

**Summary Note of the Bee Health Advisory Forum
9th Meeting – 25 April 2014
Room 821 Millbank, London**

Present:

Richard Watkins (Chair)	Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra)
Louise Mount	
Marie Holmes	
Mike McGuinness	Food & Environment Research Agency (Fera)
David Aston ☎	British Beekeepers' Association (BBKA)
Margaret Ginman	Bee Farmers' Association (BFA)
John Mellis	
Wally Shaw	Welsh Beekeepers' Association (WBKA)
Jane Jones	Welsh Government
Bob Smith	National Diploma in Beekeeping (NDB)

Apologies:

Steve Sunderland	Scottish Government
Andy Wattam	Fera
Mike Brown	
Chris Hartfield	National Farmers' Union (NFU)
Tim Lovett	BBKA
Irene Allen	Welsh Government
Amy Byrne	

Minutes edited following 10th meeting

1. Welcome and introductions

The Chair welcomed attendees to the 9th meeting of the BHAF including Louise Mount who was newly appointed to Defra Policy. Louise's role covered development and implementation of policy relating to honey bees and the National Pollinator Strategy (NPS).

Congratulations were offered to Marie Holmes, on becoming Project Manager of the Healthy Bees Plan. Marie's role would include development of contracts and day to day management of the Plan.

Helen Crews was standing down as Chair of BHAF to focus on her Head of Food Security and Quality role within Fera. Richard Watkins was appointed as Chair to align the bee forum to plant health forum's which were chaired by a Policy official. The Forum requested thanks to Helen were noted for her hard work and for being available at any time.

Giles Budge was appointed as Head of Crop Science due to start 1st June. Giles would be working with other programmes in Fera to drive the science excellence and delivery within the crop science area. This pivotal role would deliver Fera's aspirations within the governments agri-tech strategy, both through the Catalyst funding stream and in developing a significant role in a successful consortium bidding for an Agri-tech Innovation Centre.

Update on future of Fera: An announcement was due to be made to staff on Tuesday 29th April. This news was likely to be on the outcome of the market sounding exercise for a joint venture partner and news on where the bee, plant and seeds inspectorates would reside in the near future. Inspectorates were expected to be retained by government in an executive agency. It was anticipated NBU science and research would remain within the joint venture part of Fera. NBU and staff currently employed by Fera would remain on the Sand Hutton site.

2. Minutes of last meeting

The meeting was asked if they had any comments on the draft notes of the 8th BHAF meeting. The following points were raised:

Correct minor typos on pages 4 and 5 and rework first paragraph on page 6 regarding counting hives project.

ACTION 1: Margaret Ginman to provide text for rewording counting hives project section.

A query was raised on progress with the implementation plan. It was agreed this would be provided by Mike Brown via email to ensure progress was still made between meetings.

ACTION 2: Mike Brown to update Forum with progress of the implementation plan including timings.

Sub-actions from the 6th meeting included revisiting the benefits map which Mike agreed he would look at.

ACTION 3: Mike McGuinness to follow up on benefits map.

Update on actions from 8th BHAF Notes

All actions were complete with the exception of action 7 - keep VMD medicines on BHAF meeting agenda. It was discussed that VMD activities should be reported to the Forum particularly as VMD were accountable for a risk on the highlight report. Marie offered to contact Nick Renn of VMD for an appraisal of what VMD were doing.

3. Highlight Report – including addition of any new risks

The Chair invited comments on the report which had been circulated prior to the meeting. As risk 6 – delay in development of business plan for Phase 3 was completed this should now be removed.

Three new issues were identified:

1 – Lack of corporate funding when IPI initiative and other work were moved into practical beekeeping.

2 - Bumblebees imparting pathogens to honey bees.

ACTION 4: Margaret Ginman to send Richard the link so he can provide a substantive response.

3 – Oxalic acid regulations

ACTION 5: Marie Holmes to add new issues to highlight report.

4. HBP indicators – feedback from sub-group work

Mike McGuinness provided an update on the indicator sub-group work. This was a positive meeting which addressed each indicator and assessed how relevant each were. Bob suggested we needed to measure the things we wanted to see change. Once the Forum were content on what should be reported on the document would be populated.

1. Colony losses - David felt in-season losses wouldn't be statistically robust so it was suggested the BBKA in-season losses were removed. John felt an autumn count would be better and Bob noted in-season losses were important too. David was writing a paper looking at BBKA losses during the last 6 years for autumn and spring, the data the BBKA had kept is much broader. Bob thought there was the potential to collate a summer number from BeeBase.

ACTION 6: Mike McGuinness to follow up with Giles Budge on feasibility of extracting a summer present number.

2. Improved beekeeping husbandry skills – It was agreed to remove the measurement for the train the trainer 7303 element as this was no longer being funded. Kim Chadwick had conducted 4 rounds of follow-up questions with those who were sponsored and shared the list of sponsored trainers with David Blower of BBKA to be added to their trainers' network. Bob felt the husbandry questionnaire didn't fully address the varroa issue and offered to re-write.

ACTION 7: Bob Smith to draft a new metric for improving understanding of the degree to which varroa is under control in UK colonies.

3. Transition of evidence from peer-reviewed journals cited in popular beekeeping press There was wider coverage now the Welsh Beekeeper and BFA News were included. It was agreed that David would gather the data for BBKA news, Marie for Bee Craft, Margaret for BFA News and Wally for Welsh Beekeeper. David said he supported the idea of transfer of information from peer reviewed journals into the beekeeping press, it was also suggested all should be using the same criteria to assess numbers.

4. No increases in the number of exotic honey bee pests and diseases becoming established in the UK – It was felt this was a passive measure and what we're looking for is numbers of beekeepers trained or participating in the act of monitoring the apiaries. Change to 'ratio of identified risk points to sentinel apiaries', target = 1:1.
5. Reduced incidence of foulbrood disease in the UK - Giles Budge was going to look at number of beekeepers to affected apiaries ratio as this was a better indicator of how disease was being handled.

ACTION 8: Mike McGuinness and Marie Holmes to discuss with Giles Budge.

6. Increased/improved confidence in beekeeping data/no's of beekeepers/hives - There were no comments on this metric.

The Chair enquired what the cut off point for evaluation of the indicators should be and it was decided the final version would be available by the end of August subject to further sub-group work in the interim and final presentation at July BHAFF meeting.

There was a discussion on Giles' new role and its potential impact on BHAFF work. David suggested it would be worthwhile to conduct a de-brief with Giles so we had a view on the extent of his current and past activities.

ACTION 9: Mike McGuinness and Marie Holmes to meet with Giles Budge to capture current and past projects and seek clarification on his new role.

ACTION 10: All, forward questions to Marie Holmes on what the Forum would like to ask Giles for continuity.

5. Feedback and evidence on 2013/14 funded activities

The Chair invited an update on progress with 2013/14 funded education activities.

BBKA: Funding was allocated over 5 main areas. 1) General husbandry training - 220 candidates were signed up to courses around the country which were led by experienced trainers including practical sessions. More were scheduled in the summer 2) Study group leaders training - 90 study group leaders had benefited from training, this was an increase of 30 against the original target of 60 3) Advanced husbandry training - 100 people were identified as beneficiaries, the original target was 20 4) Course in a Case upgrade material - Filming and photography were completed and edited. Memory sticks with new material were provided to those who had already purchased courses 5) Interactive beekeeper's training website - White Room had finished their work on the webpages which were shown to training co-ordinators at the spring conference. The website was due to be launched during May.

ACTION 11: David Aston to send report to Marie Holmes for circulation.

BFA: The apprenticeship scheme was progressing well and had exceeded the target of recruiting 6 apprentices by 2. These apprentices were now appointed and working having had their first training sessions which included a 5 day residential course. Further training would include 2 block release sessions during the year in addition to mentor training throughout the year and there were negotiations with New Zealand for exchange of apprentices in the down season. Training modules were written with the help of City & Guilds who helpfully provided their frameworks. FOC and the Skills Council had also provided effort into the modules. Recruitment for apprentices was mainly conducted through social media which was found to be very successful, this was thought to be in-part due to the target age range of 16 to 24 year olds, although BFA would like to recruit above the 24 year threshold.

The apprenticeship scheme was expected to cost in the region of £5m and HBP had contributed 5% of the funding required for the start-up phase.

Next stages - BFA would like government to recognise the Trailblazers scheme of apprenticeships and include BFA within this scheme.

ACTION 12: Margaret Ginman to provide Richard Watkins with information on Trailblazers and any gaps/blocks.

ACTION 13: Richard Watkins to investigate whether Policy could assist with BFA's appointment to the Trailblazers scheme.

NDB: 18 short courses were funded by the HBP which provided 157 places to 331 different beekeepers. A limiting factor was the number of tutors needed to keep the highest quality training. It was queried whether the future of tutors was sustainable longer term, Bob felt there were a number of potential candidates coming through the exam system this year and next. The expectation and anticipation of those that take the Diploma was to teach, teaching was also a part of the exam.

WBKA: Welsh Government supported WBKA work whose membership was similar to that of the Yorkshire beekeepers. WBKA benefited from shorter lines of communication, worked closely with its associations, produced literature and facilitated courses. Following the production of the Welsh pollinator initiative it was hoped there would be a more integrated practical based educational programme.

ACTION 14: Wally Shaw to provide brief report to forum on what WBKA has been doing and future plans.

6. 2014/15 education funding allocations

Mike McGuinness informed the Forum that there was a potential underspend of £14k for 2014/15. This was assuming funding requests stayed at a similar level and invited proposals/ideas of how this money could be spent.

ACTION 15: All, any suggestions send to Marie Holmes.

Allocation of contracts for 2014/15 funding was anticipated to be completed by end of July, with project proposal forms requiring completion as per the previous year.

7. Update from Spring Convention

David Aston updated the Forum that the Spring Convention had once again been held at Harper Adams, was well attended with a broad range of speakers and courses plus trade representation. Attendees were staying for the duration of the convention which was thought due to accommodation being available on-site. This uptake suggested members were spending time taking up training. An Insect Pollinators Initiative seminar was held where recipients of the grants made presentations on the work they had completed to communicate their work. Wally commended the lecture ticketing system.

8. Update on National Pollinator Strategy

202 responses were received with 2 weeks left before the consultation closed. Defra Policy were aiming for completion of analyses and clearance of final strategy by Ministers before summer recess in July. The strategy would lead to an implementation plan over the following 6 months.

9. Key outputs from Bee Health Segmentation Project

The Chair presented outputs from the IPI funded project Understanding Honey Bee Health Stakeholders on behalf of Mark Reed and Karen Scott. The aim of the project was to contribute towards the health and sustainability of the honey bee population by determining how best to communicate with relevant stakeholders to improve bee health.

The following questions and points were raised during discussions:

Q - Were the blue dots on slide 12 individual beekeepers or association level?

Q - Who are 'people' beekeepers or general public?

David Aston observed the linear relationship relating to knowledge exchange on slide 18 and stated that BBKA wanted to be part of the process and not the recipient of the process.

ACTION 16: All to send comments on presentation including questions to Richard Watkins.

ACTION 17: Marie Holmes to circulate slides and report once available.

The Chair said he would let the Forum know when further IPI presentations were taking place on the IPI projects.

10. AOB

Oxalic acid – Wally Shaw stated there was concern over needing a license to use oxalic acid due to Home Office changes to explosives and poisons regulations. Wally had contacted Home Office on the potential changes who informed him they were considering <10% concentrations acceptable for home use but anything over this threshold would require licensing. They also requested advice on whether this was excessive. Marie updated the Forum with an email from Paul Robb of Fera who had summarised the changes which had come about as a result from a public consultation.

ACTION 18: Marie Holmes to forward oxalic email chain to group.

ACTION 19: Richard Watkins to discuss oxalic acid issue with Nick Renn.

ACTION 20: Wally Shaw to respond to Home Office request for guidance.

Healthy Bees Plan Project Manager
May 2014

Table of actions

Action Number	Action	Person(s) responsible
1	Provide text for rewording counting hives project section of 8 th meeting note	Margaret Ginman
2	Update Forum with progress of the implementation plan including timings	Mike Brown
3	Follow up on benefits map	Mike McGuinness
4	Forward Richard Watkins link on bumblebees imparting pathogens to honeybees	Margaret Ginman
5	Add 3 new issues to highlight report	Marie Holmes
6	Follow up with Giles Budge on feasibility of extracting a summer colonies number from BeeBase	Mike McGuinness
7	Draft a new metric for proving understanding of the degree to which varroa is under control in UK colonies	Bob Smith
8	Discuss with Giles Budge the feasibility of using the ratio of affected apiaries : affected beekeepers	Mike McGuinness/ Marie Holmes
9	Meet with Giles Budge to capture current and past projects and seek clarification on his new role	Mike McGuinness/ Marie Holmes
10	Forward questions to Marie Holmes on what the Forum would like to ask Giles for continuity	All
11	Send BBKA 2013/14 education activities report to Marie Holmes for circulation.	David Aston
12	Provide Richard Watkins with information on Trailblazers scheme and any gaps/blocks.	Margaret Ginman
13	Investigate whether Policy could assist with BFA's appointment to the Trailblazers scheme	Richard Watkins
14	Provide brief report to Forum on what WBKA has progressed with and future plans	Wally Shaw
15	Send ideas/proposals to Marie Holmes on 2014/15 potential £14k underspend	All
16	Send comments on understanding Honey Bee Health Stakeholders presentation including questions to Richard Watkins	All
17	Circulate presentation slides and report once available	Marie Holmes
18	Forward oxalic email chain to group	Marie Holmes
19	Discuss oxalic acid issue with Nick Renn of VMD	Richard Watkins
20	Respond to Home Office request for guidance on oxalic acid issue	Wally Shaw