

**Summary Note of the Bee Health Advisory Forum
Apiculture Meeting 2nd August 2013
Room 09F01, Sand Hutton, York**

Present:

Richard Watkins (Chair)	Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra)
Kim Chadwick	
Marie Holmes	
David Aston	British Beekeepers' Association (BBKA)
Tim Lovett ☎	
Peter Sutcliffe	
Margaret Ginman	Bee Farmers' Association (BFA)
John Mellis	
Dinah Sweet ☎	Welsh Beekeepers' Association (WBKA)
Ken Basterfield	National Diploma in Beekeeping (NDB)
Bob Smith	
Steve Sunderland ☎	Scottish Government
Alison Knox ☎	

Apologies:

Helen Crews	Food & Environment Research Agency (Fera)
Andy Wattam	
Mike Brown	
Wally Shaw	WBKA
Ken Edwards	Husbandry Adviser
Chris Hartfield	National Farmers Union (NFU)
Amy Byrne	Welsh Government

1. Background & Discussion on the Apiculture Programme

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and highlighted that this meeting was requested by the BFA to discuss the Apiculture Programme (AP). It was also agreed to cover another two items which were; discussion on the BHAF's role in the National Pollinator Strategy and the process regarding Parliamentary Questions (PQs).

Discussion on the AP was confidential unless otherwise agreed to be disclosed by the Forum. This was requested as we were awaiting the publication of the Commission's decision on the approval and funding of the programmes.

Kim Chadwick gave an update on the background, current programme and the present position of the AP. Key points included:

Background and current programme

- Started in 1997
- Current programme was due to end August 2013
- Funding for member states (MS) was allocated according to their % share of hives in the union (UK had a share of nearly 2%)

- From the list of eligible measures, the England and Wales programme comprised (i) technical assistance to beekeepers – training courses etc and, (ii) control of Varroosis
- Costs needed to be incurred before 50% could be claimed back from the Commission, in practice this meant claims were not submitted until the end of the programme year
- New programme was submitted in April 2013 (BHAF members were provided details at 3rd and 4th BHAF meeting)

Future programme

- All MS' programmes were approved by the Commission and the implementation decision detailing the EU contribution to the programmes was agreed by the Single Common Market Organisation Management Committee on 18th July – **this hadn't yet been published so please keep the paper confidential until such time of publication**
- Although the overall budget had increased from €32m to €33m to take account of the accession of Croatia, the amount allocated to the UK (£493k) was around 25% less than what was received under the current programme (£670k)
- Defra would have a shortfall each year of approximately £122k compared to the current programme
- UK % share of hives in the UK had fallen to 1.75% from 1.96%
- The total number of hives in the EU had increased by 1.2m to 15.7m
- A number of MS were spending more on their programmes therefore resulting in less surplus for redistribution
- The €/£ exchange rate was less favourable than that applied to the current programme

The following questions were raised in discussion:

Q) Observed inflation in number of hives in other MS whereas the UK had stuck with the same figure, were we keeping up with inflation? And how rigorously were the numbers stated by other countries checked?

A) There was a debate in the Commission Management Committee as some MS' were unhappy about other MS' hive figures. The difficulty being there was no registration system throughout the EU and most figures were based on estimates. The EU court of auditors were looking at bee health, including the AP, and sent a questionnaire to all MS' asking questions on how they calculated their hive numbers. This questionnaire wouldn't affect the current programme but may have an impact for the future.

Q) The national allocation was €670k, how was this allocated within the UK and on what basis was this split?

A) The split was traditionally calculated on the basis of each administration's % share of the UK's total planned programme expenditure that was submitted to the Commission. England contributed 70% of the programme and therefore this was the % of the allocation that was received. This method had always been used to apportion the allocated funding and **not** number of hives.

Q) Will the allocation be increased to include surplus funds not used by other MS'?

A) No. The allocation above included a small surplus which had arisen due to some MS' not claiming their full allocation when submitting their programmes. Any monies unclaimed by MS' during the term of the programme could not be reallocated to other MS'.

As time was running short a request was made to extend the meeting which was agreed by all.

The BFA listed a series of questions (A to I of supporting document) which would be addressed outside of the meeting and distributed to all members to make better use of the limited time.

There was a discussion on how stakeholder views were accounted for, the consultation process and the BHAF in general. Points raised in discussion included:

- Felt the BHAF information was one way and that stakeholders weren't always heard
- The BHAF was a much better process as some years ago there was only one meeting annually with stakeholders
- Welcomed increased amount of consultation and appreciated the constraints Defra operated under
- Needed to look at beekeeping as an activity and not what it cost each other in terms of amateur and professional beekeeping
- Needed to use make better use of the documents that were produced as part of the policy review
- Didn't like the way the consultation questions were worded and felt the questions posed may have influenced the outcome
- Felt that statutory disease wasn't a problem
- Feared the number of foulbrood would increase if the inspection regime for statutory diseases was reduced
- An exercise should be undertaken to establish the number of inspectors needed to effectively run the risk-based inspection programme
- NBU inspectors undertook a lot of training through local associations and that this wasn't always documented

It was envisaged that many of these questions could be addressed during the discussions on the implementation plan for the revised programme.

2. National Pollinator Strategy

The Chair gave a brief outline on the Pollinator Strategy and what was planned in the coming months. Evidence and Policy workshops were to be held during October and November and colleagues were considering how best to collate views. The workshops would be relatively small with 50-70 attendees to best understand and work through key issues. After the workshops a strategy would be drafted which would go out to consultation.

A suggestion was made that the BHAF should employ and fund a designated lead to collate the views of the Forum and gather evidence to input into the workshops and Pollinator Strategy. The Chair said funding may be unlikely due to the current CSR 30% cut and upcoming 10% cut but offered to ask the question of senior management.

ACTION 1: Chair to enquire with senior managers about potential funds for BHAF representative for input into the Pollinator Strategy.

Welsh Government had published an action plan on pollinators which aimed to reduce and reverse the decline in wild and managed pollinator populations. Scotland were planning a Pollinator Strategy also and discussions were planned for April/May 2014.

ACTION 2: Marie to send links to BHAF for information on the Welsh Action Plan.

3. Parliamentary Questions

A query was raised on how the process worked when a parliamentary question was asked. The Chair replied that when an MP asked the SoS a question, this was co-ordinated by the Department's Parliamentary Branch who sent it onto the relevant policy unit official to supply an answer. This was then cleared by the SoS's or other Minister's office before being published.

It was requested for the BHAF secretariat to flag to members of the Forum when questions were being answered. It was suggested that members signed up to alerts via www.theyworkforyou.com this way, subscribers would be alerted to all bee related PQs and debates (such as neonicotinoids and wild bees).

Table of actions

Action Number	Action	Person(s) responsible
1	Enquire about potential funds for BHAF representative on the Pollinator Strategy work.	Richard Watkins
2	Send links to Welsh Action plan to BHAF members [complete]	Marie Holmes