

HEALTHY BEES PLAN

IMPLEMENTATION BRIEF

This Brief has been developed and agreed by the Project Management Board for the purpose of defining the implementation project for the Healthy Bees Plan. It forms the basis for managing and delivering the detailed work of implementation and assessment of its success. It will act as a source document against which Defra, WAG, Fera and stakeholders can review priorities and assess progress on delivery.

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Background

1. The Healthy Bees Plan was issued in March 2009 following stakeholder engagement and public consultation. It sets out a plan for Government, beekeepers and other stakeholders to work together to respond effectively to pest and disease threats and to sustain honey bees and beekeeping for today and for the future. The Food and Environment Research Agency (Fera) is responsible for implementing the Plan on behalf of Defra and the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG).
2. This brief defines the implementation project for the Plan and covers structure and governance, and workstreams and activities which will be developed to achieve the desired outcomes of the Plan (improved husbandry, coordinated communications, control of pests and diseases, biosecurity enhancements and sound evidence).

Healthy Bees Plan - implementation structure and governance

3. The Project Management Board is responsible for successful implementation of the Healthy Bees Plan by identifying priorities and by steering and guiding the workstreams, activities and deliverables. It is chaired by Dr Helen Crews (Fera) and includes representatives from the WAG. Commercial and hobby beekeepers' perspectives are provided by organisations such as the Bee Farmers Association, the Welsh Beekeepers Association, the NFU as well as by individual beekeepers. The Scottish Government is an observer.
4. The Board is supported by Fera's Healthy Bees Project Team and Secretariat which will act on the Board's guidance and advice and share this with the three working groups (see below) set up to take forward the detailed work of implementation. The Project Team will also be responsible for stakeholder engagement; effective communications to update beekeepers on delivery of the Plan; and providing recommendations to, and briefing Ministers. Team Leader: Liz McIntosh.
5. Fera's Project Team reports to the Board on progress with delivery, management of risks and resourcing aspects, seeking their input and guidance as necessary. The Board's Chair reports on these same issues to Fera's Executive, Defra and WAG.
6. Three working groups comprising beekeeping experts and/or scientific experts will provide input and challenge to the detailed work of implementing the Plan. The groups will each have a designated independent Chair who will work closely with the designated Fera lead for that group and report into the Project Management Board about progress with delivery. The three working groups are:
 - i. Husbandry and Education Working Group to provide input and challenge to the work of Fera's Education and Extension Officers. Chair and participants to have expertise in education and communications. (Chair and members to be confirmed).
 - ii. Science and Evidence Advisory Group to provide scientific challenge and input to work on three of the outcomes of Healthy Bees - pests and diseases, biosecurity

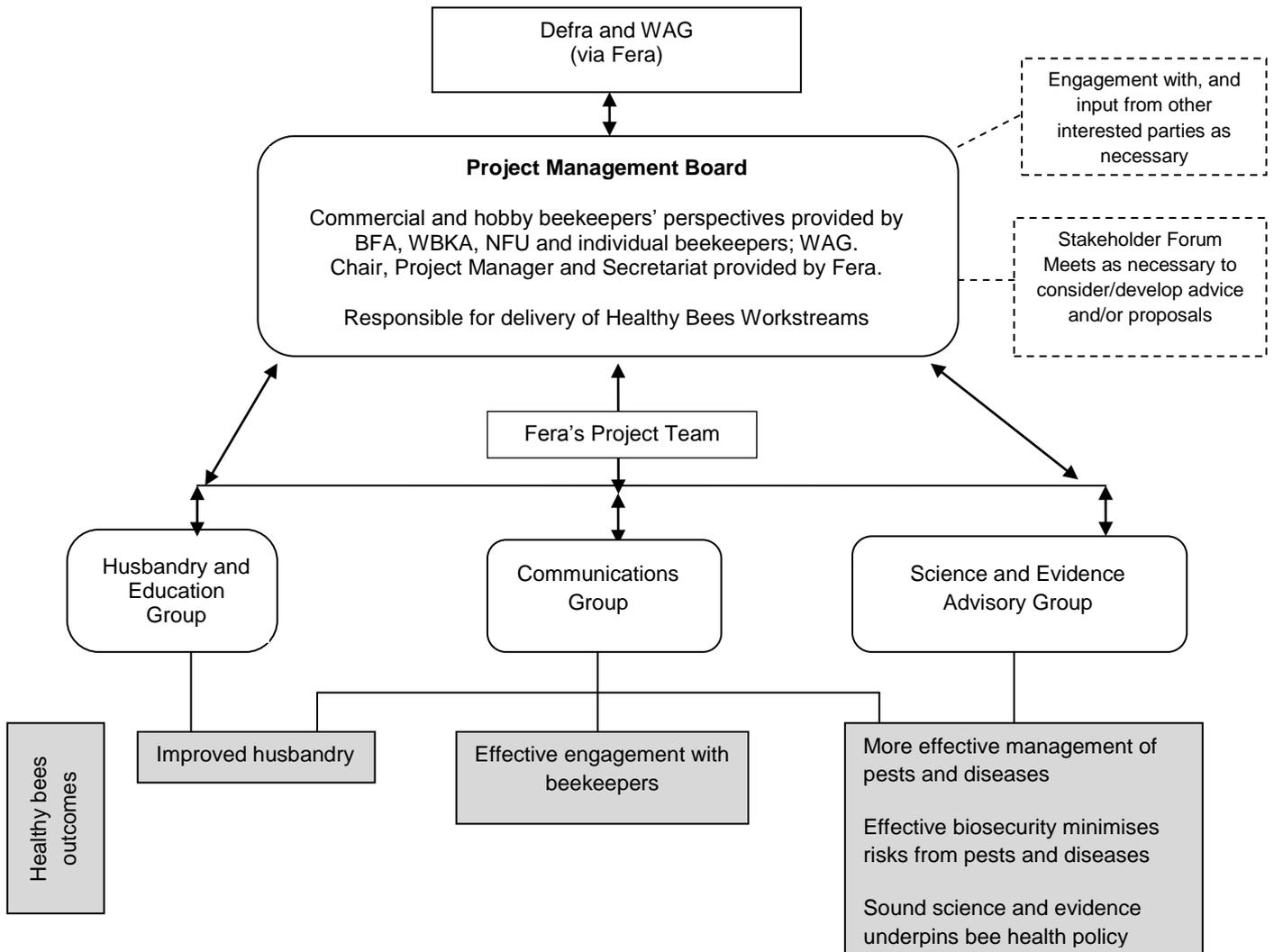
and evidence base. This is a broad remit and requires a Chair with strong science and policy development expertise and participants with science backgrounds. (Chair and members to be confirmed).

- iii. Communications Working Group to provide input and challenge to coordinated communications activities. Chair and participants to include communications experts. (Chair and members to be confirmed).

7. The governance structure also includes:

- i. the option of a Stakeholder Forum which would meet, subject to demand, to discuss particular issues/proposals before, or in-between meetings of the Project Management Board; and,
- ii. additional engagement with, and input from other interested parties as necessary, such as the Veterinary Medicines Directorate and other beekeeper associations.

8. The governance structure is shown below.



9. The terms of reference for the Project Management Board are as follows. The Board:
- is responsible to Defra and to WAG for successful implementation of the Healthy Bees Plan by identifying priorities and steering and guiding workstreams, activities and deliverables;
 - will direct the work of Fera's Healthy Bees Project Team;
 - will make decisions by consensus, recognising that activities to implement the Plan might not be what every member would chose independently but ones which secure general consensus of the members;
 - will work in the best interests of the public purse; and,
 - will seek to foster wide ownership of the Plan and a shared commitment to its outcomes amongst all interested parties including beekeepers, honey importers and packers, beekeeping suppliers and farmers and growers (given their interests in pollination services).
10. The Board will normally meet [3] times a year [expected to be more frequently during first year to guide development of detailed work activities]. Full minutes of meetings will be published on Fera's website.

Project controls

11. Risks and issues that are identified as potential or current threats to success of implementing the Healthy Bees Plan will be managed by the Project Manager who will assign owners and manage the risks and issues through a risk register and an issues log.
12. A risk matrix to help monitor the status of risks (on a red/amber-green/amber-red/green scale) and their mitigation will be reviewed by the Project Management Board and by Fera.
13. The Project Manager will issue progress reports to stakeholders on a quarterly basis from October 2009 as well as monthly highlight reports to the Board and to Fera's CEO and Directors and to Defra and WAG. The Project Manager will also prepare an end of year financial appraisal of the implementation project.
14. The Office of Government Commerce will be invited to review Fera's work on implementation.

Communications package

15. Effective engagement with beekeeping stakeholders is crucial to improve and sustain honey bee health (and therefore deliver the overall aim of the Healthy Bees Plan). In addition, stakeholders, Fera, WAG, Defra, NBU, bee inspectors, and the public need to receive regular updates on delivery of the work programme. These updates may include:

- Monthly highlight reports for reporting to the Board and to Fera, WAG and Defra;
- Core briefs to bee inspectors;
- Newsletters for reporting to stakeholders;
- Webpage updates;
- Presentations at relevant internal and external meetings/seminars;
- Commissioning of articles in beekeeping press.

Detailed workplans

16. The three working groups (Husbandry and Education, Communications, and Science and Evidence) will develop detailed workplans for implementation during autumn/winter 2009. Annex 1 shows suggested activities and timeframes to act as a starting point for each group's discussions; the suggestions draw on needs and priorities identified by stakeholders during development of the Plan during 2007/08.
17. Annex 2 sets out the roles of the Programme Management Board, the designated Fera Lead and the working groups on detailed implementation activities.

Measures of success

18. A key early task for the Science and Evidence Group will be to develop and publish a set of indicators and to agree the baseline against which we can measure progress with implementation. The indicators will help to guide policy, inform priorities and target resources.

Enabling and coordinating activities

19. Fera's Project Team will lead on enabling and coordinating activities as shown below:

- i. day to day management of Healthy Bees implementation;
- ii. working with working group coordinators and stakeholders to create and update programme and project plans and timelines, and to provide progress reports;
- iii. producing highlight reports for Programme Management Board, Fera, WAG and Defra;
- iv. providing secretariat for the Programme Management Board;
- v. development and delivery of a communications plan to support Healthy Bees implementation, using stakeholder analysis to identify communications approaches for each group of stakeholders; and,
- vi. providing advice to Fera CEO, Directors and Ministers.

Fera Healthy Bees Project Team
September 2009

Working groups - suggested activities and timeframes for implementation (as basis for early discussions)

Husbandry and Education Working Group – to deliver improved husbandry standards through a co-ordinated beekeeper learning programme

Designated Fera Lead: (shared) Richard Ball and Ian Homer. Chair and members to be confirmed.

Outline: This working group seeks to deliver a coordinated beekeeper learning programme agreed between beekeeping associations and the NBU's education advisers. The overall objective is to raise standards of beekeeping and husbandry in order to minimise pest and disease risks and contribute to sustaining healthy bee populations.

Rationale: Many learning opportunities are available to beekeepers including a long-established training and exam system delivered by the BBKA. These opportunities need to be brought together into a co-ordinated and streamlined learning programme using a common set of good husbandry principles and agreed approaches to training.

Suggested activities and timeframe (as basis for discussion and further development by the working group):

1. common set of good husbandry templates, including code of good beekeeping practice and integrated pest management by end December 2009 (ready to use by June 2010)
2. training materials based on the agreed templates – ready to use for bee inspector training by March 2010 and for beekeepers by autumn 2010.
3. coordinated delivery of learning programme with clear understanding of roles and responsibilities by early 2011. To include review of formal and informal training and analysis of gaps.
4. an agreed approach to accreditation of learning by March 2010.
5. an agreed communications plan to encourage beekeepers to adopt good husbandry practices and/or to become trained in good practice. To include a particular focus on beekeepers who are not known to bee inspectors and/or to beekeeping associations (agree action plan by end December 2009; to be coordinated with overall stakeholder engagement communications plan).

Communications Working Group – to deliver a coordinated communications plan to optimise opportunities to engage effectively with beekeepers and other stakeholders.

Designated Fera/Defra Lead: Liz McIntosh/Trish O'Donnell. Chair and members to be confirmed.

Outline: This working group seeks to deliver a coordinated communications plan to effectively engage with beekeepers and other stakeholders to achieve outcomes in the Healthy Bees Plan (particularly improving husbandry standards through education and training, awareness of import regulations, biosecurity, contingency planning, prevention and control of pests and diseases; and registering on Beebase including 'unknown' beekeepers). Also important to raise public awareness on honey bee health challenges and our response.

Rationale: The many sources of communication activities directed at beekeepers (by NBU, its inspectors, beekeeping associations, beekeeping press, Defra and WAG) need to be better coordinated to optimise opportunities to engage more effectively and powerfully on improving bee health.

Suggested activities and timeframe (as basis for further discussion and development by the working group):

1. establish coordinating forum of Fera/Defra, WAG and stakeholders to maintain overview and advise on comms activities (at various levels, including ensuring that wider stakeholders/public are aware of progress with delivery of Plan). Terms of reference. By end November 2009.
2. review current NBU/Defra/Fera comms materials and leaflets and consider re-branding under common banner of 'healthy bees'. By end 2009.
3. identify purpose of comms plan directed at beekeepers and key messages to deliver to beekeepers (for each month and/or quarter during and between seasons). Links to activities under delivering better husbandry
4. identify how we'll deliver key messages to beekeepers (eg, import guide, import guide leaflet, information about planned training events on local radio, articles in magazines, calendar of key beekeeping events etc).
5. identify how stakeholders can work together to deliver messages (eg, suppliers to help us issue leaflets (test case is current import/Beebase leaflets), advert in BBKA news, inspectors to issue leaflets at honey/bee shows etc??).
6. revamp Beebase as communications hub [or develop a healthy bees page portal which will link to webpages of contributory sites].

Science and Evidence Advisory Group – to deliver improvements in managing pests, diseases and other hazards; in biosecurity; and ensuring a sound science and evidence base to underpins bee health policy and its implementation.

Designated Fera Lead: Belinda Phillipson. Chair and members to be confirmed.

Outline: This working group will develop activities, provide advice and guide Fera's work on key aspects of improving pest and disease management and on biosecurity drawing on results from research, inspection activities and surveillance. It will maintain an overview of ongoing bee health research, identify priority evidence needs in support of bee health policy, identify opportunities for collaboration between funding bodies, and interpret research results to inform policy options. It will improve the sharing of research results with beekeepers, particularly results that are relevant to proactive honey bee health management, husbandry and pest and disease control (link to Communications Working Group).

Suggested activities and timeframe (as basis for further discussion and development by the group):

More effective management of pests and diseases

1. Advice to Fera on the results and implications for future surveillance programme from a randomised apiary survey to assess health status of apiaries which will produce a robust national picture of pests and disease incidence. The NBU is aiming to cover 5000 apiaries over two seasons (2009 and 2010). The Advisory Group will also provide advice to Fera on priorities for controlling pests and diseases to lowest levels achievable in each region, including reviewing current approaches to managing foulbroods. Timeframe: preliminary survey results available October 2010 followed by assessment of resources and priorities by end 2010. Fully analysed results mid 2011.
2. Maintaining an overview on work led by VMD to increase the availability of medicines for honey bees. Limited appropriate medicines are available to manage pests and disease in colonies. This can lead to beekeepers over-using products and the emergence of resistance. VMD is leading work to improve the availability of medicines in consultation with Fera, WAG, Scottish Government and beekeeping stakeholders. Current work includes: encouraging medicines companies to apply for authorisation of products (particularly varroacides) in the UK; developing an interim system of vets assisting beekeepers to obtain alternative products under Special Import Certificates (short term) with plans to extend this role to 'Suitably Qualified Persons' (medium term); re-classification of bees under EC veterinary medicines legislation to facilitate greater availability of bee medicines (longer term); and alternative treatments for nosema to replace fumagillin (medium/long term).
3. Adoption of integrated pest management by beekeepers. Current and new medicines need to be used sustainably by beekeepers through integrated pest management (IPM) but this approach is not widely understood or used by beekeepers. The NBU's current advice on IPM and associated extension materials will be reviewed and updated in light of new scientific evidence, and with stakeholders to take ensure it is user-friendly and fit for purpose. A field trial may be necessary as part of this work. The promotion of IPM to beekeepers will be a key feature of workstream on beekeeper learning and training. First stage is development of advice on actions needed to develop updated and user-friendly guidance on IPM and on options for setting up demonstration apiaries for IPM. Updated guidance on IPM and demonstration apiaries (numbers to be agreed) available for beekeeper training and visits. Timeframe: Outputs from first stage by end December 2009. Updated advice and extension materials by [tbc]. Demonstration apiaries set up by [tbc]

Biosecurity to minimise risks from pests, diseases and undesirable species. This covers import rules, domestic sales, risks from honey importers and packers, and monitoring and contingency planning for exotic threats. Good husbandry practices are key for biosecurity (link to education and training).

1. Import rules - Legislation is in place to manage import risks but there is limited awareness of the requirements amongst beekeepers. This work package will improve this awareness (with aim of reducing risks of illegal imports – link to communications activities). Fera is also working to review bee inspector training to strengthen, as necessary, expertise in evidence gathering and effective enforcement of rules by end December 2009. Fera will write (as a matter of course) to

Third Country authorities to inform them of any pests and diseases (in addition to statutory pests/diseases) found in imports of honey bees, based on advice from NBU. Bee inspectors will review, and increase as necessary spot checks on consignments imported intra-community.

2. Domestic sales of honey bees and hive products. Buyers and sellers of bees and hive products on domestic market have limited awareness of the risks of spreading pests and diseases from these sales. This work package will seek to improve awareness and to develop best practice guidelines (link to good husbandry and communications activities).
3. Risks from honey importers and packers. Whether honey importer and packer sites, and importers of unrefined beeswax are potential sources of pests and diseases to domestic honey bees has not been fully assessed. This work package will seek to work with importers and packers to assess this potential risk and, as necessary to identify mitigation steps and best practice. Aiming for risk assessment by end 2010. Interim Action Plan in place by end March 2010.
4. Contingency planning for exotic threats. Preparation for arrival of exotic threats is well advanced, but needs to be finalised, followed by programme of field exercises. This work package will complete preparations, including updating contingency plan to take into account any further science/evidence/risk assessment, developing a field exercise programme, reviewing contingency supplies and equipment. Aiming for publication and programme of field exercises by end March 2010.

Sound science and evidence base to underpins bee health policy and its implementation . The aim is to deliver a well-developed science and evidence base, drawing on results from Defra-funded research and also research funded by others both here and abroad. The overall objective is to improve our understanding of pest and diseases risks and produce effective response and management methods for serious honey bee health threats. It will also be crucial to share research results with beekeepers, particularly results that are relevant to proactive honey bee health management, husbandry and pests and disease control.

1. Jointly review and identify priority evidence needs in support of bee health policy with research community and beekeeping associations.
2. Jointly review and interpret results from Defra-funded research and by others to inform policy options; early focus on review research outputs to inform best practice on husbandry [note: linked to Working Group on Husbandry and Education].
3. Explore opportunities for collaborative joint funding of research.
4. Establish effective dissemination mechanisms to ensure that scientific developments are shared widely with the research community and with beekeepers.

Roles of Project Management Board, Fera Leads and working groups, using husbandry and education as an example

The diagram below sets out the roles of the Programme Management Board, Fera's Project Manager, Fera Coordinator on developing and agreeing detailed work activities to implement the Plan, using the Husbandry and Education Working Group as an example.

