

Healthy Bees Plan

Summary Note of 4th Meeting of the Communications Working Group (CWG) 17th May 2010 – BIS Conference Centre London

Present:

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|-----------------|---------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------|
| Richard Ball | NBU, Fera | Tim Lovett | BBKA |
| Dan Basterfield | Bee Farmers' Association | Liz McIntosh | FERA |
| Sharon Blake | BBKA | Trish O'Donnell | Defra (strategic Comms Adviser) |
| Rob Chilton | Fera | Belinda Phillipson | Fera |
| Brian Clark | Welsh BKA newsletter | Carl Reynolds | Chair |
| Marie Holmes | FERA (Secretary of Group) | Claire Waring | Beecraft |

Apologies: Robert Smith - beekeeper, Gay Marris - NBU Fera, Alison Wilson - Fera, Joanne Smith - Defra Marketing, Robin Dean - Bee Farmer's Association, Amy Byrne - WAG, Helen Crews – Fera.

1. Welcome and introductions

Carl welcomed the Group including new attendees Tim Lovett and Sharon Blake from the British Beekeepers' Association.

The Chair was looking for the meeting to agree some concrete outputs including campaigns, key messages and delivery routes.

2. Presentation from People Science & Policy Ltd

Alan Worley and Suzanne King presented the findings from the Defra funded study of beekeeping practices. The presentation included the research method, a profile of respondents, the findings; including further detail on influences on behaviour and practice, deciding on husbandry methods, attitudes to husbandry methods and drivers and barriers to adopting good husbandry methods. More than 1000 beekeepers participated in the study through the in-depth interviews to the internet survey.

The study had four main objectives, which were to enable Defra to have a better understanding of:

- The way that beekeepers decide which husbandry methods to employ, and their experiences of, and attitudes to, these methods;
- How beekeepers behaviours and practices are influenced by the advice available to them;
- Drivers for, and barriers to, new beekeepers adopting good husbandry methods; and

- The most effective ways of influencing beekeepers to adopt better husbandry of their bees

The main conclusions from the study were tailor the message, clarify good practice, support industry training, and enhance and raise awareness about BeeBase.

3. Conclusions from PSP study, implications and next steps

During the discussion on the study, the following questions were put to PSP:

Q) What was the number of amateur colonies?

A) About half of those amateurs questioned had 1 or 2 colonies the rest had more but not over 40, which was considered to be commercial.

Q) How was the study advertised?

A) Through a wide range of sources including; EMR press office, Horticulture Week, links placed on peripheral beekeeping websites, WBKA newsletter, through the newsfeed on the BBKA website, HBP quarterly newsletter, local associations county secretary's, flyers through equipment suppliers and BeeCraft. It was noted that the largest return was from the BBKA newsfeed and local association county secretaries.

Q) how will the effectiveness be measured?

A) PSP would be summarising the detail of findings from the methods and putting together data tables, a data file and geographical breakdown, which CWG would be able to consider further.

ACTION: PSP to forward further summary, data tables, data file and geographical breakdown to Belinda Phillipson, Fera Project Officer.

Q) Whether PSP agreed with the observation that the study seemed to suggest the need of 'back to basics' training?

A) PSP felt there was a case for clarification of husbandry practices ie. a code of conduct and promotion of simple messages such as; join an association and register on BeeBase. It was noted that respondents liked the month by month breakdown in BeeCraft of what they should be doing each month.

Further detailed consideration of the study and its conclusions continued after the PSP team had left:

- Dan suggested the publicity of bad beekeeping practices as a quick win, he noted there was a lot out there on good practices but not so much on bad practices, such as varroa resistance, and more specifically, treatments which have been identified as ineffective against varroa (due to resistance) were still being used.
- Tim felt the research was too husbandry and pest and disease focussed. He would have liked to have seen sections on feeding and apiary types. Tim also felt that CWG needed a communication message and what would work best in communicating to the beekeeping group.
- In relation to publication, Fera confirmed that, as was usual practice for Defra-funded research, when the report has been finalised, it would be published on the Defra website.

- The discussion then turned to the key messages from the report on training. The report had suggested that experienced beekeepers learned from each other and were mentors to the lesser experienced beekeepers. The Group agreed that ideally trainers needed to be competent and to deliver training of a consistent standard. Dan suggested that the Group could produce a series of good quality standard presentations to help those who would like to teach and ensure consistency of message. These could be included in the BBKA's course in a case.
- In relation to BeeBase, the report had indicated that it was not well known by around 25% of beekeepers in the survey. The Group suggested potential improvements such as, email alerts, search engine optimisation and writing to new registrants informing them about, and welcoming them to BeeBase. The Group requested that a member of the BeeBase development team should attend a future CWG meeting to answer questions about what would be possible. Liz noted that it was important to prioritise what BeeBase should evolve into but that any changes were unlikely to happen this year.

ACTION: Fera (NBU and IT experts) to develop proposition on next phase for development of BeeBase (building on findings from PSP study plus other planned work) – to be discussed at next meeting of CWG in August.

ACTION: It was agreed that Fera prepare item for BeeBase and bee press on key findings from PSP study setting out various profiles of beekeepers and weaving in key messages messages (make use of available key sources of information and/or training; register on BeeBase and join local association). Fera would circulate to CWG as soon as PSP report has been signed off and posted on Defra website.

4. Report from PMB and the 2nd meetings of HEG and SEAG

Liz reported back from the 6th meeting of the PMB where the BBKA were welcomed back. The BBKA had presented a proposal to the PMB for three potential areas of funding, which were;

- Filming of footage for their course in a case training kit;
- Working with the further education sector for credit based beekeeper learning;
- Setting up a training network

The Office of Government Commerce has completed their report on the review of the Healthy Bees Plan. Interviews were held in March with those involved in the HBP which included; the chairs of the working groups, PMB members, directors and those involved with the management of the plan. Fera were implementing the recommendations from the report.

PMB had also discussed beekeeper registration on BeeBase and had advised Fera that compulsory registration should not be pursued.

Liz reported back on the 2nd meetings of HEG and SEAG. HEG discussed the report from the roadshows and their preference was to continue to do further roadshows but to work more closely with the local associations when doing so. SEAG focussed on their workplan and viewed a presentation on the recently completed updated risk assessment of the Small Hive Beetle. Liz reminded CWG that the notes from the

meetings of the Board, HEG and SEAG were posted on BeeBase when they'd been cleared.

5.& 6. Further input into revised workplan and review of draft planning matrix

The Chair paused to check whether the Group, broadly speaking, agreed that the workplan and planning matrix were helpful and useful documents to frame the work of the CWG. The Group agreed these were useful.

Rob Chilton opened a discussion on which specific groups of stakeholders (segments) in the planning matrix the Group considered we should target. Trish O'Donnell suggested we focused on those identified in the PSP report.

Rob agreed to add beekeeper trainers as a new segment of the matrix and to review (other) stakeholder segments (to include National Trust, Coop and others). He would also further develop to matrix to include a 'month by month' plan of campaigns and engagement activities.

The Group agreed that the 3 key messages from the PSP report were highly relevant for new beekeepers and were summed up as follows:

- Get information;
- Join an association;
- Register on BeeBase.

Brian Clark then reminded the Group about the WBKA's current project to produce A6 laminated picture cards for beekeepers to use in the field. Dan Basterfield suggested that we support this initiative as the PSP study had suggested that 89% of beekeepers weren't confident in their beekeeping skills and that every beekeeper could be issued these cards as not only a guide but also for reassurance. Making sure all beekeepers had a free set of advisory cards that they could use in the field would have an immediate positive impact. BeeCraft and BBKA had also developed and issued similar cards. A brief discussion followed on whether there was value for money in developing a further set of advisory leaflets where others had already been developed by the organisations represented on the Group. The conclusion reached was that most members of the Group did not support the Healthy Bees producing a new set of picture cards.

The Group did agree however, that there should be a healthy bees leaflet produced in time for the summer shows capturing the 3 key messages from the PSP study as well as the headline core messages about beekeeping practices which Richard Ball suggested were:

- Feeding;
- Nosema;
- Varroa;
- Improving husbandry standards

The Group felt these were good areas to focus campaigns and material and supported the proposal to produce a leaflet and promotional material for upcoming shows and events.

ACTION: Richard to develop text on core messages about beekeeping practices for inclusion in the leaflet for the summer shows.

The Group agreed that healthy bees leaflets should be available at future show opportunities, whether Defra or association stands. It was agreed that it made sense to be more visible in the agricultural sector by perhaps working with those who already had a presence at the shows to keep costs down and to produce and use material with the key messages identified by the Group above.

ACTION: Rob and Marie to prepare for summer shows by preparing leaflet with 3 key messages (PSP) and key beekeeping themes, including putting together a list of shows.

Tim Lovett commented that HEG and SEAG should provide more of a steer to CWG on the work it should focus on, and that the Group should be working on delivery of messages identified by those groups.

Summing up, the Chair said that whilst we waited for outputs from HEG and SEAG, CWG should press ahead with some self evident areas of work the Group, such as key messages from the PSP study and the planned leaflets for summer shows.

7. Contingency plan on exotic threats

Liz updated the Group about the revised version of the contingency plan which had been refreshed as a result of the recently completed risk assessment on small hive beetle. SEAG were reviewing the revised contingency plan and once they had offered comments, Fera would finalise and publish during this beekeeping season. In the meantime the Group thought it would be pertinent for Fera/NBU to prepare an update note on Small Hive Beetle and link to the contingency plan, informing of what Fera was doing now and in the future about the recent interception in Hawaii.

ACTION: Fera to write a short note by end May on the NBU's response to SHB for CWG to disseminate and for publication on BeeBase.

8. Review report on assessing effectiveness of roadshows

Liz reported that HEG had reviewed the preliminary report on the roadshows and feedback notes. HEG had recommended further roadshows which could be run in the Autumn/Winter. Marie Holmes was contacting a sample of 20 attendees of the roadshows during May to seek further feedback and in particular, which, if any practical lessons they were now applying to their beekeeping practices. It was noted that the publicity for future roadshows needed to be reviewed to look for more cost effective options; publicity was needed further in advance of the event. Again the presence at agricultural shows was mentioned and how promotional material could be distributed at such events.

9. AOB and date of next meeting

Liz proposed that it would make sense for future meetings of the Group to include a standard agenda item at which members would share with others any information about current or emerging campaigns or events in which the Group could be involved or have a presence at. In addition, it made sense to share this information with the members in between meetings. The Group agreed.

ACTION: All – Share with Group any campaigns/shows where we could have an involvement.

In summary, we have four campaigns to implement during 2010/11 (i) 2nd phase of Action Plan on raising awareness about BeeBase (building on findings from PSP report); (ii) promoting findings from the PSP study; (iii) raising awareness about exotic threats contingency plan and SHB in Hawaii; (iv) 3 key messages and 4 pillars (posters and leaflets) at summer and autumn shows including national, local countryside and beekeeping events.

The next meeting will be held in August. Marie will send a Doodlepoll suggesting dates.

Healthy Bees Project Team
Fera
18 May 2010