

Changes to the National Bee Unit & the Bee Inspectorate

On April 1st 2009 The Central Science Laboratory, which encompasses the National Bee Unit merged with Defra's Plant Health Division, the Plant Health and Seeds Inspectorate and the Plant Variety Rights Office and Seeds Division to form a new Agency called 'The Food and Environment Research Agency' (FERA).

From a practical viewpoint there will be no change to the interaction between the NBU and its bees inspectorate with beekeepers, associations and the bee industry. Telephone contacts will remain the same but e-mail addresses will change to the existing name followed by @fera.gsi.gov.uk (adam.vevers @fera.gsi.gov.uk) Existing e-mail addresses will continue to be viable for the foreseeable future.

The work of the NBU will concentrate on gaining a more accurate picture of the numbers and distribution of beekeepers and the status of the health of their colonies. . Knowing where all the bees and beekeepers are will make disease control and joint education initiatives more effective. E.g. With a comprehensive list all beekeepers in an area will be contacted in the event of an outbreak of a serious pest or disease so that they can take precautionary action. It will be more effective and will enable more efficient planning of inspections programmes. The NBU would encourage beekeepers that have not already registered on BeeBase to do so: details of how to are at the end of this article.

The extra funding is enabling more Seasonal Bee Inspectors to be appointed. Diagnostics will be strengthened to support the inspection team and there will be an increase in the time and effort put into the training and education programme. A new post of extension and learning officer is being created to deliver aspects of training and development .

BeeBase will be developed to provide advise on good beekeeping husbandry and show the range of training and education courses, run either by Bee Inspectors in their local area or organised at the NBU, York.. BeeBase will soon have a diary of major training events available for people to see and consider attending.

The NBU would be very pleased to hear from new beekeepers with whom we have not had any previous contact who can 'sign up' to Beebase at:

www.nationalbeeunit.com

If you have no Internet access you can also register by contacting your Regional Bee Inspector Adam Vevers 01364 653474 or by telephoning the National Bee Unit on 01 904 462 510.

The Bee Inspectors In Devon are:

Mick Street (tel; 01404 823277) Mid &East Devon

Peter Auger (tel: 01237 473710) North Devon

Glyn Berrington (tel: 01822 840418) West Devon

Adam Vevers (tel: 01364 653474) South Devon

Jo Widdicombe (tel:01752 822335) Plymouth &South Devon