

**Summary Note of the Bee Health Advisory Forum
5th Meeting 12th July 2013
Room 319, Nobel House, Defra, London**

Present:

Helen Crews (Chair)	Food & Environment Research Agency (Fera)
Mike Brown	
Richard Watkins	Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra)
Marie Holmes	
David Aston	British Beekeepers' Association (BBKA)
Tim Lovett	
Margaret Ginman	Bee Farmers' Association (BFA)
John Mellis	
Chris Hartfield	National Farmers Union (NFU)
Wally Shaw	Welsh Beekeepers' Association (WBKA)
Bob Smith	National Diploma in Beekeeping (NDB)
Jane Jones	Welsh Government
Steve Sunderland	Scottish Government

Apologies:

Dinah Sweet	WBKA
Ken Edwards	Husbandry Adviser
Andy Wattam	Fera
Amy Byrne	Welsh Government

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Chair welcomed attendees to the 5th meeting of the Bee Health Advisory Forum. The welcome was extended to Jane Jones from the Welsh Government who was attending for the first time. The Chair explained that Richard Watkins would attend the meeting at lunchtime so it was suggested the Pollinator Strategy and feedback from the Friends of the Earth event were discussed after his arrival.

2. HBP Breakdown of Spend and Budget

The Chair circulated a paper to the Forum which included summary of income and expenditure for the National Bee Unit (NBU) and a breakdown of the Healthy Bees Plan (HBP) budget allocation. The figures were based on actual income and expenditure for 2012/13. Defra funded the NBU with £833,600 via a Memorandum of Understanding, £404,000 was received from the HBP in addition to £465,600 from the EU Apiculture Programme.

A query was raised on the Apiculture Programme money as it was thought that the income received should have been closer to £600,000.

ACTION 1: Marie to clarify nature of cut and feed back to Forum.

Update to action 1: The table reports EU Apiculture Programme monies awarded to the UK in Euros and converted into sterling. A standard exchange rate is applied by the Commission through all the years.

Year	Amount awarded to UK in €	Amount awarded to UK in £	Amount awarded to England (NBU)
2010/11	€743,523	£672,144	£467,140
2011/12	€741,131	£669,982	£465,638
2012/13	€737,733	£666,911	£463,503

The money allocated is to the UK Apiculture Programme. This money is then divided between administrations in England Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. England was awarded approximately 70% of the UK programme.

For information a link to the Apiculture Programme press release can be found here http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-10-653_en.htm?locale=en

The Chair went through each line of expenditure and offered further explanation against each. Whilst discussing resource expenditure it was queried how much Seasonal Bee Inspectors (SBIs) and Regional Bee Inspectors (RBIs) received. The Chair said it wasn't possible to provide individual salary details but would provide a salary range for both SBI's and RBIs.

ACTION 2: Helen Crews to obtain salary ranges for SBIs and RBIs and circulate to the Forum once obtained.

Update to action 2: SBI's are typically recruited at Band 3 and employed in most cases on a part time basis for a period of up to 6 months. The pay range for Band 3 is from £21,203 to £26,097. RBI's are typically Band 4 which ranges from £25,560 to £31,245.

Information on 2012/13 expenditure would be shared with the Forum once they were made available by Fera's accountancy team.

ACTION 3: Helen Crews to circulate HBP actual expenditure for 2012/13 to the Forum.

A member of the group calculated that it cost approximately £50 per inspection on average and suggested that seemed expensive. However, not all of the group agreed and most felt an average cost of £50 represented good value.

It was queried what value the HBP gained from the BeeBase technical enhancement and BeeBase Co-ordinator funding.

ACTION 4: Helen Crews to circulate roles and responsibility of Bee-base co-ordinator.

It was asked whether Healthy Bees Plan budget headings and expenditure could be reconsidered. The Chair said there would have to be an exceptional case to consider any reallocation as the Local Approvals Panel approved the budget according to the business

plan submitted which was based on current budget headings. It was suggested by a member of the Forum that we focused on the next phase. For clarification, funding of £579,000 was approved for this year (2013/14) and next year (2014/15) after which time a new business case would need to be submitted for funding the Plan beyond 2014/15. The original 10 year plan was scheduled to complete in 2019.

An explanation was offered on what was considered as 'core' work. This included the English and Welsh MoU's which funded the statutory inspection programme, training, diagnostics, contingency planning, checks on imports, training and advice to beekeepers and advice to policy etc. A proportion of NBU staff time is spent on research projects. All the income comes together and runs an integrated programme. It was suggested that the HBP money seemed 'bolted on' and a suggestion was made for the need to understand the broader picture and strategically refine the model of how we dealt with the subject of bee health. It was suggested to reflect the consultation recommendations when drafting the next business case and to consider where the HBP sits in the wider bee health scheme particularly with the launch of the Pollinator Strategy.

3. Programme/project plan from Phase 2 Business Case – Update on progress (Bhaf/1) & review of indicators (Bhaf/2)

It was decided to re-visit this agenda item at the September meeting as there wasn't enough time to review.

4. Policy Review Implementation Plan (Bhaf/3)

The chair recapped why the policy review came about. A National Audit Office (NAO) study was the primer for the Random Apiary Survey (RAS). The NAO scrutinise public spending on behalf of Parliament, hold government departments and bodies to account for the way they use public money and help service managers improve performance and service delivery. The NAO requested we had a clearer understanding of disease prevalence. As a result Defra commissioned the NBU to undertake an assessment of the national picture of honey bee pests and diseases (with the intention of using this assessment to inform the future honey bee pest and disease control programme, including establishing agreed outcomes). The RAS confirmed our understanding that the *Varroa* mite was widespread in apiaries across England and Wales. NBU inspectors recorded high levels of *Varroa* at one in every six apiaries visited. The RAS also provided additional data on viruses associated with *Varroa*. Reports of varroosis or detectable levels of DWV in an apiary (in the survey) were both clearly linked to poor apiary health reaffirming that *Varroa* and its associated viruses do have a clear impact on beekeeping success. Additionally the survey found that 80-90% of statutory diseases were found by inspectors and that risk based inspections were an effective approach in identifying disease outbreaks.

Mike Brown then turned to paper Bhaf/3 the draft implementation plan which was drafted by Mike, the National Bee Inspector and other NBU colleagues. The scope for the plan was

lifted from section 3 (recommendations to current policies) of the consultation document and responded to each recommendation with what was being undertaken already (the baseline) and what was proposed to do including timescales and risks/issues. The Chair thanked Mike and colleagues for developing the document.

Confirmation was given that the draft implementation plan covered all activities under the Bee Health programme. The draft plan were based on recommended actions identified by the review of policies on honey bee pests and diseases undertaken by the Fera, on behalf of Defra and Welsh Government (WG), with the National Bee Unit, representatives from bee farmer and beekeeper associations and an independent scientist.

ACTION 5: Post Ministerial approval: a) All to feedback comments on the document and endorsement of the key changes including the DASH. b) Association representatives to identify areas of the implementation plan they could have input into.

The NBU also noted a recent successful bid for EU R&D funding. The successful proposal, called Smartbees, will look at sustainable bee populations and management of varroa etc. Final contractual negotiations with the Commission are underway and more details will be circulated to the Forum when available.

ACTION 6: Mike to circulate Smartbees abstract once available.

The Chair informed the group that as of 1st July the Defra library had closed and that responses would be published on the website. Upon return to the office clarification was sought on what would be placed on the website. The summary of responses would be published on the 22nd July. However, the association only and not the individual replies to the consultation would be available by request and not published on the website as first thought. As the library had recently closed the process of how these requests are handled was yet to be confirmed. Responses to the consultation were in both electronic and hard copy format.

5. Feedback from Friends of the Earth Conference and Update on Pollinator Strategy

The Friends of the Earth conference was held on 28th June and several members of the Forum were present at the event. The aim of the event was to gather together interested parties to work together to develop a more ambitious and integrated approach to address the threats faced by pollinators. The Chair asked for feedback from attendees.

Feedback 1 – Impressed by numbers and broad range of stakeholders and felt that the organisers tried hard to hear all the stakeholder points. Lord De Mauley was invited to give a speech and then visited each table personally. The FoE facilitator was asked whether FoE planned to have their own strategy running parallel to Defra's or whether it was anticipated to join together. The reply was for the latter and all to join together to inform one strategy.

Feedback 2 – Felt the Ministers statement was carefully managed as were the table discussions.

Feedback 3 – Felt there wasn't a clear strategy going forward and didn't approve of commercial sponsor involvement.

Feedback 4 – Frustrated at times at how much factually incorrect information was out in general fora ie. ideological pesticide usage and felt many of the conversations were on pesticides/ neonicotinoids or intensification of farming. Felt the event was very managed and wanted to express that the best approach should be based on all the evidence and not sensationalist views.

Feedback 5 – Pleased with the sponsors selected as this was an opportunity for us to educate them, particularly as they had a significant influence on the supply chain and on the wider public.

For information, a link to Lord de Mauley's speech can be found by clicking the below link.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/bee-health-lord-de-mauley-at-friends-of-the-earth-conference>

Richard Watkins provided the Forum with an update on progress toward the publication of the Pollinator Strategy. Richard and colleagues were gathering the information in preparation for two workshops being planned for October and November to which interested parties will be invited. It was planned that the strategy would be published by the end of the year before going out to consultation. It was anticipated that members of the BHAF would be included in the workshops and it was noted that the BBKA could be used for habitat expertise in addition to their honey bee expertise.

ACTION 7: Richard Watkins to provide links to the Workshop activities when available.

The majority of Forum members wished to express the importance of their immediate involvement in the Pollinator Strategy work and sought assurances for its involvement. Stakeholder mapping was being carried out by a member of the pollinator team which would include the Forum as whole in addition to individual associations which may require further representation.

The Forum also wished to express the validity of its work on Bee Health and for its role to be protected and not side-lined or dissolved following the introduction of the Pollinator Strategy. The Chair said that as far as the HBP was concerned it would be business as usual for the Forum.

It was suggested that as a Forum we weren't communicating good news stories widely enough. The Chair suggested that the Fera external communications expert could flag the work higher although expressed that general media didn't tend to pick up good news stories.

Earlier in the meeting it was noted that the Welsh Pollinator Strategy had been published.

ACTION 8: Amy Byrne to see whether Welsh Government representative could talk to the BHAF about their Action Plan for Pollinators.

6. Minutes of 4th BHAF Meeting: Sign off and Actions plus Review Highlight Report (BHAF/4)

It was decided to re-visit this agenda item at the September meeting as there wasn't enough time to review.

7. AOB

Date of next meeting: 2nd August via teleconference. This meeting would be to discuss to the Apiculture Programme. A briefing document will be distributed prior to the meeting to aid discussion and mutual understanding of the topic.

Dates were in the diary for the November meeting (26th) and Marie would circulate potential dates for a meeting in the first 2 weeks of September.

ACTION 9: Marie to a) circulate teleconference details for 2nd August and b) circulate potential dates to the Forum for a September meeting in London.

It was suggested that there often wasn't time to review key documents such as minutes of the previous meeting and the highlight report etc. Therefore it was suggested and accepted that such housekeeping documents were discussed at the start of future meetings.

Table of actions

Action Number	Action	Person(s) responsible
1	Clarify nature of Apiculture Programme cut and feed back to Forum. [completed]	Marie Holmes
2	Obtain salary ranges for SBIs and RBIs and circulate to the Forum once obtained. [completed]	Helen Crews
3	Circulate HBP actual expenditure for 2012/13 to the Forum.	Helen Crews
4	Circulate roles and responsibility of Bee-base co-ordinator.	Helen Crews
5a	Feed back comments on the implementation plan document (BHAF/3) and endorsement of the key changes including the DASH.	All
5b	Association representatives to identify areas of the implementation plan they could have input into.	All
6	Circulate Smartbees abstract when available.	Mike Brown
7	Circulate links to workshop activities when available.	Richard Watkins
8	Amy Byrne to see whether Welsh Government representative could talk to the BHAF about their Action Plan for Pollinators	Helen Crews
9a	Circulate teleconference details for 2 nd August BHAF meeting based on the Apiculture Programme	Marie Holmes
9b	Circulate potential dates to the Forum for a September meeting in London.	Marie Holmes