

**Healthy Bees Plan**  
**Summary Note of 9<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Communications Working**  
**Group (CWG)**  
**5 March 2012 – Teleconference**

**Present:**

Carl Reynolds	Chair
Liz McIntosh	Food & Environment Research Agency (Fera)
Rob Chilton	
Marie Holmes	
Alison Wilson	
Gay Marris	
Claire Waring	Bee Craft
Bob Smith	Beekeeper

**Apologies:**

Helen Crews	Food & Environment Research Agency
Matthew Isted	Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD)
Tim Lovett	British Beekeepers' Association (BBKA)
Sharon Blake	
Trish O'Donnell	Defra External Comms
Robin Dean	Bee Farmers Association (BFA)
Dan Basterfield	
Emmanuel Blaevoet	Welsh Beekeepers' Association (WBKA)
Amy Byrne	Welsh Government (WG)

**1. Welcome and Introductions**

The Chair welcomed attendees to the 9<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Communications Working Group. A welcome was extended to Emmanuel and Rebecca Blaevoet, who would be joining CWG to replace Brian Clark as Editor of WBKA News, but were unable to join in with the teleconference.

Richard Ball retired in December as the NBU's Extension and Learning Officer and Brian Clark retired as Editor of WBKA News. Our thanks go out to both Richard and Brian for their time and contributions to CWG.

**2. Comms plan for CWG during 2011/12 (CWG 9/1)**

Rob Chilton introduced the comms plan which was being used to guide the campaign activity and assist with the planning of material and inserts into the

beekeeping press. Marie Holmes had received an update from Bee Craft and would work this into the plan.

Liz McIntosh updated the group that the Bee Farmers Association (BFA) had a new Secretary, Margaret Ginman, who would also be sharing the Editor role with David Bancalari for BFA News. Margaret would be joining Project Management Board (PMB) and would also be invited to either join CWG, or to be included on correspondence/ updates from the Group.

### **3. Review and update HBP workplan for 2012/13 (PMB 17/1)**

Liz McIntosh confirmed that approval was granted by Defra Local Approvals Panel for the next three years of HBP funding (2012/13 to 2014/15). £579k is allocated per year covering:

- £60k – enhanced education programme
- £404k – additional inspectors
- £50k – NBU based Coordinator
- £10k - BeeBase technical enhancements
- £5k – survey of beekeepers husbandry practices and overwintering losses
- 350k – project management costs, including part time Project Manager

The work plan (circulated as paper PMB 17/1) would be issued to PMB at their next meeting on 3 April. Activities flagged as red were; item 8 – BeeBase to become the authoritative source of advice for beekeepers and item 13 – secure additional funding for HBP education and research through sponsors. Recruitment for the BeeBase co-ordinator role was underway and had a closing date of 14 March, this meant that there wouldn't be anyone in place before the end of the financial year, which this work plan was focused on. Following the last meeting of PMB (14 December), it was proposed by the BFA to seek sponsorship to help set up a bee farming recruitment campaign, which PMB supported and would be led by Margaret Ginman. Fera would work with BFA to invite potential sponsors to a seminar/ workshop to explore scope of campaign and potential sponsors.

Marie Holmes asked the group what to do with activity 9 – advice and campaign to encourage local queen-rearing initiatives, given Richard Ball's retirement. Gay Marris said she would consult with colleagues in the NBU to identify who could lead on this. It was agreed that everyone from the Group would also consider who could lead on this work.

**ACTION: All** to consider and propose a suitable replacement for Richard Ball on the Group as a technical expert following his retirement in December.

**ACTION: Gay Marris** to consult with colleagues in the NBU to identify who could lead on workplan activity 9. **Bob Smith**, to also consider any beekeepers who could lead on this work.

**ACTION: Liz McIntosh** to raise Richard Ball replacement issue at next PMB meeting to scope for potential candidates.

It was asked whether there was anything that we'd like to see in the work plan for next year? The Chair suggested to include communications activity effectiveness into the workplan for 2012/13 to review whether anything we had done had made a difference i.e. dissemination and use of advice, and suggested seeking feedback on leaflets that had been sent out, and suggested this to be a small qualitative piece of research.

**ACTION: All** to forward suggestions on potential additional communication or other activities for the 2012/13 workplan (building on paper 17/1 which is the 2011/12 workplan) to Marie Holmes by **Friday 16 March**. Suggestions would be considered by PMB at their 3 April meeting.

#### **4. Article for bee press on RAS (CWG 9/2)**

Gay introduced the paper on the RAS article which had been written by the NBU for the beekeeping press and asked if there were any suggestions from the Group. Bob Smith offered some suggestions, and it was decided to mark these suggestions in track changes and forward to Gay directly.

Alison Wilson asked was there any surprises from the survey or anything new/interesting? Pathogens that weren't previously detected were found, but the main outcome confirmed that the priority inspection service was working. Israeli acute paralysis virus (IAPV) was seldom found and was the driver behind the word cloud (figure 4) in an effort to illustrate how infrequently this potential risk indicator of Colony Collapse Disorder was found.

It was asked whether there was a good news story angle for a press release from the research and report. However it was felt that due to the publication of the NBU end of season report which was published on BeeBase in December that there was no new relevant news to add and the most newsworthy angles of evidence and impact were covered and reinforced in this article for the beekeeping press.

**ACTION: All** to forward any comments on the Random Apiary Survey final results paper for the beekeeping press (paper CWG 9/2) to Gay Marris by Friday 9 March.

#### **5. Update on BeeBase Co-ordinator role – workplan and progress (PMB 16/7)**

Liz McIntosh introduced paper 16/7 which showed progress made against the original CWG plan for 2011/12. The NBU were in the process of recruiting an Office Manager which would include elements of the BeeBase Co-ordinator role, the closing date for this vacancy was 14 March. Gay updated the Group that in the meantime whilst recruitment wasn't possible, the NBU had invited Andy Cuthbertson of Fera to complete some of the tasks identified on the plan. Gay also informed the Group how NBU administrative support team met weekly with Oliver Wardman (Fera

systems development team) and went through a priority list, which included this brief. Liz McIntosh noted that the paper should be updated ahead of the next meeting of PMB and it was suggested that Helen Crews should do this.

**ACTION: Helen Crews** to update BeeBase Co-ordinator workplan (PMB 16/7) with developments ahead of the next PMB meeting scheduled for 3 April.

## **6. Update on Gateway review recommendations and actions**

Several members of the Project Management Board and working groups were interviewed for the Gateway Review of Healthy Bees Implementation between 13-15 December 2011. Defra requires regular independent reviews of projects at key points – such as before agreeing to more funding to ensure that the project is on track and delivering results as well as value for money.

The report from the review was not published but we were sharing the recommendations with PMB and, as appropriate, with working groups. One of the recommendations was to consider the workplan and activities of the working groups and this raised the question of whether HEG and CWG should merge. PMB would consider this at their 3 April meeting. The Chair asked were there any thoughts on this recommendation from the Group? Most saw some merit in joining as there was some duplication of ideas and considering the technical expertise gap which Richard Ball's retirement left in CWG, was there a suitable person from HEG? It was felt that simply joining the two groups wouldn't work as there would be too many members and it was stressed that CWG shouldn't lose its main communication channels which were so important to the success of the Group and its work.

To increase transparency and understanding between the working groups of the Healthy Bees Plan it was decided to circulate the monthly highlight report to all of working groups where previously it was only circulated to PMB.

## **7. Update on work with bee suppliers to develop good practice guidance on supply of nuclei**

During December and January, Liz McIntosh and Kim Chadwick (secretary of HEG) had been working with the main bee nuclei suppliers to share with them recent evidence that clearly showed some bee suppliers were selling diseased bees. The bee suppliers had agreed to work with Fera to develop best practice guidance on the supply of nuclei. This was now ready and would be issued in the April BBKA News. The guidance also provided purchasers who buy through suppliers who have adopted the guidance, more confidence in the quality of the nuclei supplied. A letter was sent to beekeeping suppliers during February informing them of the guidance and invited them to adopt the guidelines (if not already doing so) and to display at point of sale/ on their website etc. when published.

## **8. Upcoming activities/ events from group**

Bob Smith said that he used every opportunity when meeting beekeepers to press registration and the use of BeeBase. There were no other specific activities/ events raised by other members of the Group.

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

The Chair reviewed the actions arising from the last meeting of CWG (7 October). Actions which were still in progress were:

1. Liz McIntosh to ask beekeeping suppliers (when they meet Fera later this year to identify how to minimise disease risks from buying and selling bees) to act as another communications channel for Healthy Bees implementation.

Liz updated the Group that the first priority had been working with suppliers to develop a best practice guidance on the sale of nuclei. Fera would aim to also encourage their co-operation to communicate HBP messages wider. In the meantime these suppliers would also be distributing the medicines record card which was in development.

4. Rob Chilton to insert a feedback form into the electronic versions of NBU's leaflets on Varroa and Foulbroods for posting on BeeBase.

Rob updated the Group that an exemption case was being developed by the NBU for printing of Foulbroods etc. and a feedback form would be included with these hard copies in addition to a feedback form to be inserted into the electronic versions on BeeBase.

13. Liz McIntosh to find out from WG whether they consider that Welsh beekeepers have sufficient information on, and access to the HBP training courses, as BBKA and NDB felt there hadn't been a large uptake from Wales.

This is ongoing and is periodically considered at HEG meetings.

The rest of the minutes were signed off and Marie Holmes would post on BeeBase.

## **10. Update on BeeBase action plan and blog monitoring**

Marie Holmes updated the group that the January quarterly newsletter on the Healthy Bees Plan had been posted on three forums; Scottish Beekeepers Association, Beekeepers Forum and Biobees with the user name 'HealthyBeesPlan'. The newsletter had been well received and several people said that they would like some of the NDB training courses held in the north. Marie also reported on a post which highlighted the sale of a garden beehive from a well know shopping channel which included potentially misleading information on how to look after bees. Full

details of the thread can be found at  
<http://www.beekeepingforum.co.uk/showthread.php?t=15153>.

### **11. AOB and next meeting**

Date of next meeting would be decided following PMB's decision on whether to merge CWG and HEG.

Healthy Bees Project Team  
Fera  
13 March 2012