



Annual Report – National Bee Unit Eastern Region December 2016

The 2016 Season – An Overview

In January stocks of bees looked very good, so much so that I think if it had been April it would have been possible to make up new stocks from splits. Unfortunately by the time April arrived it was another story, a cold March and then April living up to its name of being a very showery month, although this time the showers were of snow and hail stones had led to the colonies holding back. The previous autumn of 2015 had been exceptionally mild with record UK temperatures for November and the warmest December since records began in 1659. This warm winter had led to a higher than normal varroa load and the Api-Bi Oxal treatment was a lot less effective due to the large amount of brood present in the colonies.

The oil seed rape came into flower a week or two later than normal in most areas but there was little bee activity initially due to the persistent cool, damp conditions. However, those colonies that had remained strong or picked up more quickly and were in areas which had a wider range of forage managed to produce a good surplus during the extended, if intermittent, spring flow. The weather turned good in May for some forage, Hawthorne and Sycamore being worked well and it was perhaps a case of being 'in the right place at the right time'. With so few consecutive days of good weather, queen rearing was rather 'pot luck' too. Unsuccessful or poor mating was very common and many colonies that appeared to have a laying queen subsequently became queenless or turned to drone laying.

June was the wettest I could recall and at times very cold with daytime temperatures not going above 10C and the high rainfall led to exceptional totals around the area. Houghton Estate in North Norfolk recorded 6.5 inches of rain in the month. This weather had a detrimental effect again on the bees and certainly on the prospect of Queens mating successfully and reports soon came in from the Inspectors of higher than normal incidence of Drone Laying Queens. In one incidence a report from a beekeeper of 5 out of 6 hives having a Drone Laying Queen, not very good for the expected flow of honey

June's wet weather did have an upside and that was when the sun finally shone in July it lead to a greater yield from the Limes, Blackberry, Clover and the many wild flowers in the hedgerow. That is where the hedges are allowed to flourish and not cut regimentally as is seen in parts of the Region.



The sun in August continued to shine and beekeepers were reporting good yields of honey from the lowland heather and from the Sea Lavender.



The Hawthorn Yielded well in some parts of the region

September came and again on the whole some good weather allowed the bees to top up the stores with Ivy Honey, a wise move at this time is to feed some sugar syrup so the bees mix it with the Ivy Honey which will otherwise set like rock and the bees have great difficulty dealing with it in cold winters. The pollen it gives however enables the bees to go on breeding into the winter, giving the stocks a healthy number of young bees, to take them through the winter.

Throughout the season due to the inclement weather and unpredictability ,it proved that providing you kept on top of the swarming ,had good Queens and Varroa at low levels most beekeepers managed to get a crop of honey ,others struggled ,the honey yields being reported being between 15 pound and 100 pound.

In the autumn of 2015 Sylvia Pettitt decided to hang up her smoker and retire from the Eastern Region Inspectorate. Sylvia had done 7 seasons within the region covering both West and central Suffolk and at times up to the wilds of the North East coast of Norfolk and across into Cambridgeshire. Sylvia would be well known to beekeepers across the



Region as she took part in numerous training events passing over a huge amount of both experience and knowledge to the wider beekeeping audiences

In April 2016 Stewart Spinks decided to leave the inspectorate. Stewart had done 2 seasons as the bee inspector covering central and East Norfolk. He also helped with training events across the region and took a very active part in some major disease outbreaks.

Sylvia and Stewart I know will be missed by both the beekeepers and by their colleagues, who have worked with them over the years, so again I will take this opportunity to thank them for all the help and support and their enthusiasm and willingness to help beekeepers within the region and will wish them well for the future .

This brings us back to April 2016 and the process of looking for replacement inspectors. For the first time I found myself interviewing potential candidates in snow and hail stones at Sand Hutton, this certainly sorted out the beekeepers who could handle bees in adverse conditions. From the process of both a formal interview and practical assessment in the apiary we were able to offer 10 candidates posts across the Country, 2 of which in the Eastern Region were filled by Peter Davies and David Burns. Both Peter and David then received a month's training before taking up their respective areas, Peter covering West and Central Norfolk, North Cambridgeshire and South Lincolnshire and David covering the North East Suffolk and East Norfolk.

From the picture below most of you will recognise another well-known face, that of Andy Wattam, who in 2005 was appointed Regional Bee Inspector for the Eastern Region. During his time as RBI Andy became very well known amongst the beekeepers and associations, running numerous training events and doing an unprecedented number of talks across the region. Andy fulfilled this role until July 2009 when he accepted the role of National Bee Inspector

Coming forward to October 2016, Andy announced that he had decided to move on from his role as National Bee Inspector and go back to his farming roots and took up a post with the Red Tractor Scheme.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Andy for all the help and support he has given me over the last 11 years, it has been greatly appreciated. Also for the help and friendship he has shown to the rest of the team, who I know will miss him. I also know that many of the Associations from across the Region will also miss Andy as he was a regular speaker



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at numerous events around the Region, so I think together with myself and the Eastern Team and all the Associations within the Region I would wish Andy all the very best with his future career

A swarm of Bee Inspectors at Sylvia's retirement do.

Left to Right; Peter Folge, Dave Bonner, Stewart Spinks, Sandra Gray, Keith Morgan, Paul Horton, Peter Heath, Andy Wattam, Sylvia Pettitt, Fred Daynes





Eastern Region Training Events

In 2016 we ran 6 Bee Health Days across the Eastern region in the following Counties

8/05/2016 Kings Lynn and West Norfolk

28/05/2016 Hertfordshire

11/06/2016 Suffolk

16/06/2016 Essex

9/07/2016 Leicester and Rutland

23/07/2016 Lincoln

All these events were well attended and with the help from the associations we were able to make them as practical as possible with the use of their and their member's apiaries. Feedback from these events was on the whole very positive and a great opportunity for the newer members of associations to get to know more experienced beekeepers and to pick up very worthwhile information. I always feel that at the end of these days you always come away with a useful bit of information, however much you feel you already know.



Photos from Bee Health days around the Region.



DASH

As the Beefarmers within the Eastern Region know I coordinate between the NBU and the Beefarmers Association to run the Disease Assurance Scheme. (DASH)

In 2016 I organised 2 Beefarmer Refresher days and together with colleagues from the NBU we carried out a full day involving Disease Recognition, Disease Prevention and Inspecting for Disease. We also demonstrated the use of Shook Swarms and Bio Security methods to prevent it. Both of these events were well attended and I intend to run 2 more country wide in 2017.





Eastern Region Forum

On the 14th September we ran what has become the yearly forum for the Regions Bee Associations. This gives the representatives the opportunity to meet the Inspectorate, listen to the invited speakers and voice any concerns they or their members may have about bee health. This year we had Dr Giles Budge who as always gave 2 very informative talks, one on Chronic Bee Paralysis virus and the other on the 10 most common ailments of bees and the impact of these on their wellbeing.

Also attending was Mr Nigel Semmence who gave a very well informed talk on the spread of both Small Hive Beetle in Italy and the Asian Hornet in France and the preparation that the Inspectorate was doing for its expected arrival within the UK.



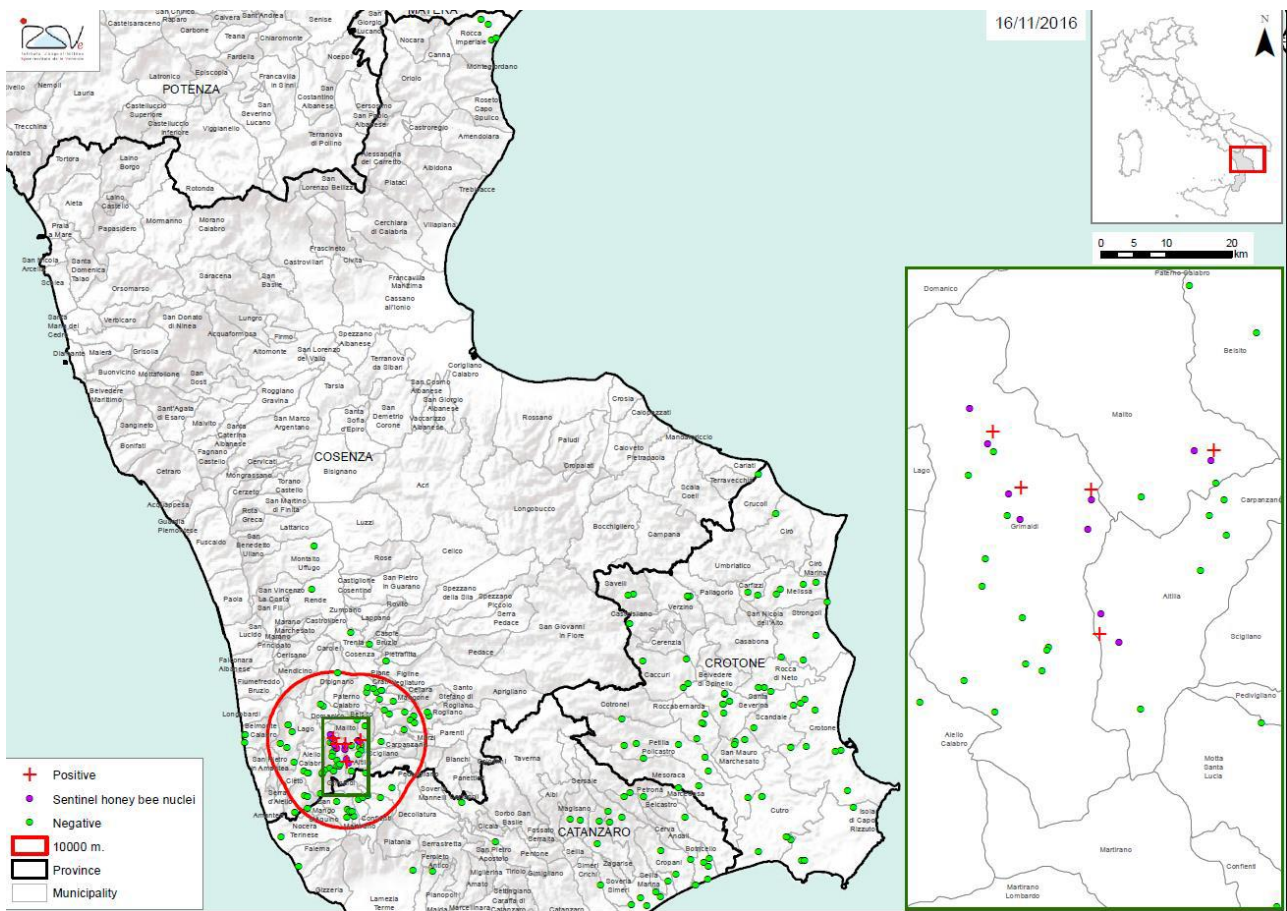
Small Hive Beetle (SHB)

In July this year we had the unwelcome news of a further outbreak of Small Hive Beetle about 100km north of the original finding near Gioia Tauro in Calabria, South West Italy. It is understood that this outbreak was found after the Italian authorities became aware of and traced an illegal movement of a significant number of colonies from the restricted area to several apiaries in the province of Cosenza, Calabria.

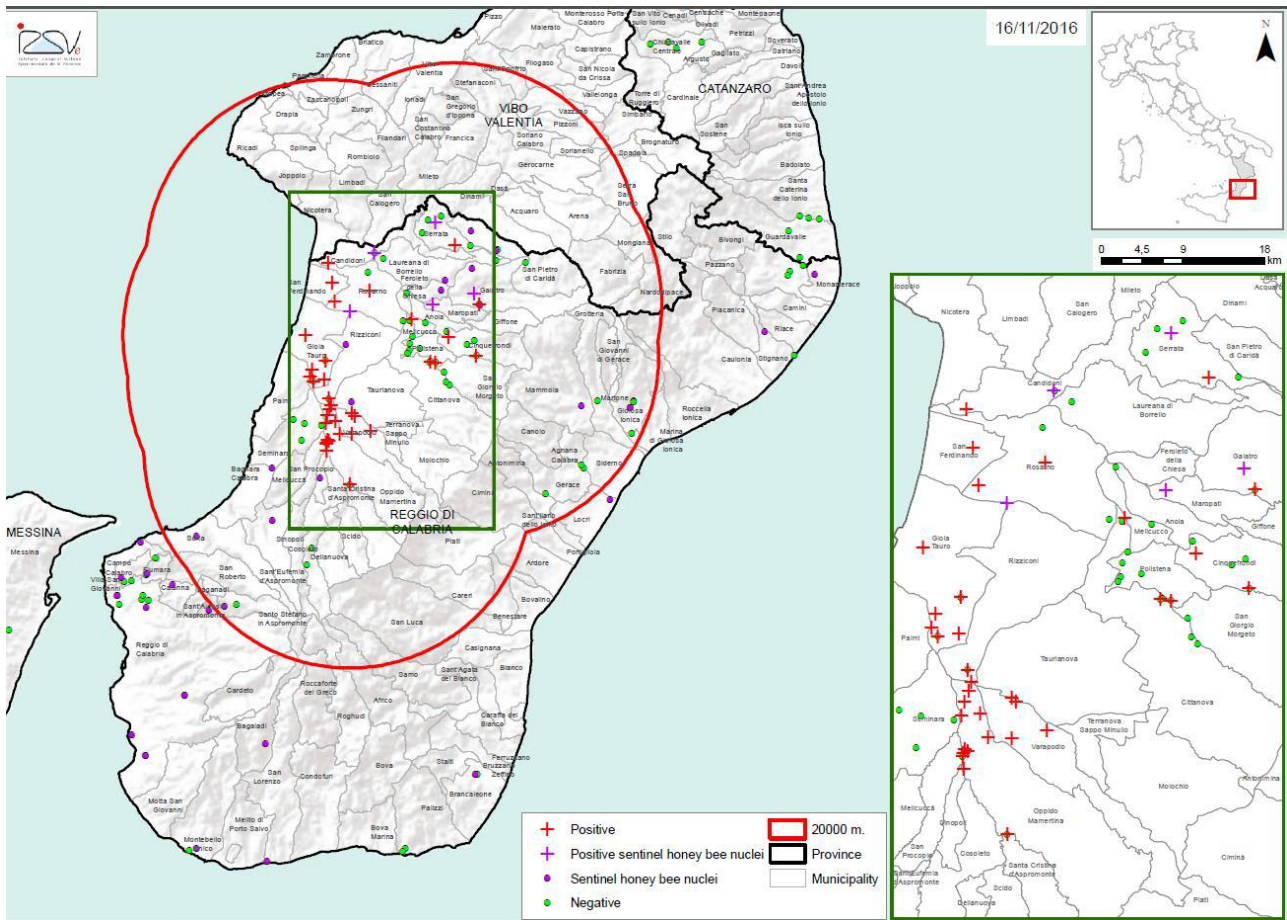
All the colonies were destroyed and inspections of surrounding apiaries commenced. A small number of adult beetles have since been found in one other apiary close by. Only time will tell whether the prompt action has eradicated SHB from this area as (so far) appears to be the case for Sicily where colonies were moved just before the first outbreak was discovered.



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A large number of sentinel apiaries have been set up in Calabria and Sicily, near apiary sites where SHB has been previously found and to monitor for any spread into other areas. Once again this year there was little found until late summer, apart from some adult beetles and one larva picked up in a small number of sentinel colonies in Calabria. However, since September and to date (16/11/16) another 34 apiaries within the original protection zone have been found to be infested with a significant cluster to the south of Gioia Tauro.



See <http://www.izsvenezie.com/aethina-tumida-in-italy/>

Despite considerable effort it is apparent that the Italian authorities have not yet managed to eradicate SHB from southern Italy, demonstrating the absolute necessity for the earliest detection of an incursion for this to be possible. The NBU continues to step up monitoring for SHB under the exotic pest surveillance programme at apiaries within England and Wales near to identified risk points for incursion. I am thankful to those beekeepers who add to the surveillance effort by being part of the Sentinel Apiary programme but I would encourage all beekeepers to make themselves aware of the signs of SHB and monitoring techniques as described in the NBU leaflet, 'The Small Hive Beetle – a serious threat to European apiculture', available as a download from BeeBase at www.nationalbeeunit.com or as a hard copy.

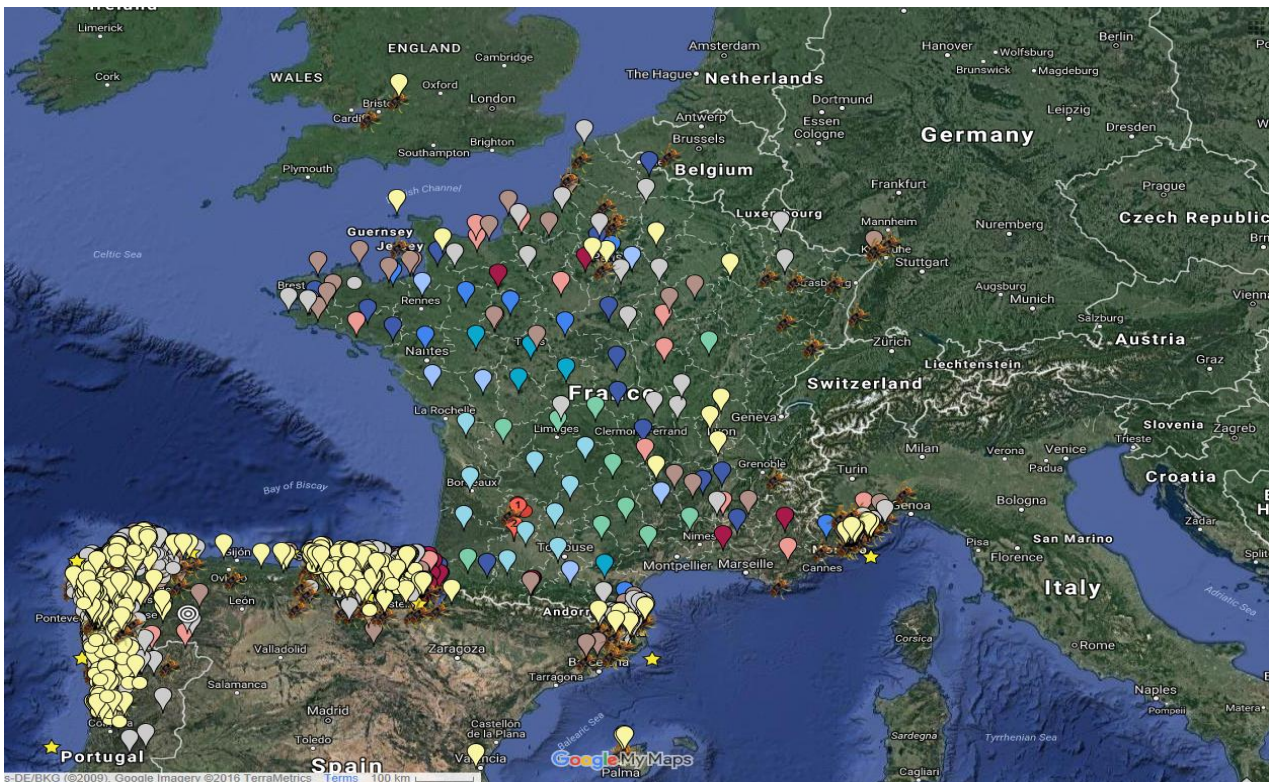
I make no apology for mentioning once again how essential it is that all apiaries are registered on BeeBase (as well as beekeeper contact details) so that we can identify apiaries at risk in the event of an incursion of SHB into the UK and target control measures effectively. Self-registration is free via the link at www.nationalbeeunit.com, or you can register by contacting the NBU office or your Regional Bee Inspector. It is also essential that all beekeepers abide by UK regulations for the import of bees from Europe and elsewhere, including submitting an Importer Notification Form, either on-line or to the NBU office so that we are able to follow up



on imports. It is of course illegal to import bees, queens or any bee-related products from within the 100km zone around the affected areas. Further details can be found on the Imports/Exports pages of BeeBase at <http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/index.cfm?sectionid=47>

Update on Asian hornet

A natural or assisted spread of the Asian hornet, *Vespa velutina*, from mainland Europe into the UK had been anticipated and a Contingency Plan put into place to deal with any confirmed outbreak. The google map illustrated (updated November 2016) shows the continuing spread of Asian hornet in Europe, including the first incursion into the British Isles in the Crown dependencies of Alderney and Jersey and subsequent incursions in the UK in Gloucestershire and North Somerset.



<https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?msa=0&mid=1jRfoi4oF6GmiGRgbXuD71Qpbw8s&ll=46.60925415505642%2C2.689161067645273&z=6>

The recent Defra press release <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/asian-hornet-outbreak-contained-in-gloucestershire-and-somerset> confirms the destruction of the nest found at Tetbury, Gloucestershire and no subsequent Asian hornet activity in this area or that of the two individual sightings in North Somerset (both dead specimens). Further details and pictures of the nest at Tetbury can be found on BeeBase 'recent news', <http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/public/News/news.cfm#177>



With the amount of traffic, both commercial and private, entering the UK from Europe further incursions are highly likely and, as experience has shown, could occur anywhere in the UK, not just in the higher risk areas along the South and South East coasts. The NBU will be assisting beekeepers in placing hornet traps in the affected areas early next year but all beekeepers are advised to put out monitoring traps with a sweet bait in apiaries in late winter. Experience in France has shown that these are highly attractive to queen hornets coming out of hibernation. These should be checked regularly, preferably daily so that non-target species can be released, and any suspect sightings reported to the Non-Native Species Secretariat at alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk and the NBU office or your Regional Bee Inspector. A fact sheet detailing a suitable home-made monitoring trap can be found on BeeBase at <http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/index.cfm?pageid=167>

An updated identification sheet for the Asian hornet and further information on the Asian hornet can also be found on the dedicated pages on BeeBase at <http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/index.cfm?pageid=208>



Eastern region foulbrood diseases and inspection statistics 2016

4029 colonies were inspected and 748 apiary visits made within the Eastern Region. A further 604 inspections were carried out in other regions as part of contingency exercises, management of high risk areas, disease outbreaks and Asian Hornet incursion.

Over half of the apiary inspections (400) were carried out as part of the NBU exotic pest surveillance programme, covering imports and apiaries in areas where there is an increased risk of an exotic pest incursion. These inspections focus on checking for Small Hive Beetle primarily followed by a full brood inspection for notifiable foul brood disease and other non-notifiable disorders.

County	Number of inspections	EFB	AFB
Bedfordshire	253		
Cambridgeshire	337	3	
Essex	262		
Hertfordshire	262		
Leicestershire	355	4	5
Lincolnshire	1024	27	
Norfolk	841	24	
Rutland	19		
Suffolk	676	22	
Other inspections	604		
Total	4633		



Further details and mapping can be found on the disease incidence pages of BeeBase at www.nationalbeeunit.com. It is recommended that these are checked regularly to see if there is any foulbrood disease close by.

All beekeepers registered on BeeBase with an email address will receive an automatic email alert if disease is found within 3km of the registered apiary. If you are self-registered, please ensure that you keep your apiary records up to date or contact me if you are unsure. Self-registration is recommended as it also gives beekeepers secure password protected access to personal details and inspection records

Eastern Region Sentinel Apiary Program

Around the Region we have set up 15 Sentinel Apiaries run by dedicated beekeepers and pictured below is the Regions oldest beekeeper running a Sentinel apiary Mr Frederick Durrant who this year has decided to again hang up his smoker and won't be participating in the program no more. I would like to thank Fred for his help over the years together with all the other beekeepers who participate in the program; it is greatly appreciated and enables us to have eyes on the ground in the fight to hopefully spot any potential pests before they get a foothold.





Eastern Region Inspectors and 2017 Season

From April 1st 2017 you can use the post code search on the contacts page of BeeBase to check who you're local SBI is, but over the winter period please direct all enquiries to me.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Seasonal Bee Inspectors who make up the Eastern region team for all their hard work during the past year.

The new season will start on 1st April 2017 and from that date their contact details will be as follows:

Sandra Gray	sandra.gray@apha.gsi.gov.uk	07775 119430
Fred Daynes	frederick.daynes@apha.gsi.gov.uk	07775 119435
David Burns	david.burns@apha.gsi.gov.uk	07900 365721
David Bonner	david.bonner@apha.gsi.gov.uk	07775 119434
Peter Folge	peter.folge@apha.gsi.gov.uk	07775 119433
Peter Heath	peter.heath@apha.gsi.gov.uk	07775 119429
Peter Davies	peter.davies@apha.gsi.gov.uk	07900 292160

Finally I would like to wish you all a great 2017

Keith

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