

## Healthy Bees Plan

### Summary note of 1st Meeting of the Communications Working Group 26<sup>th</sup> October 2009 - Nobel House, London

Present:

Richard Ball	NBU	Marie Holmes	FERA
David Bancalari	Bee Farmers' Association	John Howat	Secretary, BFA
Dan Basterfield	Bee Farmers' Association	Liz McIntosh	FERA (Co-Chair)
Amy Byrne	WAG	Trish O'Donnell	Defra (Strategic Comms Adviser) (Co-Chair)
Brian Clark	Welsh BKA newsletter	Karen Roberts	Defra (Strategic Comms Officer)
Helen Crews	FERA	Joanne Smith	Defra (Marketing)
Robin Dean	Bee Farmer' Association	Claire Waring	Editor, Beecraft
James Dubrey	Defra (Press office)		

Apologies: Sharon Blake, Editor, BBKA News & Hywel Lloyd, Defra Specialist Adviser

#### Introduction

The role of the Communications Working Group is to develop and implement a jointly owned and coordinated communications strategy to help deliver the policy objectives of the Healthy Bees Plan. Members include editors of beekeeping journals such as Beecraft, beekeepers, and staff from Defra and Fera.

#### Outcomes

At the first meeting, the Group:

- noted and endorsed the crucial role of communications in helping to deliver the objectives of the Healthy Bees Plan;
- noted that the Healthy Bees Project Management Board would identify priorities, and steer and guide the three working groups in implementing the Plan; therefore this Group would be guided by, and report back to the Board regularly and seek their endorsement of implementation activities. Further details on the roles of the Board and the working groups are in the Healthy Bees Plan Implementation Brief (PMB 3/1\_final, September 2009 on [www.nationalbeeunit.com](http://www.nationalbeeunit.com)).
- agreed their terms of reference and their principles of working (see Annex 1 and 2).
- proposed that the editor of the Scottish Beekeepers Association should be invited to join the Group.

- agreed to consider and put forward proposals to Fera on a possible independent Chair of the Group.
- agreed that policy objective to be supported by coordinating communications were to:
  - improve and sustain honey bee health, minimising disease risk and improving pest and disease management;
  - improve husbandry standards through a coordinated beekeeper learning programme.

In summary, to 'help bee keepers keep healthier bees'.

- contributed to workshop session around key questions to help with the development of a joint communications strategy. The results of this session would be used by Defra to develop the first working draft of a communications strategy which would be circulated to the Group for further input and development. Feedback from the Group would be required by end of November in time for circulation of the draft strategy to the Project Management Board for its next meeting in early December.

#### Additional comments from members of the Group

In addition to the workshop session, the Group raised the following suggestions/observations:

- Fera should consider expanding circulation of a leaflet on BeeBase and on import rules beyond Thornes which was currently helping to distribute the leaflet. For example, it could be distributed to intermediary suppliers.
- Some beekeepers were worried about posting their hive grid references on BeeBase due to fears an inspector may turn up unannounced. Fera stressed that grid reference data was used for disease outbreak tracking and beekeepers should be assured that an inspector would need permission prior to inspection. The Group suggested that it should have an opportunity to discuss BeeBase and help refine it to exemplify its usefulness as a key resource for beekeepers.

#### Date of next Meeting

The Group agreed that the second meeting should be arranged to take place before Christmas if possible.

Healthy Bees Project Team  
Fera

6 November 2009

### **Communications Working Group – terms of reference**

[With reference to the *Healthy Bees Implementation Brief (ref PMB 3/1\_final)*], the Communications Working Group will deliver a coordinated communications plan to optimise opportunities to engage effectively with beekeepers and other stakeholders in order to achieve the outcomes in the Healthy Bees Plan. [It will be chaired by an independent communications expert, and in the interim will be co-chaired by Defra and Fera]. Members include editors of Beecraft, Bee Farmers Newsletter, BBKA News, WBKA News, beekeepers, Welsh Assembly Government and staff from Defra and Fera.

The Working Group:

- is responsible to the Healthy Bees Project Management Board for successful delivery and implementation of a coordinated communications plan;
- will be guided by, and report on progress to the Project Management Board;
- will provide input and challenge to the development and implementation of coordinated communications activities;
- will work closely with Fera's Healthy Bees Project Team, Defra's Strategic Communications Team and Welsh Assembly Government;
- will make decisions by consensus, recognising that activities as part of a communications plan might not be what every member would choose independently but ones which secure general consensus of the members;
- will work in the best interests of the public purse;
- will seek to foster wide ownership of the Healthy Bees Plan and a shared commitment to its outcomes amongst all interested parties including beekeepers, honey importers and packers, beekeeping suppliers and farmers and growers (given their interests in pollination services).

The Working Group will normally meet [2] times a year [expected to be up to 4 times during first year to guide development of detailed communications activities]. A summary note of meetings will be published on Fera's website.

**Healthy Bees Communications Working Group – principles of working**

The Group agreed to:

- Share information about planned communication activity in advance with all members of the Group
- A policy of “no surprises”
- Pass on communications approaches to other members of the Group if/when appropriate (e.g. if an interview request is received by one member of the group but they cannot field a spokesperson or it is a subject on which they are unable to comment at that time, that they will pass the request to another member of the Group. This will be the case for Defra in the run-up to the general election, for example)
- Share information about new opportunities that arise with the other group members
- Alert the other Group members as soon as possible to emerging risks to communications strategy