

**Minutes of the Healthy Bees Plan
Project Management Board
9th Meeting 12th October 2010
Defra, Nobel House, London**

Present:

Helen Crews	Food & Environment Research Agency [Fera] (Chair)
Helen Carter	Food & Environment Research Agency (Secretary)
Liz McIntosh	Food & Environment Research Agency (Project Manager)
Giles Budge	Food & Environment Research Agency
Bob Smith	Amateur Beekeeper
John Home	Bee Farmers' Association [BFA]
John Howat	Bee Farmers' Association
Tim Lovett	British Beekeepers' Association [BBKA]
Martin Smith	British Beekeepers' Association
Chris Hartfield	National Farmers' Union [NFU]
Wally Shaw	Welsh Beekeepers' Association [WBKA]
Dinah Sweet	Welsh Beekeepers' Association
Huw Jones	Welsh Assembly Government [WAG]
Steve Sunderland (observer)	Scottish Executive

Apologies:

Brian Ripley	British Beekeepers' Association
Andy Wattam	Food & Environment Research Agency

1. Welcome and introduction. Timings.

The Chair welcomed attendees to the 9th meeting of the Healthy Bees Plan Project Management Board. Steve Sunderland was attending in place of Nick Ambrose as an observer from the Scottish Executive. Giles Budge (Fera) had been invited to the meeting to present item 2 and agreed to represent the National Bee Unit in Andy Wattam's absence (due to telecommunication problems). Apologies were received from Brian Ripley (BBKA).

Lord Henley, the Parliamentary Under Secretary for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs had been invited to attend the meeting at 14.30 – 15.00. The Chair said that Lord Henley had previously visited the Food & Environment Research Agency, which had included a tour of the National Bee Unit.

2. Preliminary Random Apiary Survey results from year 1 (PMB 8/4)

Giles Budge gave the board an update on the preliminary results from the Random Apiary Survey (RAS) which he had previously presented to the Scientific and Evidence Advisory Group.

The RAS was in response to a recommendation from the NAO for Defra to develop a better understanding of pest and disease prevalence in known honey bee populations. Funded by Defra and Welsh Assembly Government as part of the first phase of implementing the Healthy Bees Plan, RAS was being undertaken over two years across England and Wales. First year results from RAS were currently being completed so the information presented to the Board needed to be seen as provisional and subject to review until the whole survey and associated analysis were complete. Additional surveillance by the enhanced inspection service during the first phase of implementing the Plan has also provided further information on pest and disease burdens.

The RAS tested for the following organisms:

- Viruses – Deformed wing virus (DWV), Black queen cell virus (BQCV), Sacbrood virus (SBV), Chronic bee paralysis virus (CBPV), Slow paralysis virus (SPV), Acute bee paralysis virus (ABPV), Kashmir bee virus (KBV), Israeli Acute Paralysis Virus (IAPV)
- Fungi – Nosema apis, Nosema ceranae, Chalkbrood
- Bacteria – Melissococcus plutonius, Paenibacillus larvae
- Pests – Tracheal mite

The primary role of the RAS was to monitor the prevalence of statutory notifiable disease (AFB and EFB), data which were collected at the point of inspection. The list of organism tests (described above) were a secondary measure, and provided added value to the cost of the initial inspection. The survey was designed to detect a 0.1% disease prevalence at 99% confidence, therefore enabling the detection of statutory diseases with a known low prevalence, such as AFB, with a high degree of certainty.

The study required that 4,600 were visited across England and Wales over two complete seasons between 1/6/09 and 31/5/11; this equated to 10% of beekeepers who were registered on BeeBase. Provisional estimates of the number of apiaries affected by notifiable disease across England and Wales suggested that, in the absence of a prioritised inspection programme, AFB had a prevalence of 0.24% (62 apiaries) and EFB had a prevalence of 1.12% (290 apiaries). This contrasted sharply with similar estimates generated using prioritised inspections data, when apparent prevalence for both AFB and EFB was far higher at 0.76% (196 apiaries) and 4.97% (1290 apiaries) respectively.

Giles also pointed out that every apiary in BeeBase is given a red, amber or green status based on spatial and temporal links to disease outbreaks and known exotic risk points. Interestingly, very few “green” (low risk) apiaries, visited during the RAS

proved to harbour AFB or EFB. The majority of the diseased apiaries visited during the RAS were identified as being at risk prior to the inspection (i.e. red and amber).

The Board asked the following questions:

Martin Smith (BBKA) asked what the timescale was for completing the analysis once all of the survey results were available. Giles said that it would be within 3 months of collecting the last sample i.e. during August/September 2011.

John Howat (BFA) queried whether the apiaries of beekeepers who were not registered on BeeBase were being accounted for in the study and Giles said that an estimate of 'unknown' beekeepers had not been made, but this did not affect the estimates of disease prevalence because disease estimates are based on a stipulated population size (27,000 apiaries) and are therefore scalable.

Wally Shaw (WBKA) queried whether the RAS was looking at organisms rather than clinical disease and Giles confirmed that the results came in two parts. First, the initial inspections confirmed the prevalence of notifiable disease. Second, the diagnostic tests confirmed the presence of disease causing organisms.

Martin Smith (BBKA) wanted to know whether the RAS was sensitive enough to estimate prevalence of AFB and EFB when there were so few diseased apiaries detected. Giles pointed out that the survey was constructed to estimate AFB and EFB, and that both estimates were robust. Giles also pointed out that the 95% confidence intervals for AFB and EFB estimates from the RAS cover the observed prevalence of AFB and EFB in priority inspections.

Tim Lovett (BBKA) asked what the practical applications of the survey were. Giles hoped that the main practical application was that an improved prioritised, risk based inspection service was achieved. He also hoped that practical applications for beekeepers were achieved e.g. shared use of apiaries, knowledge about what was being done well and what needed improvement and an improved understanding of disease risk.

Bob Smith suggested that current prioritised inspections were quite crude, basing risk on proximity to disease (5km), and that every beekeeper within that radius received a disease alert via BeeBase. He queried whether this could be fine-tuned. Giles responded that he believed that BeeBase gave higher priority to apiaries which were closer to disease, therefore giving a scale within the "red" (high risk) apiaries. Giles said that this was work being addressed under the Insect Pollinators Initiative.

Giles offered to answer any further queries from the Board during lunch-time.

3. Sign off note of 8th meeting for posting on BeeBase. Actions from 8th meeting. September Highlight report. Risks and issues log (PMB 9/1)

Note of the 8th meeting

Brian Ripley (BBKA) had sent his comments via email. Brian had asked that the following was clarified:

Page 4 would now read - Brian Ripley (BBKA) thought that there was a potential conflict with the British Beekeepers' Association's charitable status since part of their remit was the education of beekeepers. *However, he would not prevent a charge to cover the expense of hiring facilities if required, as opposed to charging for training.*

Brian had responded to his actions from the last meeting as follows:

Brian Ripley (BBKA) agreed that the BBKA needed to find a way to fund CiC in future years and he agreed to explore this further with the Project Manager and the NDB.

I will discuss this with Martin Smith before the next project meeting looking at plan expenditure, but I remain of the view, expressed at the meeting, that provision of some future expenditure should be made subject to seeing how current programme is delivered and response to it.

The Board agreed that it would also be useful to see feedback from individual courses and Brian Ripley (BBKA) agreed to provide feedback from the next beginner level course which was taking place on 23rd October at Edge Hill University.

Martin Smith is leading this course and I think Wally Shaw is also attending. I suggest a first hand account of how the course is received/ran would better.

Martin Smith (BBKA) said that this was a 'train the trainer' course rather than a beginner level course. He agreed that it would be beneficial to gather feedback and said that survey forms were available for this purpose. It was also noted that Lancaster University had shown an interest in observing this course.

It was agreed that feedback from the BBKA regarding incentives to associations and/or trainers was needed and Brian Ripley (BBKA) agreed to action this.

Martin may wish to comment but my current view is that associations don't attempt to incentivise other than perhaps providing free facilities and a sandwich lunch and judge response.

Martin Smith (BBKA) said that the British Beekeepers' Association had previously tried to incentivise trainers by paying them a nominal fee to deliver courses but this had not been well received. The BBKA had since decided that providing a free lunch/refreshments was viewed more favourably by trainers.

Following discussion by the Board the following alterations would be made to the minutes:

Wally Shaw (WBKA) requested that his comment on page 4 was amended to show that his views represented that of his own local association and not of the WBKA.

The Chair would amend her comment regarding inspection charges (page 8). She said that Fera needed to provide details to the Treasury regarding the cost of providing inspections, together with the evidence base for the public good. The final decision regarding charging would then be made by the Treasury. The Board were concerned about the potential charges for inspections and Tim Lovett (BBKA) said that beekeepers were already paying the economy back by providing pollination services. John Howat (BFA) said that amateur beekeepers did not gain financially from beekeeping and charging for inspections might deter them from registering on BeeBase. The Board agreed that this issue needed to be incorporated into the business case.

Tim Lovett (BBKA) asked for page 8 to be clarified to reflect the fact that SQP (Suitably Qualified Person) veterinary nurses would be selling medicines rather than receiving a dispensing fee for this service.

The Board agreed that the comment regarding the NBU-based co-ordinator role (page 9) should be amended to reflect that communication, web editing and PR experience were all essential requirements for the role and that beekeeping experience was beneficial.

The amended minutes will be circulated to the Board for comment.

Matters arising

The Chair tabled a paper (PMB 9/4) which detailed the 2009/10 outturn. During that year provision had been made to allocate up to £180,000 on education and promotional activities but agreement on some appropriate activities had not been reached until this financial year although pilot road shows for example had been delivered. However staff time had been higher than anticipated for developing BeeBase and for RAS diagnostics work. Spending on BeeBase had also been higher than anticipated due to the additional work of populating the system with data for the Scottish Executive, for which there would be a reimbursement in 2010-11. Therefore, in summary for 2009-10, the under spend of £112,000 on education and promotional activities had been used to balance the budget due to an overspend elsewhere under the Defra Memorandum of Understanding for bee inspection and advisory services.

Martin Smith (BBKA) was concerned at the prospect of a potential overspend in the 2010/11 financial year as the money which was allocated to education and promotion activities was already accounted for. The Chair said that she did not anticipate that this would be the case as the cost of these activities were part of a new balanced budget for 2010-11.

At previous meetings the Chair had made the Board aware of the government-wide freeze on any marketing activities costing over £25,000. Martin Smith (BBKA) said that an excellent Varroa leaflet had been developed but, because of the freeze, there were no copies available for circulation. The Chair hoped that there would be a clear steer on marketing/printing activities once the government's Comprehensive

Spending Review had taken place and said that she would contact the BBKA once she was aware of a way forward.

The Chair and the Project Manager still needed to draft a formal letter to associations covering data protection issues and encouraging BeeBase registration.

September Highlight report. Risks and issues log (PMB 9/1)

The key milestone 'agreed indicators of success and reporting against agreed baselines in place' still had a RAG status of 'red'. This had been discussed by SEAG and they had agreed the key indicators which were tabled as SEAG1/3. The Project Manager asked the Board to let her have comments on the paper by the end of the week. Once finalised the key indicators would be incorporated into the Business Plan.

Risk 8 – 'lack of progress with extending range of authorised medicines available for controlling pests and diseases due to poor response from bee medicines manufacturers' had a RAG status of 'red'. Tim Lovett (BBKA) suggested that this could have a large impact on bee health and needed to be considered further. It was agreed that this should be explored by the SEAG sub-group in conjunction with VMD and that the results should be provided to the Board.

ACTIONS: 1. Secretary to amend the minutes of the 8th meeting to incorporate comments made by the Board and distribute for further comment before posting on BeeBase. 2. Chair to amend her comment regarding inspection charges and ensure this issue was considered further in developing the Business Case. 3. Chair to contact the BBKA once she is aware of the situation regarding the Varroa leaflet. 4. The Chair and the Project Manager to draft a formal letter to associations covering data protection issues and encouraging BeeBase registration. 5. SEAG sub-group to discuss range of authorised medicines with VMD and report back to the Board.

4. Update on contract with BBKA on education project

Work on the contract started on 12th September. The Chair and the Project Manager had met with Martin Smith (BBKA) earlier today and confirmed that the project was on track. Milestones will continue to be distributed to the Board so that they can monitor progress.

Martin Smith (BBKA) presented the yellow CiC to the Board saying that it was aimed at 'novice' beekeepers who would be expected to have taken the basic assessment. The next CiC to be produced would be aimed at the 'improvers' level. He said that each new case would be presented to the Board as, via the Healthy Bees Plan, they had provided some of the funding.

Steve Sunderland (Scottish Executive) thought that the CiC was excellent and could be effectively used in Scotland. He would discuss this with colleagues and then contact Martin Smith (BBKA) regarding the provision of CiC to Scotland.

The Board queried whether the NBU may be able to provide a disease DVD to be included in the 'improvers' CiC and the Project Manager agreed to discuss this with Andy Wattam (Fera).

It was intended that all course material would carry a strapline which would incorporate both the Fera and BBKA logos. The Chair would ensure that a suitable Fera logo was made available to the BBKA for this purpose.

ACTIONS: 1. Steve Sunderland and Martin Smith to discuss the provision of CiC to Scotland. 2. Project Manager to discuss the provision of a disease DVD for the 'improvers' level CiC. 3. Chair to provide a Fera logo to the BBKA for use on course material.

5. Development of business case

The Chair introduced this item by suggesting that the first year of Phase 2 (2011/12) would be a consolidation year during which Fera would (i) review evidence from RAS to identify options for future inspection service and (ii) review evidence on the use and effectiveness of courses in cases, as a basis for deciding on whether to provide additional funding for the programme during the rest of Phase 2 (2012-15).

The purpose of this item was to gather PMB's views on the draft package of proposals for the business case. In the coming weeks, the Project Manager would be seeking views from the Fera Executive Team, from Defra's Brian Harding and from Ministers.

Draft package of proposals (PMB 9/2)

The Board discussed each of the proposals as follows:

1. BBKA-led rolling programme of education and training

The Board confirmed that they were content with the draft wording.

2. Retain current seasonal bee inspectors in England and Wales

The Board confirmed that they were content with the draft wording.

3. Suitably Qualified Persons across England and Wales

A new system of prescribing bee medicines would be in place from 2012 onwards. Tim Lovett (BBKA) said that bees were food producers so medicines given to them needed to be via prescription. We needed to ensure that SQPs were members of associations and were therefore empowered to purchase medicines on behalf of the association. John Howat (BFA) said that practicalities for the SQPs such as shelf lives and returns of unused medicines also needed to be taken into account. Wally Shaw (WBKA) considered that SQPs would not be a workable system for bee medicines and saw no need to include in the business case; John Howat supported

this view. The Project Manager said that she would consider these conflicting comments in further development of the paper.

4. NBU based co-ordinator

The Board were content that the post occupied by Richard Ball and Ian Homer evolved into the NBU based co-ordinator post. They agreed that BeeBase needed to be as up-to-date as possible and were satisfied that no additional funding was required.

5. Enhance and further develop BeeBase

John Home (BFA) and Tim Lovett (BBKA) agreed that BeeBase was a priority and needed to be developed. The Chair said that there may be a small budget available to upgrade the front page.

6. Association-led biosecurity code of good practice or action plan on the health and quality of bees for sale

It was agreed that the BBKA and the NBU needed to work together to develop an agreed action plan or code of practice.

7. Establish and resource one routine randomised survey of winter losses across Great Britain

The Board would like to encourage partnership between the NBU, BBKA and other associations. They agreed that SEAG should advise on how best to develop and implement a coordinated survey across Great Britain.

8. Management costs

The Board were content with the funding allocated.

Annex 1

In addition to the package of proposals, beekeeping stakeholders also advised that funding should be allocated for high priority, high impact applied research and/or technology transfer. Appendix 1 of PMB 9/2 will set out stakeholders' recommendations for additional funding in these specific areas. In addition, SEAG had been asked to suggest their top 3 research priorities; once decided these would be provided to the Board for comments.

The Board was aware that Tony Harrington, Director of Policy and Regulation had suggested forming strategic alliances for funding, for example a consortium or forum of potential sponsors. The Board had agreed with this in principle but felt that it would involve a high degree of knowledge and a large time commitment. Tim Lovett (BBKA) agreed that applied research was necessary but he questioned how any funding would be controlled. It was agreed that applied research needed to be put into the business case with matched funding, for example, 50% from government

and 50% from other sources. The Chair and Project Manager agreed to clarify if this business plan (which would bid into Defra's Food and Farming directorate budget) covered applied research.

Tim Lovett (BBKA) said that we were trying to deliver measurable shorter-term results as opposed to the Insect Pollinator Initiative which was longer-term. The Chair agreed to look for case studies from Fera, specifically projects which were worth in the region of £15k. Huw Jones (WAG) asked for Wales to be kept informed as they may be able to contribute.

The Project Manager agreed to re-draft PMB 9/2 in line with discussions and distribute to the Board for their comments.

Draft business case (PMB 9/3)

The Board had previously been consulted regarding content of the business case and the Project Manager needed a steer from the Board regarding whether Fera submitted a one year interim case or a longer term case with contingencies. Huw Jones (WAG) said that we could budget for the next financial year to a high level of detail including inspectors, inspections, diagnostics, and so on. However for years 2 and 3 we may need to cut back in these areas so there needed to be a built in contingency.

Bob Smith said that, since the training of beekeepers did not happen until the year after train the trainer, there would be a delay in its effect on disease control. The Project Manager agreed that this needed to be a caveat.

The Board agreed that a 3 year business plan with caveats was submitted. The plan needed to contain an indicative budget for years 2 and 3 which demonstrated different scenarios based on, for example, implications of Random Apiary Survey for future inspection service.

Fera would be meeting Brian Harding, the Defra lead for bees, at the end of November to discuss, among other things, the business case.

ACTIONS: 1. Project Manager to update comments on SQPs to reflect the Board's discussions. 2. Project Manager to re-draft PMB 9/2 in line with discussion and distribute to the Board for their comments. 3. Project Manger to clarify where funds for applied research were assigned. 4. Project Manager to re-draft PMB 9/3 in line with discussions.

6. Lord Henley

Lord Henley, Parliamentary Under Secretary with responsibility for honey bees attended the meeting. He asked the Board to brief him on the current issues facing bees. The Chair introduced the Healthy Bees Plan saying that it was a 10 year plan and the business case for the next 3 years was currently being drafted. She went on to explain that Defra and Fera were working with the BBKA and the NDB to deliver an education programme aimed at raising beekeeper competence.

John Howat (BFA) said that the majority of bees were looked after by either bee farmers or amateur beekeepers. Bob Smith said that most colonies were owned by amateur beekeepers, each having 1 or 2 hives and producing 30 – 50 kilos of honey per annum.

Martin Smith (BBKA) said that 100 years ago there were 1 million managed bee hives in the United Kingdom and we currently had only 25% of that level. Wally Shaw (WBKA) said that in Wales some colonies of feral bees were increasing in number but they no longer had the right conditions, in terms of mature tree coverage, in order to thrive.

Tim Lovett (BBKA) said that bees were worth £200 million in terms of pollination and that beekeepers were providing this at no cost. He went on to say that funding was required for research to complement what the government was spending on education in order to give people the ability and the tools to do the job.

In discussion, the Minister asked whether funding from the horticulture sector had been considered. The Project Manager said that this had been tried in the past and had not been successful. Chris Hartfield (NFU) said that funding was not forthcoming and would probably only be available in the event of tangible effects on crop production due to declining bee populations.

It was also noted that 90% of the honey sold by supermarkets was imported and that most English honey was now sold to farm shops.

The Minister said that he hoped to attend a future meeting of the Board and the Chair thanked him for taking the time to attend this meeting.

ACTION: Secretary to contact the Minister's office with the date of the next meeting of the Board.

7. Update on Legislation

The Project Manager reported that she was reviewing the current legislation to ensure that there were appropriate measures in place to address disease risks. A particular issue was whether there was sufficient clarity about control measures in honey packers. The Honey Association was in process of producing a code of practice on biosecurity at packing plants which would need to be reflected in the review of the legislation. Huw Jones (WAG) requested that Fera discussed its review of the legislation with Wales and Scotland.

ACTION: Project Manager to discuss further the review of the legislation with Wales and Scotland.

8. Any Other Business and date of next meeting

Any Other Business

John Howat (BFA) was concerned that it was taking a long time for the cause of bee death to be communicated to beekeepers/bee farmers following submission of a sample. He queried whether that this was owned by too many bodies with Natural England (NE), Chemical Residues Directorate (CRD) and the National Bee Unit (NBU) all having an input. The Chair said that she would consider a future presentation from these bodies to see whether any improvements to the service could be made.

The Board had previously agreed to press coverage regarding the contract between Defra, BBKA and NDB and the Chair reported that this had been a success. The Project Manager would continue to liaise with Bill Cadmore of the BBKA to raise awareness.

The Board asked whether the Chair was aware of any implications for the Healthy Bees Plan from the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review but the Chair said that we would probably not be aware of the impact until early in 2011.

Date of next meeting

The Chair requested that the next meeting was in early December at which she and the Project Manager would report on progress with the Business case following Fera's meeting with Brian Harding.

ACTION: Secretary to arrange the 10th meeting of the Board for December 2010.