

# THE BRITISH BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

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Registered Charity No. 212025

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Dear Adrian

Thank you for your time when we visited FERA on 20 July. On the basis of the encouraging signs at that meeting with yourself and your reassurances on the new spirit of consultation, we decided to attend the first meeting of the 'Steering Group', now the Healthy Bees Plan Project Board, on 23 July.

We were most unhappy with the conduct and outcome of that meeting. At the invitation of Liz McIntosh and Helen Crews, we put forward a proposal for a more classical PRINCE2 structure involving separate stakeholder/user and supplier groups, reporting in to a small Project Board, rather than the proposed, flawed hybrid group put forward by FERA, involving all parties. It is our view that little will be achieved through the current construction. Our proposal was summarily rejected on the basis of 'consensus', i.e. votes around the table. This then highlighted a further major inadequacy in the governance of the Project Board, in that there is no recognition of the differential democratic weight between the various stakeholders and other members, largely government representatives, around the table. Our conclusion, is that the Project Board is disinterested in the democratic stakeholder view. The BBKA represents the overwhelming majority of beekeepers, currently some 15,000+, and cannot accept a construction which fails to recognise this and which enables its views to be over-ridden by managers from government agencies with no practical expertise in apiculture.

We were also most dissatisfied with the so-called 'consultation' over the recently allocated extra £100K for research projects; it is not acceptable to expect decisions in haste over the telephone and then further to have our views totally over-ruled because FERA has clearly made up its mind on what it wishes to do in the first place. The BBKA 'Research Concepts' (still undiscussed with us after six months) are the starting point for us and the only document in the public domain covering this area. We were dismayed to hear that FERA was supporting a 'social science' project on beekeepers. Given our clearly stated priorities, such a study is of no relevance to meeting current, urgent research to meet pressing practical needs. There has not been a change in the approach to consultation, which was urged upon Defra and FERA by the PAC when reviewing the NAO report.

As the organisation clearly expected to contribute the most in terms of human resources and effort, we cannot afford to waste our limited resources by becoming involved in the ill-conceived Project Board and the various work streams in the Healthy Bees Plan, to the detriment of our own

programmes and charitable trust obligations . With a burgeoning membership, we have a prime duty to deliver an enhanced education and training programme to new and existing members and of course other beekeepers (including the WBKA and SBKA), who make use of our programmes.

The BBKA Public Affairs Committee reported back to the BBKA Trustees at its Executive Committee meeting on Saturday 5 September. It was resolved unanimously by the Trustees at that meeting, that the BBKA withdraw from participation in the Project Board. We are not at variance with many of the concepts advanced by the Healthy Bees Plan per se, but we feel strongly that we will be better able to represent our members and indeed achieve more in a shorter time-frame for honey bee health, from an independent position, rather than being associated with this deeply flawed structure and process.

We continue to wish to work with FERA and the NBU on the achievement of commonly agreed objectives and are available for true consultation on specific issues whenever you feel that we may be of help.

Yours truly

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tim Lovett', with a horizontal line underneath.

Tim Lovett  
President