

**Healthy Bees Plan**  
**Summary Note of 6<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Communications Working**  
**Group (CWG)**  
**10 February 2011 – Defra, Nobel House, London**

**Present:**

Carl Reynolds	Chair
Liz McIntosh	Food & Environment Research Agency (Fera)
Rob Chilton	
Alison Wilson	
Marie Holmes	
Gay Marris	
Richard Ball	
Dan Basterfield	
Robin Dean	
Tim Lovett	British Beekeepers' Association (BBKA)
Sharon Blake	
Trish O'Donnell	Defra Strategic Comms
Claire Waring	BeeCraft
Brian Clarke	Welsh Beekeepers' Association (WBKA)
Bob Smith	Beekeeper
Amy Byrne	Welsh Assembly Government (WAG)

**Apologies:**

Helen Crews – Food & Environment Research Agency

**1. Welcome and Introductions**

The Chair welcomed attendees to the 6<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Communications Working Group. Apologies were received from Helen Crews.

**2. Update from the Healthy Bees Project Manager**

Business case

The business case for the next 4 years of Healthy Bees implementation was finalised following advice from the Defra owner that a realistic budget for phase 2 should be based on a 50% reduction of the budget allocated to phase 1. The case was now being reviewed by Defra's economists and would be put before the Defra Local Approvals Panel for consideration and decision. An outcome is expected by the end of February.

## Course in a Case

Fera's contract with the BBKA and NDB to deliver new training materials (course in a case) and to roll out train the trainer events was making good progress. Demand was strong for NDB courses. Sharon Blake enquired how the courses had been advertised, which was through the HBP quarterly newsletter, direct contact with local associations and BeeBase. Twice the number of applicants had applied to places available. A rigorous selection process was used to ensure the best candidate trainers were given the opportunity to attend these courses.

There was a discussion on communications and how they should be better arranged, for example, getting the messages into publications in good time and warning editors of when articles were up-coming. Tim Lovett pointed out 'top down' approaches for dissemination weren't necessarily the best approach and 'bottom up' should be considered more. It was agreed that future courses should be advertised well in advance.

Tim Lovett reported that BBKA's Spring Convention would have two sessions on course in a case. Delegates would be able to find out more about course in a case on Saturday through the speaker's corner. The Sunday session would be 1 ½ hours and was aimed at trainers. Around 200 beekeeper trainers had attended the training events so far with the aim of 400 to be trained by the end of March.

## HBP Working Groups

PMB met in December and decided that their next meeting would be an extended PMB where the Chair, secretary and a member of each working group would be invited to review phase 1 and consider priorities and governance for phase 2. This meeting was scheduled for 14 March and would be held at the NFU offices based in Stoneleigh.

Actions from SEAG and HEG for CWG included a press release on what to look for when buying bees and a leaflet to be drafted on imports guidance.

## EU Presidency - Hungary

The Hungarian Presidency had identified honeybee health as one of its four priorities during its 6 month term. A working group had been put together, which the Project Manager attended, to identify additional actions at a national and international level for honeybee health. There were three further meetings planned to take place before May, after which, the Presidency would produce conclusions to present to the Agriculture Council. The Commission noted that there wasn't a single body of beekeepers in the EU which they could talk to. Robin Dean suggested the European Professional Beekeepers Association (EPBA) as a group the Commission could talk to about bee health.

**ACTION:** Liz McIntosh to forward the European Professional Beekeepers Association contact details to the Commission as a possible representative EU-wide body of beekeepers [Robin Dean to send Liz these contact details].

### **3. Review of CWG's Impact and Effectiveness in Phase 1**

In order to help prepare for the 14 March PMB meeting, the Chair proposed that he would produce a review note of what the Group had completed, what had gone well, what had gone poorly and thoughts for the future. The Chair would present this at the 14 March PMB as CWG's views.

**ACTION:** Carl Reynolds to produce a review paper on effectiveness of CWG during Phase 1, and will share as a draft with CWG for comment. This will then be used at the PMB meeting on 14 March where a review of Phase 1 and forward look to Phase 2 will take place.

The Chair then opened discussion and the following points were made:

Examples of what went well:

- Raising the profile of BeeBase and the importance of registration, as shown by increased numbers registered on BeeBase
- BeeBase offered more information to beekeepers
- Association numbers were up
- Output such as roadshows and leaflets had been well received
- Increased cross working between interested parties and better understanding of each other, leading to greater coordination between CWG members to get information out to beekeepers

Examples of what went badly:

- CWG had to work independently of SEAG and HEG as they had not sent enough requests for comms output from CWG (Amy Byrne suggested that SEAG and HEG should forward a report to CWG of the outcomes of their meetings). Brian Clark suggested that the timing of meetings for the various groups should be better coordinated
- WBKA didn't have the beekeeping essentials leaflet provided to them for distribution in their newsletter **ACTION:** Marie Holmes to send out 1500 copies of the beekeeping essentials leaflet to WBKA for circulating with their next newsletter to members
- Interactions and coordination between the working groups had not worked well (Dan Basterfield said that a kick-off meeting should have been held with all working groups so we could have learnt what was expected of each other)

Suggestions for the future:

- Joining up of surveys to beekeepers where possible
- Merger of HEG and CWG (mixed response from the Group whether this was a good idea or not. Rob Chilton suggested that the terms of reference from HEG would help show CWG what they do. Also suggested sharing the planning matrix with the other working groups which would help identify concerns with a potential joining of implementers vs. theorists)
- A looser project structure with smaller sub-groups
- Further overlap between groups
- Explicit terms of reference for each group and shared between all
- PMB to provide a stronger steer to the working groups

The Chair noted the following composition for the Group and asked was this balance right for the Group. It was agreed that although there were a higher number of Fera members the balance was right as representation was from different areas of expertise.

Fera – 5  
Defra – 1  
WAG – 1  
Others – 8  
Independent chair – 1

#### **4. Future Planning for Communications Activities (CWG 6/1 & 6/2)**

The Project Manager asked whether paper CWG 6/2 was useful to look back at comms activities between meetings. It was agreed it was helpful.

**ACTION:** Marie Holmes to compile list of comms activities completed since last meeting ahead of the next CWG meeting. It was agreed by the Group that this retrospective look was helpful.

The Project Manager asked the Group what the future comms activities should be. Dan Basterfield suggested the Group should support/promote the idea of education not just being classroom based learning but that there were other ways of education such as through course in a case etc. Sharon Blake noted that the Group should all aim to publicise each other's messages. Rob Chilton stressed that planning was key and that plans were shared with the other working groups. Each member of CWG should know what was on each other's agenda for the next 12 months to enable effective cross working.

**ACTION:** Sub-group of Rob Chilton, Marie Holmes and Liz McIntosh to create a draft comms plan for CWG for 2011 and beyond. This will detail month by month activities and communications channels and will identify specific work for the Group to undertake in the coming year(s).

Brian Clark suggested each working group need to think a season ahead and anticipate what was coming.

The small hive beetle contingency plan was due to be published by the end of February on BeeBase. In support of this plan, CWG 6/1 (small hive beetle leaflet) was produced. Any comments on paper CWG 6/1 should be forwarded to Rob Chilton.

**ACTION:** All – final comments on draft SHB leaflet to Rob Chilton by Friday 18 February. The contingency plan is due to be published by the end of February and this leaflet is required to accompany it.

A discussion was held on the potential for a leaflet for importers of bees. It was agreed it would be helpful for importers to be clear about the regulations and that a sub-group (Robin Dean, Liz McIntosh, Marie Holmes and Kim Chadwick (HEG)) should work on putting something together in the coming weeks. Trish O'Donnell pointed out that any new leaflets not outlined in the original submission of the Defra wide marketing freeze, which came into effect May 2010, would need to be applied for. Trish also pointed out that if elements of the original submission hadn't been used or were unlikely to be used, that an amendment could be put forward to Defra for approval.

**ACTION:** Sub-group of Robin Dean, Marie Holmes, Liz McIntosh and Kim Chadwick to develop a leaflet for importers lifting key messages from the revised imports guidance. It was agreed that this would be helpful for importers to be clear on what was expected of them.

**ACTION:** Marie Holmes to clarify status of the completed and branded (blue) best practice templates, which HEG and CWG have approved, and report back to CWG on when they will be posted on BeeBase. BBKA News, BeeCraft and WBKA News (Sharon, Claire and Brian) to inform Marie of their plans to disseminate the templates to their readers when available.

## **5. Code of Practice on selling and buying bees (CWG 6/3 & 6/4)**

Richard Ball introduced the topic of a code of practice for buying and selling bees. He said that the sale and purchase of bees undoubtedly led to problems for beekeepers and that there used to be a national standard some years ago which fell by the wayside and it was felt this area of work needed to be revived. The tracing of purchase of nuclei was a difficult task for the NBU and was resource intensive. Richard proposed actions at industry level and small beekeeper level. Bob Smith had circulated a draft traceability form which was deemed very useful by the Group. It was agreed that industry needed to be more pro-active and perhaps consider the introduction of a 'gold bee standard' which would help reassure purchasers.

Robin Dean updated the Group with the plans which the BFA had for a voluntary certification scheme for selling bees. Robin also said that the BFA would be happy to sign up to a certification scheme.

Tim Lovett enquired whether the NBU had any definitive figures that the sale of diseased nuclei was causing a problem. Richard reported that whilst he had no figures to hand it was a considerable problem. Tim also enquired whether the initiative would make a real contribution. Bob Smith felt that it would and that there were two issues, quality and traceability. Quality was longer term but something could be done about traceability straight away and it was an opportunity to raise consumer expectation and quality may rise as a result. Also with better traceability the Inspectors would spend less time attempting to trace the origin of nuclei.

**ACTION:** Sub-group of Richard Ball, Bob Smith, Robin Dean, Gay Marris, Dan Basterfield and Marie Holmes to create guidance/leaflet on the sale and purchasing of bees, with Richard as lead author. To include traceability forms (drafted by Bob Smith although subject to NBU's views about resource implications). Draft to be circulated to CWG for comment. Aiming to post on BeeBase in early March.

There was a discussion on general press vs. beekeeping press, and caution was expressed on misrepresentation from the general press. Liz McIntosh asked whether the NBU could prepare guidance on buying bees ready for spring onto BeeBase.

Regarding publicity of the guidance, copy deadlines were discussed and it was discussed that Sharon Blake, Claire Waring and Gay Marris should work together to place the guidance in their various publications. Brian Clark said that the next WBKA newsletter would be quite late for this but would be included anyway and requested the information as early as possible as he would put it on the website and issue a notice to secretaries.

**ACTION:** Gay Marris, Sharon Blake and Claire Waring to agree how best to work together with guidance and other material to maximise impact on BeeBase and in their publications, starting with the guidance on sale and purchase of bees guidance.

## **6. Update/discussion on blog monitoring (CWG 6/5)**

Marie Holmes updated the Group with the blog monitoring exercise observations. It was agreed that no specific topics from this exercise this time needed to be addressed by CWG producing additional information and advice to beekeepers. Amy Byrne suggested that this monitoring exercise should continue and the results of this and future iterations should be forwarded to HEG and SEAG for them to conclude what, if anything, required CWG's input. Alison Wilson suggested a myth busting section on BeeBase, the Group agreed this was a good idea but would need to be able to prove what was said if/when challenged.

**ACTION:** Marie Holmes to continue monitoring beekeepers' blogs and groups ahead of each CWG meeting to identify issues which it would be helpful to address by specific guidance or advice.

## **7. Upcoming activities/events from the Group**

- BBKA Spring Convention, 15-17 April
- NDB courses continue
- Welsh Beekeepers Convention, 26 March
- NBU Bee Inspectors Conference, early April

Richard Ball updated the Group with a request from a Cornwall spray liaison officer who had contacted the NBU and enquired whether it would be possible for them and BeeBase to link up to issue a warning to beekeepers of pending spraying activities. This would also provide a further incentive for registration.

## **8. Draft minutes of 5<sup>th</sup> meeting – review of actions**

Further work required on action point 2 'explore with NBU the feasibility (practical and data aspects) of undertaking a swop of databases eg, through a third party, to get a better understanding of total numbers of beekeepers'. Tim Lovett expressed this could be completed relatively inexpensively. Sharon Blake noted that BeeBase registration details weren't in the BBKA new starter packs.

**ACTION:** Marie Holmes to identify potential independent third parties and their costs for investigating BeeBase and BBKA memberships to check similarities and differences to help understand total numbers of beekeepers. First step will be to check data protection aspects and whether BeeBase data can be used for this purpose.

**ACTION:** Marie Holmes to forward registration leaflets to BBKA (if available through current stocks) as it was noted in the meeting that these weren't currently in the new members packs.

The rest of the actions were complete.

## **9. AOB and next meeting**

Gay Marris updated the Group with her visit to the PHSI conference which was held in January. Gay gave a presentation on the Asian hornet advising that this could come in on the type of consignments they handle and asked inspectors to check and be vigilant for it.

Gay enquired whether the Group should publish the same thing at the same time or to stagger. It was dependant on the issue but was thought that when we do disseminate information, that it was made clear who had received it already and what was expected of each other.

There was a brief discussion on local association tick boxes and the confusion around whether beekeepers thought they were registered on BeeBase when the box

was ticked. Greater clarity was required about whether ticking the box was granting permission for their details to be forwarded or whether they were being signed up to BeeBase, as many had thought this.

Tim Lovett asked whether the NBU had email addresses for all those registered on BeeBase, it was thought that the NBU had carried out a mailshot exercise to those without email addresses requesting them.

**ACTION:** Bob Smith volunteered to check with NBU what had been sent to date.

The Project Manager asked for any comments on the contingency plan and executive summary for the small hive beetle to be forwarded by Friday 18 February.

**ACTION:** All - to forward comments to Liz McIntosh on SHB contingency plan and executive summary.

Date of next meeting – TBC

Healthy Bees Project Team  
Fera  
14 February 2011