from policy review including roles of associations) would be covered under Agenda item 7b. The NBU lead with respect to Activity 2 was queried. Richard Watkins said that following the policy review and consultation the NBU will lead on an implementation plan including changes to surveillance and input from stakeholders/association. The Chair agreed and said that the implementation plan will be brought to the Forum.

Activity 3 (Review of EU Animal Health Law) is to be covered under Agenda item 6.

Activity 4 (Contingency planning for exotic threats). Richard Watkins outlined the plan for the emergency exercise on Asian Hornet. He stressed that in particular this will test lines of communication and said that input from stakeholders would be requested.

Activity 5 (Review of EU apiculture programme) is to be covered under Agenda Item 8.

Activity 6 Healthy Bees Plan Delivery

Activity 6.1 Jointly funded Fera, BBKA and NDB education project

David Aston highlighted what had been done. David Blower, an education coordinator had been recruited using funding from Wax Chandlers. He has been building up a network and gathering information to understand what member associations are capable of doing and what they might like help with a view to spreading best practice. He will hold an education day in November which will be regionally based to discuss progress and with the aim of identifying themes and other regional events will take place in February. From this he hopes to develop a model which will be applied in the first instance to the Warwickshire area.

**Action 3:** The Chair thanked David for his report and requested that he send one side of A4 describing this work including David Blower's actions to Richard Watkins.

The Chair also said that there was £30K funding from the HBP for the current year which had not been used.

**Action 4:** Richard Watkins is to arrange a teleconference with David Aston to discuss what to do with the unused funds.

David Aston said that a second activity was to improve husbandry training skills and that this was done as a function of the BBKA Education & Husbandry committee. This activity currently only extends to England. Tim Lovett said that so far large numbers of the Course in a Case (which have been developed for use by trainers) have been circulated but it is very

important to ensure that they are actually used. It was suggested that this could be part of David Blower's role ? Tim Lovett suggested that local associations could be incentivised by putting forward proposals to use the Course in a Case and get a grant to assist this. The Chair said that this proposal should be put in writing to the BHAF so that the Forum could consider.

Ken Basterfield presented a report about the NDB Short Courses which had been prepared by Bob Smith. The courses are aimed at trainers. The first courses in 2010/11 were developed with Fera funding for which they were grateful. In 2011/12 there was no funding but in 2012/13 they had understood that further funding was available so courses had been offered at a subsidised rate. However more recent correspondence suggested that only some courses and individuals are eligible for funding. These issues need to be urgently clarified so that courses can be delivered before the end of the financial year. The Chair suggested that the eligible courses are those that are the first priority for healthy bees. Ideally a task force (subset of BHAF) would be set up to prioritise which courses should be funded but in the current year this would not be possible in time for courses to be run by the end of the financial year. Margaret Ginman acknowledged the value of these courses to the bee farmers apprenticeship scheme.

**Action 5:** Richard Watkins to discuss via a teleconference with Ken Basterfield as soon as possible. Courses to be prioritised and circulated to the rest of the BHAF for comment/agreement.

Tim Lovett asked for clarity on how much money is available under the HBP?

**Action 6:** The Chair agreed that a 6 monthly statement would be prepared for the BHAF.

There was general agreement that it would be good to have an overview of ALL the training courses in order to agree priorities, e.g. apprenticeships, train the trainers, etc and it would also be useful to consider people's motivations for seeking training. The Chair agreed and suggested that the BHAF should consider what has been done and what are the remaining gaps. It was pointed out that beekeepers also need training as well as the trainers.

**Action 7:** Richard Watkins to compare what the HBP planned to cover this year against the achievements to date.

#### Activity 6.2

Despite several enquiries there have only been 3 applications to take 'Train the trainer' courses. Tim Lovett suggested that there needs to be more publicity although adverts have been placed in the BBKA news and the WBKA publication. Ken Edwards suggested that as part of his role, David Blower could highlight where in country this is working well. In future David Blower could liaise with Kim Chadwick about 'Train the trainer' courses.

**Action 8:** BBKA to ask David Blower to provide highlights once he is established in his role, by Jan 2013 ?

#### Activity 6.3

**Action 9:** The secretariat to circulate Kate Parker's note on increasing Beebase registrations.

Activity 6.4 to be covered under agenda item 6.

Activity 6.5 Beebase is currently being developed to enable changes to take place in the way it provides information.

#### Activity 6.6

**Action 10:** The Chair to discuss knowledge transfer and synthesis of research with Mark Tatchell or in Mark's absence Belinda Phillipson.

### Activity 6.7

**Action 11:** The indicators are to be considered at the next BHAF meeting. The Chair and Mark Tatchell are to review where we are with the indicators and whether they were signed off. The Chair thinks that the basic indicators were agreed but there wasn't clarity about how far we could go in collecting data on these. She suggested that a summary would be useful.

Activity 6.8 To be parked for now.

## **6. Animal Health Law**

### Medicines

The chair welcomed Nick Renn who explained that the Veterinary Medicinal Products Directive (2001/82/EC) is being revised and that beekeepers will have the chance to feed in their views. The Impact Assessment will be published in December and following this VMD will gather feedback. . [Post meeting note: The publication date for the IA is now likely to be during the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2013.]

Richard Watkins outlined the reviews of animal health, plant health and plant varieties and seeds that are taking place. He intends to meet Pamela Thompson who is the Defra lead on the animal health review. He asked whether it would be useful for Pamela to speak to the Forum and members agreed that it was.

**Action 12:** Richard Watkins to invited Pamela Thompson to the next Forum meeting.

Mark Tatchell suggested that some input from other animal producers would be useful. Richard Watkins, also explained that an overarching piece of legislation, the food and feed regs is to be introduced which is designed to reduce admin costs and burdens. He said that there is likely to be a long feed in time for introduction of these regulations.

As Mohamud Hussain (Fera Economist) had now arrived the Forum agreed to consider item 9 next.

### **9. Brookdale consulting: cost and benefit analysis**

Mohamud presented the key findings from the cost and benefit analysis for bee health that is being done as part of the Defra funded research project PH0442.

The Chair requested that Forum members should not discuss the data presented in Mohamud's talk outside of this meeting until after the final report has been published. The chair said that if there is a Defra press release for this project, it will have to be agreed with ministers but will then be sent to the BHAF prior to publication.

Mohamud said that he was happy to answer questions and also welcomed direct contact. Tim Lovett said that he would prefer to use the word 'amateurs' not hobbyists. The Forum discussed the possibility of a press release when the report is published. However this will need to be agreed with Fera and Defra. Tim Lovett said that he would like to be kept updated. It was suggested that there need to be links between this report and the policy review as they need to be consistent.

Nick Renn asked about the benefits to individual keepers as well as to agriculture. Mohamud said this is picked up in prevented costs to beekeepers which is covered in the report. Chris Hartfield suggested that there should be a health warning on the data used for the analyses as these will be based on the information published in the ADAS report from 2001.

Mohamud agreed but said that the benefits are still far greater than the costs even if the magnitude is changed. Chris Hartfield said the issue is who should pay for benefits ? Ken Basterfield pointed out that there may be a difference between urban colonies and colonies that are moved.

Ken Edwards said that the analyses had studied beekeepers with 0-9 colonies but asked how much we know about the distribution? He suggested that this could be important for education. It is often quoted that 50% of beekeepers have 2 colonies or less. Margaret Ginman said that if the Forum agrees that we need more colonies we could suggest that people ought to start managing larger numbers of colonies.

**Action 12:** David Aston agreed to send the average no of colonies from the BBKA survey to MH.

#### **7a. EU Surveillance Programme**

Richard Watkins said that one of the actions agreed by the EU was to enhance surveillance as it was very weak in Europe although the NBU system was commended. Therefore an EU reference laboratory had been set up. The EU ref lab have initiated a Pilot Surveillance Programme which is being carried out in 17 member states including the UK. In the UK this will involve 200 apiaries which will be visited 3 times. One visit has already been made to each of these apiaries in order to gauge the status. The aim of the programme is to get an in season estimate of colony losses and an estimate of overwinter losses. This type of survey may form the basis of a standard EU survey in future. Andy Wattam was concerned that after such a bad season losses were likely to be high. All the beekeepers involved have been contacted and asked to inform the NBU immediately if any of their colonies are lost. The Chair said that there is an article about the Surveillance Programme in the October 2012 BBKA news.

#### **7b. Bee Health Policy Review**

Richard Watkins thanked everyone who had been involved in the policy review. As a result of the discussions 3 options were considered; (1) Build on and refine current practices including government, beekeepers and beekeeping associations continuing to work together; (2) status quo and (3) do the bare minimum. These options were assessed using expert judgement.

There are now new ministers in Defra who are dealing with bee health so the consultation needs to be cleared with them before it can be published. We are currently waiting for a response but hope that it will be published in December with 8 weeks for the consultation. David Aston felt that the supporting documents produced for the consultation contained a lot of useful information and therefore that these should be published. Richard Watkins agreed and said that we need to consider how to publish these documents. Mark Tatchell commented that the Science and Evidence Advisory Group (SEAG) had not had the opportunity to assess whether the evidence supported the policy options that had been recommended. The chair said that this was noted and suggested that members of SEAG could specifically be asked to comment on the consultation. Wally Shaw was particularly keen to consider the evidence for the proposed changes in EFB policy. Any other comments should be sent to Liz McIntosh with Richard Watkins copied in.

#### **8. Apiculture programme.**

The current programme has been running for 3 years. Richard Watkins doesn't know how much money we will get in future from the EU. The policy team need to submit a new application to the EU in April 2013. Kim Chadwick will produce papers and consult the BHAF. The papers need to describe what is to be done and how it will work to provide a clearer understanding of the process.

#### **10 AOB/comms/news**

##### **AOB1.**

Chris Hartfield asked about the issue of neonicotinoids and communications. He suggested that a more joined up approach between Defra and the BHAF would be useful. David Aston

also said that the BBKA receives a great deal of correspondence on neonicotinoids which is often negative.

**Action 13:** The Chair to consider with Richard Watkins and Hilary Aldridge about how best to join this up.

## **AOB 2.**

Belinda Phillipson gave an introduction about a new Defra funded research project which had been commissioned on understanding honey bee health stakeholders. PMB had previously been informed about this project. She handed out a flyer on the project which had been produced by the contractors.

## **AOB 3. Risk register in the highlight report.**

The Chair highlighted all the risks which were currently red.

Risk 6. Lack of progress with extending range of authorised medicines available for controlling pests and diseases due to poor response from bee medicine manufacturers. Tim Lovett said that VMD had not made much progress with this as he was aware that there are at least 2 companies that could have submitted applications for oxalic acid but had not done so yet. Nick Renn said that VMD do encourage manufacturer's to enter the system but the problem is the market for bee products is so small it's difficult. VMD don't often meet small producers. The Forum agreed that this should be left as red. The legislation on minor animal species and mutual recognition is currently under review. David Aston asked whether we can optimise the products that we already have, for instance aromatic oils ? Tim Lovett suggested considering enterprise activities in BIS and also said comments may be raised during the consultation.

Risk 7 and 8. The Forum questioned why these were two separate items.

## **Date of next meeting.**

The following dates in the last week of January were suggested, 28<sup>th</sup>, 30<sup>th</sup>, 31<sup>st</sup>. The secretariat will send out a doodle poll. London was agreed as the venue for the meeting. Timings of future meetings will be from 10:30 to 3:00.

## **11. Meeting review: format and structure**

The Chair asked the members of the Forum to consider what had gone well in the meeting and what could be better ? Richard Watkins also asked Forum members to identify 1 agenda item for the next meeting. Mark Tatchell would like bee health science and indicators to be considered. He also asked if there was evidence for how effective the training is ? Are the right people being targeted ? He said that there is great deal of information already available which needs to be targeted in the right way to beekeepers. For example the experts in SEAG say that Varroa can be controlled yet it remains a major issue for beekeepers. Ken Edwards questioned the emphasis on training the most skilled beekeepers? He suggested that more people from the BBKA could give input to the NDB training and felt that education should be looked at as a whole. David Aston chairs the BBKA and NDB education board to give join up but feels that education should be reviewed. He feels that we are missing the bigger picture and should consider more strategic issues like a programme for the year. Tim Lovett enjoyed Mohamud Hussain's presentation. He thought that a lot of time had been spent on education and training but we haven't really got to grips with science. Chris Hartfield felt it is important to build on science and the impact of neonicotinoids. Margaret Ginman said that the future apiculture programme is very important and thought that there should be a workstream for commercial bee farmers. Steve Sunderland also thought that that neonicotinoids are also an issue particularly as Ministers have been requested to ban them. He also pointed out that we shouldn't lose sight of the original healthy bees plan. Nick Renn said the meeting had been a useful re-introduction to bee health issues. Andy Wattam

agreed with all these comments. Margaret Ginman would also like commercial beekeeping to be considered and can prepare a paper on this.

**Action 14:** Science will be a major agenda item for a subsequent meeting.

## Table of actions

Action Number	Action	Person(s) responsible
1	To forward their contact details to Kate Parker to establish a common contact point between NBU/BBKA and NDB.	Bob Smith David Aston
2	To amend Annex B of Terms of Reference.	Bee Health Policy team
3	To send a summary of what has been done to date with the jointly funded Fera, BBKA and NDB education project Richard Watkins	David Aston
4	To arrange a teleconference with David Aston to discuss what to do with the remaining unused funds.	Richard Watkins
5	To discuss the NDB courses to be prioritised via a teleconference with Ken Basterfield as soon as possible. List of prioritised courses to be circulated to the rest of the BHAF for comment/agreement.	Richard Watkins
6	A 6 monthly statement of the funds in the Healthy Bees Plan to be prepared and shared with the BHAF.	Chair/ secretariat
7	To compare what the HBP planned to cover this year against the achievements to date.	Richard Watkins
8	To ask David Blower to provide highlights once he is established in his role, by Jan 2013 ?	BBKA
9	Circulate Kate Parker's note on increasing Beebase registrations.	Chair/ secretariat
10	To discuss knowledge transfer and synthesis of research.	Chair and Mark Tatchell/Belinda Phillipson
11	Indicators to be discussed at next BHAF meeting	All
12	To send the average no of colonies from the BBKA survey to Mohamud Hussain.	David Aston
13	To consider how best to join up responses on bees and neonics.	Chair, Richard Watkins and Hilary Aldridge (Fera Director of Policy)
14	Science to be a major item at the next BHAF meeting	