

**Minutes of the Healthy Bees Plan  
Project Management Board  
1<sup>st</sup> Meeting 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2009**

**Present:**

Helen Crews	Food & Environment Research Agency [Fera] (Acting Chair)
Helen Carter	Food & Environment Research Agency (Secretary)
Liz McIntosh	Healthy Bees Project Manager Fera
John Home	Bee Farmers' Association [BFA]
John Howat	Bee Farmers' Association
Tim Lovett	British Beekeepers' Association [BBKA]
Martin Smith	British Beekeepers' Association
Chris Hartfield	National Farmers' Union [NFU]
Amy Byrne	Welsh Assembly Government [WAG]
Huw Jones	Welsh Assembly Government
Wally Shaw	Welsh Beekeepers' Association [WBKA]
Dinah Sweet	Welsh Beekeepers' Association

**1. Welcome from Lord Davies**

Lord Davies, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State with responsibility for honey bees opened the meeting.

After thanking everyone for coming, he talked about his awareness of beekeepers' concerns, including those raised at the recent debate in the House of Lords, and emphasised that honey bee health was high on Defra's agenda. He expressed his hopes that Government, beekeeping associations and beekeepers work effectively together on honey bee health. Lord Davies acknowledged that there was still a considerable amount of work to do and that this group's input would be vital in shaping and steering that work.

The Chair thanked Lord Davies for his opening remarks.

**2. Introduction and purpose**

After Lord Davies's departure, the (Acting) Chair noted that his remarks had set the scene well and proceeded to introduce the meeting. She explained that Fera was responsible for implementing the Healthy Bees Plan on behalf of Defra and Welsh Assembly Government and that Tony Harrington was the lead Fera director. He had proposed her as the Chair of these meetings subject to the views of stakeholders. Helen's current role was Head of Inspectorates at Fera and the National Bee Unit [NBU] is part of that programme.

After a brief discussion, during which Martin Smith (Chair BBKA) proposed Helen Crews as the Chair of this group and John Home (Chair BFA) supported the nomination, the meeting endorsed Helen as Chair.

The Chair asked whether any other stakeholders were missing from the group. The BFA suggested that a representative of Scottish beekeepers should be invited, at least in the capacity of observers as they are not

currently represented. The Chair noted that Scottish Government colleagues had previously met the NBU regarding beekeeping databases. BBKA suggested that a member of the academic/research area may be useful either on this group or on one of the workstreams to provide scientific advice.

**ACTION: Liz McIntosh to invite representative from Scottish Government as an observer.**

The Chair clarified the procedure for members of this group to claim T&S for attending meetings. Guidance had been issued with the papers for this meeting. The organisations represented should invoice Fera and send with receipts to Helen Carter (Secretary to the Group) who will arrange to pay them by BACS or cheque. **ACTION: All.**

### **3. Budgets**

The Chair introduced paper SSG1/1 which showed the various funding streams relevant to bee health.

Column 1 covered the Insect Pollinator Initiative (IPI) for which a budget of up to £10m over 5 years was available from five funders, including Defra. The funders had issued a call for proposals in July, expressions of interest were due by 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2009 and projects due to start in mid 2010 following independent peer review. This funding stream had been included in the paper for information.

Column 2 covered Defra's funds for applied R&D in the NBU (for strategic reasons to maintain a critical mass of expertise in bee health) - £100,000 for 2009/10.

Column 3 was Defra funding for 2009/10 for ongoing NBU inspectorate work and additional work for the first year of the Healthy Bees Plan. Additional funds of £1,003,000 have already been allocated to strengthen the bee inspectorate (24 additional Seasonal Bee Inspectors) and provide additional statutory inspections; establish a baseline of evidence on pest/disease prevalence; and to enhance Beebase as a communications and information source.

The Chair emphasised that the survey to establish pest/disease prevalence was necessary to provide an extended evidence base to help Defra assess during autumn 2010 what resources were required to manage bee health beyond 2010. The WBKA supported the survey and noted that the Bee Health Advisory Panel (see BeeBase for further details) had identified the need for such a baseline survey. The BBKA also supported the survey, but asked for further clarification of its statistical basis, sampling regime and turnaround, and requested a meeting with Fera's statisticians. **ACTION: the Chair will provide an additional note on the survey.**

Column 4 covered additional Defra funding of £285,000 for 2009/10 of which £45,000 was to fund a fixed term post for an Education and Extension Officer which had been filled on a job-share basis by Ian Homer and Richard Ball. £60,000 was to fund travel and subsistence for this group and for stakeholder

representatives to attend meetings anticipated to be required for the various workstreams. £180,000 was earmarked for education and promotional activities.

The Welsh Assembly Government updated the meeting on their additional funding of £486,840 for the Healthy Bees Plan during 2009/10. As with England, a key deliverable for Wales is education and training and WAG would work closely with Ian Homer and Richard Ball to ensure that this money is used to best effect. WAG stressed that next year's funding still required Ministerial approval and would be pending a successful outcome this year.

During discussion, the following additional points were made:

- Scotland and Northern Ireland should be made aware of the additional funding on honey bees in England and Wales, given that EU legislation on honey bees applies UK-wide. The BBKA noted that this would be beneficial as they have some representation in Northern Ireland.  
**ACTION: Liz McIntosh.**
- This group will be consulted by Fera on the evidence from the pest/disease survey and the case to be made to Defra and WAG during autumn 2010 on resources required to manage bee health beyond 2010.

In summing up, the Chair noted that the group had stressed education and training as a key priority for the Healthy Bees Plan.

#### **4. Healthy Bees – implementation structure and governance**

The Chair explained that the purpose of this item was to agree on the implementation structure for Healthy Bees. Various options were proposed in paper SSG1/2 and an additional option proposed by the BBKA; the group may also wish to propose other options. The Chair explained that Fera's preferred option was No 2 in SSG1/2 which proposed a Project Management Board as the decision-making body for the Healthy Bees Plan with membership from BFA, BBKA, WBKA, NFU, WAG and Chair, Project Manager and Secretariat provided by Fera.

The BBKA explained that in their proposed structure, stakeholders would meet separately from the project board on a Stakeholder Steering Group to achieve a unified position. The BBKA as the senior user would then bring issues/proposals to the project board which would be kept small and comprise a senior user (BBKA); senior supplier (Helen Crews); Director; and Project Manager (Liz McIntosh).

The WBKA said that they were in favour of a project board which included stakeholders. The BFA commented that they were not keen on adopting a Prince model as it would be cumbersome and tie up resources. The NFU commented that it would be difficult to boil down stakeholders' views into one view to be relayed to the project board.

The WAG commented that, as the Healthy Bees Plan covers England and Wales, and was partly funded by Wales, they would need to be represented on the project board in order to influence how their budget was spent. They favoured option 2 where all interested parties were engaged in the project management group and had joint ownership of activities and outcomes.

Summing up, the Chair noted that most of the organisations represented favoured option 2 where the **Project Management Board**, including stakeholders, was the decision-making body for the Healthy Bees Plan. It was agreed to proceed on that basis. The Chair also noted that the majority view did not accord with BBKA's who reserved their position.

The Chair proposed that there may be times when stakeholders requested a separate meeting (or as a pre-meeting of the Board) to discuss particular issues/proposals and this could be accommodated within the structure, subject to prior notification to the Project Manager (for travel and subsistence purposes).

The Chair said that in return for stakeholders being members of the Project Management Board and their key role in helping to deliver the Healthy Bees Plan, Defra, WAG and Fera would look to them to champion the Plan with beekeepers and more widely.

**ACTIONS: Liz McIntosh to revise the implementation structure diagram to include this group as the Healthy Bees Project Management Board and to review the text and terms of reference in the implementation brief (SSG1/2). Revised implementation brief to be circulated to Board during early August with deadline for comments by mid-August.**

## **5. Healthy bees – workstreams and activities**

The Project Manager introduced the proposed workstreams which reflected the desired outcomes of the Plan and asked for comments from the Board on whether they were content with this approach; the proposed activities under each workstream; and the proposed advisory networks supporting each workstream.

The BFA stressed that implementation of the Plan was of key interest to them as some of the bee farmers they represented were currently losing their livelihood.

The BBKA requested a proper discussion of the Healthy Bees Plan before considering the workstreams, otherwise they were not able to promote the Plan to their members. They also asked for further clarity on the workstreams that the Board could influence and those which the Board could not, e.g. the current apiary survey. The Chair confirmed that although we would not be able to cancel the survey, the Board could influence the next stage of the survey if there were concerns that it was not delivering what was required.

The WAG commented that the Healthy Bees Plan provided the platform for the work of this group. It had been developed with input from stakeholders

around the table and others and subjected to public consultation. It was not productive for the Board to re-open discussions on Plan. Instead, the Board needed to focus on aims and outcomes in the Plan and shape and direct the work to implement it.

The Chair agreed and proposed that an early focus for the Board was the husbandry and education workstream (with links to the communications workstream) not least as there was funding available for educational and promotional activities. In addition the clear message from the Board was that education was a priority, and there was scope for the Board to influence this workstream's activities.

**ACTION: Liz McIntosh to review workstreams and activities and identify where the Board would be able to lead/have influence/have no influence. And to develop Workstream 2 (on education) as a template for how the other workstreams would work and will re-draft and circulate it to the Board.**

The Board discussed the advisory support network and how that might look for the education workstream, including who might chair the network and work alongside the Education and Extension Officer to deliver the agreed activities. It was agreed that the chair of this workstream would need to have expertise in husbandry/education and communications. **ACTION: The Board to put forward nominations for the Chair and participants of this workstream.**

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Board will consider and agree how the advisory network would work; nominees for Chair; nominees for participants; and what was in and out of scope for this workstream in order to advise the Education and Extension Officer and the Chair.

## **6. Indicators for monitoring progress**

In view of time constraints, the Chair proposed that paper SSG1/3 would be discussed at the next meeting.

## **7. Updated import guidance – coordinating communications**

The project manager asked for comments on SSG1/4 which was a leaflet to remind beekeepers of their responsibilities on importing honey bees and about registering on Beebase. **ACTION: All by 31st July.**

## **8. AOB/Date of next meeting**

The 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the Healthy Bees Plan Project Management Board will be on Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> September 2009 and will be hosted by the BBKA in Stoneleigh, Warwickshire.