

**Minutes of the Healthy Bees Plan
Project Management Board
5th Meeting 3rd March 2010
9 Millbank, London**

Present:

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| Helen Crews | Food & Environment Research Agency [Fera] (Chair) |
| Helen Carter | Food & Environment Research Agency (Secretary) |
| Liz McIntosh | Healthy Bees Project Manager [Fera] |
| John Home | Bee Farmers' Association [BFA] |
| John Howat | Bee Farmers' Association |
| Chris Hartfield | National Farmers' Union [NFU] |
| Huw Jones | Welsh Assembly Government [WAG] <i>via telephone conference</i> |
| Amy Byrne | Welsh Assembly Government <i>via telephone conference</i> |
| Dinah Sweet | Welsh Beekeepers' Association [WBKA] |
| Bob Smith | Amateur Beekeeper |
| David Shannon | Yorkshire British Beekeepers Association (YBBKA) |

Apologies:

Wally Shaw Welsh Beekeepers' Association [WBKA]

1. Introduction. Note of 4th meeting on BeeBase. OGC's Starting Gate review of Healthy Bees implementation (PMB 5/1 – scope)

Introduction

The Chair welcomed attendees to the 5th meeting of the Project Management Board. Apologies were received from Scotland. They would aim to send an observer to the next meeting.

Note of 4th Meeting on BeeBase

The notes of the 4th meeting were agreed by the Board and would now be posted onto BeeBase. We also needed to ensure that the notes of the 3rd meeting were posted on BeeBase.

ACTION: Helen Carter to ensure meeting notes are on BeeBase.

The British Beekeepers' Association

The Chair then briefed the Board on a letter which she had received from Martin Smith, BBKA President on 2nd March. In his letter Martin Smith had reported that the BBKA Executive had voted in favour of returning to the Project Management Board. They had been persuaded to return following Lord Davies's letter which had included the offer of three BBKA representatives on the Board. The Chair asked the Board for comments regarding the BBKA's decision to return to the Project Management Board.

Huw Jones (WAG) and John Home (BFA) welcomed the BBKA back to the Board but hoped that they were ready to move forward to progress the Healthy Bees Plan. The Chair reassured the Board that recent conversations with the BBKA

had assured her that they were willing to move forward. The Chair had not yet had any indication regarding potential BBKA members of the Board or the working groups but Martin Smith would let her know in due course. John Howat (BFA) asked whether the Board might be able to comment on the choice of representatives offered by the BBKA. The Chair confirmed that they should flag any concerns to her.

David Shannon (YBBKA) said that he would report back to the BBKA regarding the Project Management Board's view on their return to the Board. David had agreed with Martin Smith (BBKA) that he would relinquish his position once the BBKA had returned to the Board. This would, therefore, be his final meeting. The Chair then thanked David for his valuable input to the work of the Healthy Bees Plan Project Management Board.

ACTION: Project Manager to copy Martin Smith's letter of 2nd March to the Board.

Office of Government Commerce - Starting Gate Review of the Healthy Bees Implementation Plan (PMB 5/1)

The Defra business case (late 2008) had included the intention to invite the OGC to review its approach to implementing the Healthy Bees Plan. Fera were now taking this forward and it would consist of a 4 day review from 15th – 18th March which would be conducted via interviews with stakeholders. It was intended that approximately 20 stakeholders (including the Project Management Board) would be interviewed. Board members agreed to let Helen Carter know if they were unavailable during the review period so that alternative arrangements to interview them could be made.

The OGC would provide the Chair with their initial conclusions/recommendations at a meeting on the 18th of March at Sand Hutton and would then produce a formal report. The Chair would report these findings back to the Board at the next meeting.

ACTIONS: 1. PMB to let Helen Carter have their availability during the review period. 2. Chair to report back to the Board the conclusions/recommendations from the OGC review.

2. January/February Highlight report. Spend to date. Risks and Issues log (PMB 5/2)

The Project Manager asked the Board to consider the updated highlight report (PMB 5/2) which now included a financial statement. She requested that the Board let her know of any additional milestones which they may like to add to the report.

The Chair then updated the Board on the financial statement. The budget for 2009/10 had been £285,000. Spend to date (to 31/1/10) was £106,600. Estimated spend to 31/3/10 was £1,500. This had left £179,000 as unallocated and this would now be returned, as was normal practice, to Fera's budget to balance out overspend elsewhere.

The Chair hoped to have a similar amount for the Board to influence in 2010/11 and was aiming to have this budget signed off at the end of March/beginning of April. The Chair would update the Board regarding the budget at the next meeting.

The Chair then briefed the Board that £90,000 had been spent on BeeBase during 2009/10 including scheduled improvements and additional work, including security issues, associated with the Scottish Government's decision to participate in BeeBase. The Scottish Government has been able to contribute some funding for this during the current financial year and also next year. The Board were pleased that Scotland would now be involved in BeeBase which they felt benefited the wider bee community.

ACTIONS: 1. PBM to let the Project Manager know of any additional milestones to be included in the highlight report. 2. Chair to update the Board on the available budget for 2010/11 at the next meeting.

3. Progress update on implementation of 2009/10 education workplan (to include 'train the trainer', roadshows, scoping exercise on training apiaries, training DVDs)

Train the Trainer

The implementation of the 2009/10 education workplan was underway. There had been a good level of interest in 'train the trainer' (generic skills) with 70 beekeepers from 35 associations registering for the training to date. The Project Manager would collate feedback from attendees of the course during 2010/11 and report on findings to the Husbandry and Education Group.

The Husbandry and Education Group had been very supportive of train the trainer and it was intended that we continued to fund it during 2010/11. However, in order to ensure the best use of funds, they felt that there was merit in having a more formal application process with minimum entry criteria. The Board suggested the following:-

- John Home (BFA) suggested that rather than looking at beekeeping years it was more relevant to consider the number of hive years e.g. a beekeeper may have had only 1 hive for 18 years or 20 hives for 1 year.
- David Shannon (YBBKA) suggested that basic husbandry skills would be relevant to train the trainer. Huw Jones (WAG) agreed with this.

Huw Jones (WAG) emphasised that train the trainer also applied to the delivery of courses on specific beekeeping skills and that we needed to ensure consistency of delivery and accreditation of beekeeping courses to promote the application of best practice.

These suggestions and others will be considered by the Husbandry and Education Working Group who will then bring their recommendations back to the Board.

Dinah Sweet (WBKA) was keen to know how many beekeepers from Wales had signed up for train the trainer during 2009/10. The Project Manager agreed to provide the Board with a detailed breakdown of attendance by geographical area.

ACTION: Project Manager to collate feedback from ‘train the trainer’ and provide the Board with a geographical breakdown of attendance.

Roadshows

Attendance at the pilot roadshow in Wales had been good with approximately 60 beekeepers attending; of these 2 were not from associations. It was hoped that future roadshows captured more beekeepers who were not affiliated to associations and, in order to do this, the Northern Regional Roadshow on Saturday 6th March had been advertised in the local press. Dave Shannon (YBBKA) said that there had been a high level of interest shown.

Dinah Sweet (WBKA) attended the Welsh roadshow. Dinah had found the roadshow useful and had received very positive feedback from attendees. However, she had felt that the afternoon workshop lacked consistency among the Regional Bee Inspectors. In order to achieve consistency the Chair would consider ‘train the trainer’ for both the Regional Bee Inspectors and the Seasonal Bee Inspectors. The Chair confirmed that the funding for this would not be taken from the Healthy Bees budget.

Bob Smith suggested that the Husbandry and Education Group considered less structured methods of training such as workshops where beekeepers could drop in and out and/or portable labs and caravans.

ACTIONS: 1. Chair to consider ‘train the trainer’ for Fera’s Regional Bee Inspectors and Seasonal Bee Inspectors. 2. Husbandry and Education Group to consider alternative training methods.

Training Apiaries

Norman Houston had provided a list of training apiaries sited at land based colleges to Richard Ball (Fera) and Ian Homer (Fera) and they would now be considered by the Husbandry and Education Group who would bring their recommendations back to the Board. The Board agreed that it would be beneficial that the BBKA would be involved in this in future.

Training DVDs

David Bancalari had presented an example of a training DVD to the Board at their meeting on 10th December 2009. At that time the Board had viewed this as a good form of disease-specific interactive training and had asked the Chair to explore this further. The Chair had met with David in January and planned to follow this up with a progress meeting to further consider the business development area.

The BBKA was currently considering a ‘course in a case’ which involved providing a free case to every association with a subsequent charge of £80.00 for any

additional cases required. A number of cases would also be provided to Scotland and Wales. If we were to go ahead with the training DVD, the Board agreed that it needed to be complimentary to the 'course in a case' rather than running parallel to it. The Chair commented that she would ask the BBKA to brief the Board on their education plan at the next meeting. It was agreed that Ian Homer (Fera) should liaise with Chris Deaves (BBKA) regarding the interactive training DVD and the 'course in a case' and discuss further in the Husbandry and Education Group and bring back recommendations to the Board.

Huw Jones (WAG) felt that, now the BBKA were back on board, we needed to give a clear and consistent message about good practice from all of the organisations involved in education and training, including materials used, such as DVDs. Huw was also keen for education and training to be backed up by accreditation as far as possible. It would also be important to discuss accreditation with the BBKA and to explore whether and how Healthy Bees funding could be used to assist in achieving accreditation.

ACTIONS: 1. Chair to hold a progress meeting with David Bancalari. 2. Ian Homer (Fera) to liaise with Chris Deaves (BBKA) and with Husbandry and Education Group regarding interactive training DVD and 'course in a case' and bring recommendations back to the Board.

4. Report Back from Communications Working Group, Science and Evidence Advisory Group and the Husbandry and Education Group. Draft (emerging) Workplans

The Project Manager reported that the 3 working groups had now met and produced early draft workplans. The following documents were provided to the Board:

CWG_wp version 1, 25th February 2010 (Draft Workplan for Communications Group)

SEAG_wp version 1, 25th February 2010 (Draft Workplan for Science and Evidence Advisory Group)

HEG_wp version 1, 25th February 2010 (Draft Workplan for Husbandry and Education Working Group)

Input on content and priorities within the workplans was now required from the Project Management Board. General feedback from the Board on the proposed format of the workplans was as follows:

- John Home (BFA) would like each workplan to contain a critical path analysis detailing how the groups would interact with each other.
- Bob Smith would like the overarching objectives of each working group on the front page.
- Huw Jones (WAG) suggested a strategic strap line for each working group i.e. who were we communicating with/target audience.

Comments on the draft workplan for CWG_wp version 1 were as follows:

- Bob Smith commented that the Communications Working Group had been formed in advance of the other working groups so had, until recently, been working without input from the other groups. The Chair confirmed that she would continue to attend meetings to help steer the group.
- Priorities in the draft workplan were currently all high; CWG needed to consider further and identify which to focus on as priorities for the short, medium and longer term.
- The draft workplan refers to the setting up of a beekeepers panel. Huw Jones (WAG) felt that we could use day to day interactions with beekeepers to trial advisory products rather than setting up a panel to do this.
- BeeBase needed to be developed further as a key source of information with regular refreshing and updating.

Comments on the Healthy Bees Outline Communications Planning Matrix (vn 1_1 March 2010) which CWG would be considering at their next meeting:

- It needed to demonstrate how will we communicate (e.g. BeeBase, DVDs) and who with (general public, beekeepers).
- Huw Jones (WAG) commented that it currently referred to England only and needed to incorporate both England and Wales.

A preliminary discussion of SEAG's and HEG's draft workplans raised the following points:

- Bob Smith would like to see an amendment to point 10 on the SEAG_wp version 1 to include monitoring for exotic pests, and further strengthening of work on biosecurity.

It was agreed that the Board would send their priorities for the Communications Working Group workplan to the Project Manager prior to the next CWG meeting on 24th March. The Board were also invited to comment on the workplans for the Husbandry and Education Working Group and the Science and Evidence Advisory Group. The revised workplans would be returned to the Board to be signed off by the end of April or at their next meeting.

ACTION: Project Management Board to send comments on the Communications Working Group workplan to the Project Manager before 24th March and to comment on the Husbandry and Education Working Group and the Science and Evidence Advisory Group before the end of March.

5. Proposal for Healthy Bees Plan to sponsor pilot microscopy courses (as part of proposals being considered by HEG to extend 'train the trainer' sponsorship to topic-based courses) (PMB 5/3)

Ken Basterfield had requested £1,500 from the Healthy Bees Plan to fund a pilot microscopy course at Bicton College consisting of six sessions for three hours each. The HEG were very supportive at their first meeting of the 'train the trainer' concept covering generic skills and specific topic skills and for this to be a key feature of the future model of beekeeper learning. The Chair needed to know whether the Board agreed with this. The Chair was aware that the National

Diploma in Beekeeping was currently not accredited and this could be an issue when considering the best use of public money.

Dinah Sweet (WBKA) was on the National Diploma in Beekeeping Board and confirmed that they had discussed accreditation in the past but lack of funding had been an issue. Bob Smith agreed that accreditation was important; he queried whether we would accredit the whole organisation or individual courses. The Chair agreed that accreditation needed to be explored (by the Husbandry and Education Group).

The consensus was that Healthy Bees should fund a pilot train the trainer course in microscopy to be run by Ken Basterfield, but following the course we needed to establish the added value the students brought to beekeeping and disease recognition in their local associations, and the further training of beekeepers. Following this review and assessment, we would consider how best to progress train the trainer for specific skills and the accreditation of courses and training more generally.

ACTION: Project Manager to confirm pilot course arrangements with Ken Basterfield.

6. Progress on action plan to raise awareness about BeeBase and to encourage registration. Data protection issues

Raising awareness of BeeBase

The Project Manager reported on progress with the action plan to encourage more beekeepers to register on BeeBase. This included encouraging organisations with similar interests to beekeepers to post a link to BeeBase on their websites. Eighteen of 29 organisations we had contacted now included a link to BeeBase on their sites. The Board thanked the NFU for raising awareness of BeeBase both on its internet page and additionally by writing out to the organisations they dealt with. Following its recent interest in bees, the Project Manager would check whether the Co-op was one of the organisations who had a link to BeeBase on their website.

We had also contacted large landowners and local councils to encourage them to encourage beekeepers to register. This request was starting to filter down to parish councils for example.

The Project Manager would monitor the effectiveness of these measures in increasing registration over the next few months. If these measures were not effective it was possible that we needed to consider compulsory registration in the future. The Chair would also consider whether a BeeBase stand at the BBKA Spring Convention would be beneficial.

Encouraging registration on BeeBase

The Chair asked the Board whether there was anything else we could do to encourage registration. Dave Shannon (YBBKA) said that the Yorkshire British Beekeepers' Association had been putting their members details on BeeBase

with their permission. Bob Smith said that the Canterbury association also aimed to get all full members to register on BeeBase. Dinah Sweet (WBKA) said that she would seek agreement for this procedure at the WBKA Annual General Meeting on Saturday 6th March. The Chair would also promote this idea to the associations which she will be visiting over the coming months and Bob Smith offered to attend association meetings if required.

Amy Byrne (WAG) thought that the new BeeBase was much improved on previous versions. Bob Smith felt that BeeBase lacked ownership and needed somebody from the National Bee Unit (possibly the Education and Extension Officers) to take day to day responsibility for it. Huw Jones (WAG) thought that a 'latest news from the field' page would make it feel more fresh and up to date. An early warning system in the form of alerts to beekeepers was considered as a major possible benefit to registering.

Data protection

The Chair felt that we needed to reassure users that BeeBase was a secure system with limited access which was run by the NBU for beekeepers. Dinah Sweet (WBKA) offered to reaffirm this at the WBKA Annual General Meeting on Saturday 6th March.

ACTIONS: 1. Project Manager to monitor BeeBase registration levels. 2. Chair to consider a BeeBase stand at the BBKA Spring Convention. 3. Dinah Sweet (WBKA) to raise BeeBase registration and data protection issues at the forthcoming WBKA Annual General Meeting.

7. Any other business/date of next meeting

John Howat (BFA) and Dave Shannon (YBBKA) were concerned that Local Councils were considering treating honey houses as business units which would, in turn, make them eligible for business tax. Dave Shannon had been asked to provide a list of members of the YBBKA to the Local Council but had refused on data protection grounds. The Chair and the Project Manager agreed to look at this further.

Random Apiary Survey - the Chair reported that Fera would collect 5000 samples over 2 years in order to have 99% confidence in finding disease. The current year would run until the end of May 2010 and the Chair would attend the Bee Inspectorate Conference at the end of March to reiterate the importance of collecting data for the survey.

The next meeting will be held at the end of April/beginning of May.

ACTIONS: 1. Chair and Project Manager to investigate whether Local Councils were considering honey houses for business tax. 2. Chair to attend the Bee Inspectorate Conference to reiterate importance of the Random Apiary Survey. 3. Helen Carter (Fera) to arrange the next meeting of the PMB for end of April/beginning of May.

8. Draft Apiculture Programme 2011 – 2014 (England)

This programme was to be reviewed for 2011 to 2014. Fera had invited beekeepers in November to offer suggestions for the new programme and had received no responses. In February, Fera had issued a draft programme covering England for consultation with beekeepers. Wales, Scotland and N. Ireland were working up their programmes in consultation with their beekeepers. The UK programme for the next 3 years needed to be submitted to the EU by 15th April 2010, allowing us to continue to claim back 50% of our expenditure (within limits related to number of colonies) from the EU. The draft programme (for England) was based on previous programmes and sought to re-imburse expenditure on the work of the bee inspectors given their important work in supporting apiculture.

John Howat (BFA which represents commercial beekeepers in GB) had asked that Defra/Fera should consider different areas, still within the scope of the EU programme, where funding may be used to greater effect to support commercial beekeepers, given the pressures they were facing, particularly in Scotland. In particular, the BFA, considered that the following should be covered by the programme:

- Re-stocking
- Varroa control – subsidies for medicines for bee farmers/beekeepers
- Provision of queens from abroad for breeding purposes
- Cost of moving bees around the country
- Subsidies for feeding bees over the winter

The Project Manager commented that, at least from England's perspective, it would be difficult to significantly change the programme at this stage given time pressures. The changes proposed by the BFA would lead to the loss of 8-10 bee inspectors. Some of the changes proposed by the BFA were being considered as part of Healthy Bees implementation, for example, identifying a network of regional training apiaries which could also be used to improve our home-based breeding of queens. The Project Manager would explore the links between the Apiculture Programme and the Healthy Bees Plan and would keep the Board updated on progress.

ACTION: Chair and Project Manager to consider links between Apiculture Programme and Healthy Bees Plan and update the Board regarding outcomes.

Fera
March 2010