

**Summary Note of the Bee Health Advisory Forum  
20<sup>th</sup> Meeting – 29<sup>th</sup> June 2017  
Nobel House, London**

**Present:**

Richard Watkins (Chair)	Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra)
Kevin Beattie	
Louise Mount	
Mike Brown	
Marie Holmes	Animal & Plant Health Agency (APHA)
Julian Parker	
Giles Budge	
ginamagaret Murdin	British Beekeepers' Association (BBKA)
John Hendrie	
Margaret Ginman	Bee Farmers' Association (BFA)
Jane Jones ☎	Welsh Government (WG)
Norman Carreck ☎	International Bee Research Association (IBRA)
Steve Sunderland	Scottish Government
Anna Burrows	Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD)
Wally Shaw	Welsh Beekeepers' Association (WBKA)
John Hill	British Bee Veterinary Association (BBVA)

**Apologies:**

Nigel Semmence	APHA
John Heard	BFA
John Mellis	
Ken Basterfield	NDB
Belinda Phillipson	Defra
Ivor Davis	NDB
Chris Hartfield	NFU
Irene Allen	WG
John Bowles	WBKA

(Minutes amended following 21<sup>st</sup> meeting on 21/09/2017)

**1. Welcome and introductions**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Introductions were given by each member of the Forum.

**2. Minutes of last meeting & Highlight report**

Actions arising from the 19<sup>th</sup> meeting were discussed.

*Update on action 1 – Circulate apiculture programme timetable. Complete.*

*Update on action 2 – Investigate whether there were any upcoming Nosema treatments. No new Nosema treatments were known to be arriving on the market.*

*Update on action 3 – Send Marie written report on education contract progress. BBKA reported an increase in the pass rates from 40% to 60%. BFA were appointing a further 2 apprentices, with the first 6 apprentices on the cusp of passing and completing their apprenticeship. Full written report to follow from both associations.*

*Update on action 4 – associations to aid business case development for funding of HBP beyond 2019, by providing success stories and communications around completed work. Ongoing. Nothing had been forwarded to Marie. However, a session would follow in the meeting with discussions around successes or otherwise. This theme would be revisited by the Forum over the coming year whilst a business case was being developed.*

*Update on action 5 – Check number of NI 944 overwinter hives. Checked and amended to over 6,000 as the original 944 was felt to be too low.*

*Update on action 6 – Investigate whether new memberships could be identified as completely new or returning members to BBKA. Yearly churn was approximately 3,000 leavers with a similar number taking up beekeeping as new members each year.*

*Update on action 7 – Forward views on controls on how EFB and SHB legislation to progress. Meeting went ahead with Commission including input from stakeholders. The Commission Implementing Decision was published in March 2017. It extended control measures on Calabria until the end of March 2019 while the safeguard measures on Sicily lifted as a result of 2 years of surveillance without finding any cases of Small hive beetle since the initial outbreak.*

#### Highlight report

The Chair invited comments on the report which had been circulated prior to the meeting.

*Risk 1 – Insufficient project team resources. No comments.*

*Risk 2 – Lack of progress with extending range of authorised medicines. No comments*

#### Issues

*Issue 1 – Apiculture programme matched funding – No comments.*

### **3. EU exit day 1 issues**

The UK would be formally leaving EU in April 2019. Work was underway to enable as smooth a transition as possible through the process. Negotiations started this month and Defra were in an information gathering stage from stakeholders on concerns, what was important for them and how policy should be taken forward. The process for how negotiations would happen was presently unknown. However, it was thought bee health would slot alongside agriculture and animal health

To gather input from the Forum to inform negotiations a group working session followed discussing the below areas of interest. Feedback from the 3 sub-groups included:

**Risks/concerns on doing business on day 1 what we shouldn't lose from regime as we have it at the moment:**

Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
<p>Collaborative bee research with EU partners would be impaired</p> <p>Links to international apiculture research (long term)</p> <p>Access as members to EU funded projects</p> <p>Access to medicines/medicine approval</p> <p>Access to TRACES</p> <p>Issues around imports and exports/import &amp; export of bees and honey</p> <p>Importation of bee &amp; queens –developing our own breeding programme</p> <p>Operation of import controls &amp; health certification</p> <p>Fear that UK will downgrade the environmental</p>	<p>EU funding for apiculture</p> <p>Research funding/EU programmes</p> <p>EURL Anses/NRLs honey bee health [lack of access and access to samples of exotics to test our methods]</p> <p>Loss of EU networks &amp; influence and lack of information [on EU situation/developments] – Atrophy over time/horizon 2020 &amp; beyond</p> <p>Risks and controls – import/export Increased checks required &amp; funding for these</p> <p>Restrictions on categories able to import – queens/nucs/packages/colonies</p> <p>If replacement requirements are too onerous – illegal imports may increase which may increase risks</p>	<p>Coloss – SciTech funded – cost actions – superbee (one step removed) like Switzerland</p> <p>Decision on Neonics – EFSA – control on pesticides/chemicals/medicines – clarification on whether UK will remain members</p> <p>Standards and exports</p> <p>Not contributors – will need to fund to access benefits</p> <p>Overseas pharm [companies] reluctant to form consortia – UK government not clear</p> <p>Mechanism to get scientist in</p> <p>Smartbee</p> <p>Swarm monitor</p>

<p>policy/aspirations</p> <p>Loss of EU funding/CAP funding for apiculture</p> <p>Future funding of bee inspectorate/NBU</p> <p>Lack of apiculture funding impacts on the NBU</p> <p>Decreased investment</p>	<p>Imports/exports – risks/controls – protocols – wax, honey, bee products</p> <p>PRAs for each country wishing to import?</p> <p>Beekeeper views – locally produced vs traditional imports</p> <p>Border controls – BIP/checks</p> <p>NZ and other 3rd countries use TRACES to generate export certificate</p> <p>IT systems – if TRACES is unavailable – cost/design</p> <p>Mutual recognition/availability of new medicines/cascade – UK small market – lack of market access</p> <p>UK science – cut out of conversations re long term funding</p> <p>EU harmonisation – pesticides – quality of UK products acceptable</p> <p>Freedom of movement of scientists/workers</p> <p>Cost associate membership status to COLOSS</p>	<p>Alarm/step/bee doc</p> <p>Lack of inspectors due to loss of EU funding</p> <p>Wish list equal funding &amp; index linked</p> <p>BHAF exists and supported</p> <p>Clear UK bee strategy</p> <p>Science UK scientists research cost – bids lost Horizon 2020</p> <p>Same limitations on ability to control bee imports</p> <p>Freedom of movement – loss of EU nationals – research/workers/institutes</p> <p>NBU UK NRL – co-ordinating with EURL</p> <p>Assurance of funds</p> <p>UK honey exports – at risk – tariffs</p> <p>Importation of bees and certification – perhaps stop</p>
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**Opportunities to change our approach:**

Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
<p>Aim to make UK self-sufficient for bees and queens/UK to be self-sufficient on importing bees/ self-sufficiency of bee/queen populations</p> <p>Secure borders against diseased imports</p> <p>Production benefits (bees/CAP) early adopter (with appropriate challenge)</p> <p>Widening options for medicines to be imported from outside the EU</p> <p>VMD to remain vigilant as they presently are</p> <p>Continuation of import of medicines/cascade</p> <p>Import/export opportunities – widening market to access</p> <p>Continuation of BHAF or at least government &amp; stakeholder interactions</p> <p>Mandatory beekeeper registration</p> <p>Landscape level pollinator protection</p>	<p>Training programmes – opportunities vs damage limitation</p> <p>Competency to get insurance – hive count</p> <p>Compulsory registration – exams (City &amp; Guilds)</p> <p>More medicines available</p> <p>Movement skills and people</p> <p>Landscapes – stewardship/pollinators – pollinator friendly landscapes</p> <p>Opportunities for “sale” of skills/advice – sale of Scottish bees</p> <p>Continued support for notifiable status – animal health law – secure border</p> <p>R&amp;D embedded with significant funds as in the past</p> <p>Wider monitoring of apiaries – surveillance – holistic</p>	<p>Attitude to education – ensure proactive, encourage enable</p> <p>Hive count – carry on - do it properly</p> <p>Post-CAP – BHAF</p> <p>Compulsory registration of beekeepers – linked to insurance</p> <p>Government support (BBKA)</p> <p>Clear strategy Bee UK wide – bee health</p> <p>Registration/insurance/exams &amp; qualifications</p> <p>Registration does not link to insurance to hives</p> <p>UK beekeepers stop import – communications difficult</p> <p>Medicines – given hope</p> <p>How regime is going to work – need assurances</p>

<p>programmes (stewardship schemes)</p>	<p>Imports/exports – status quo – same level of scrutiny</p> <p>Encourage queen rearing to reduce dependency on imports (self-sufficiency)</p> <p>Government support – maybe a UK wide programme – would this require “undevolving” bee health</p> <p>Resources to deliver the objectives – stretched- R&amp;D embedded –all areas</p> <p>All Ireland pollination scheme – FIBKA &amp; Ulster BKA – join up</p> <p>The bee health programme to continue – in partnership – strengthened and refined</p> <p>More medicines from overseas</p>	<p>Not a diluted regime</p> <p>Farmers – different issues</p> <p>Notifiable diseases – change?</p> <p>Damage limitation</p> <p>Keep influence into AHL</p>
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During plenary discussions it was queried how the BBKA's funded project with Keele University had progressed. The project was investigating what chemicals or contaminants were contained in commercial beeswax available to beekeepers. Margaret advised she would investigate the projects progress and report back to the Forum.

**ACTION 1:** Margaret to investigate whether the project concluded and send to Marie (or replacement) to circulate an update or final report to the Forum.

Regarding medicines, Anna would feed comments into VMD planned work. Anna reported that day 1 would see no change and UK should still have access to EU medicines and also possibly a wider spread of medicines from countries such as America and New Zealand with similar checks as present that they're safe. VMD still retained the ability to refuse imports.

The session concluded that this was a living document where additions could be made at any time, and was likely this topic would be revisited at another meeting.

#### **4. Education contracts**

Marie asked BBKA and BFA (NDB absent) what their thoughts were on using the Bravo system and whether the 3 year total with year-by-year contracting was beneficial. Feedback included that technically Bravo was a very difficult system to use but praise was sent to Melanie Swann (DEFRA) for guiding bidders through it. It was asked whether year 3 could have more lead-in time to year 2. Marie advised this would be taken into account and timings were led by budget approvals. 2017/18 contracts were issued in April. On the whole the 3 year overall duration with year-by-year granting worked very well and enabled better planning.

#### **5. Healthy bees plan retrospective**

The Forum was asked to summarise prior to the meeting initial thoughts on the below points. The aim of gathering this feedback was to help inform the next phase of HBP funding beyond 2019. A business case would require writing/submission during 2018.

##### What worked well?

- Asian hornet communications were excellent
- Increase in BeeBase registrations
- £10m Insect Pollinator Initiative, which Defra funded £2.5m towards
- Literature that improving beekeepers education and training was now known and evidenced
- Idea/knowledge exchange and differing points of view
- Introduction of Disease Assurance Scheme for Honeybees (DASH)

- Apprenticeship scheme
- Education programme success, positive impact on pass rates
- Additional bee inspectors on the ground
- Collaborative working
- Random Apiary Survey
- Stronger in terms of contingency planning, better understanding of the science e.g. EFB strain types, better data

What was lacking:

- Professional bee farming found it hard for their views to be adopted
- All members could improve how success and objectives of the HBP were communicated
- 1 person per organisation funded to attend BHAF meetings, funding for 2 would be preferred

What are the challenges moving forward?

- Not knowing what the future was in terms of funding and EU exit
- Establishing a strategy for the Forum when more was known about future funding/working
- An observer from ROI beekeepers and CONBA should be invited to join BHAF
- Drawing on scientific expertise had been more reactive rather than proactive. Research priorities should be established early and revisited at least annually

For a final discussion topic the Forum were asked what their top 3 priorities would be in HBP2. This session was for very early thoughts that would be captured and kept in mind when drafting the business case. There would be further opportunities for input before drafting was complete.

Top 3 priorities for HBP2

- Further support for beekeepers on the ground to learn more about bee health/hygiene and disease, preferably hive-side
- Assessor training in the autumn
- BHAF should be retained with further membership extended to ROI and CONBA



- Develop a strategy for bee farming in the UK – presently UK beekeepers provide 14% of domestic honey demand, it was thought an increase of 15,000 more colonies would supply entire UK demand
- Commitment to training younger demographic into bee farmers – and second careers
- Proactive attitude towards bee health in general such as, CBPV
- BHAF is specifically for honeybees, should this be extended to solitary and bumblebees?
- Honey is a premium product, this should be championed
- Mandatory registration of beekeepers
- More inspectors – they're the ones who pick up diseases
- Propolis as a concept
- Support to a UK queen rearing programme
- BHAF refresh – other members to host meetings and set agenda
- Partnership working maintained
- Work towards removing the apparent mystique of receiving an inspection
- The 5 HBP objectives were evolved over time, recommended and constructive. Any new plan shouldn't wildly stray from the original 5 objectives
- Adequately resourced with a bigger remit, particularly a rolling programme of research
- VMD were very helpful in providing a better understanding of issues by attending BHAF meetings and proactively participating and keeping members informed, this should continue during the next phase
- Establish formal scientifically sound and robust reviewing practices from the outset
- Ensure objectives are achievable and a measure of success established
- Greater emphasis on varroa control – the method hadn't changed since 2001, was it due a refresh?
- Raising awareness amongst beekeepers et al. on the economic value of pollination
- BeeBase was a useful information hub, keep using this as a method of communication

## **6. AOB**

News:

SHB – The Forum were concerned that SHB could easily be transferred via packaged bees on imports from northern Italy which presently fell outside the containment area. Safeguard measures were in place and being followed with a KPI to check at least 50% of Italian packages. Typically SHB discoveries were found late in the season, with findings being discovered earlier in the year than previously.

Resignation - Marie announced she had a new job and was moving to Defra estates in a project management and operations role. Her last working day as Healthy Bees Plan Project Manager would be 19<sup>th</sup> July. She thanked the Forum for their continued support and participation over the years, and would ensure all was up-to-date for handover to the new Project Manager, who would likely be appointed following a recruitment exercise.

Fipronil – A further incident of suspected Fiprinol poisoning was flagged in addition to the one reported several months ago. An investigation concluded that traces of Fiprinol had been found with the likely transmission being via a dog or cat flea collar. It was strongly felt this was improbable due to most Fipronil being applied directly to the animals' skin which then required piercing to emit the product.

The Chair concluded the meeting by thanking everyone for their attendance and valued input.

**Date of next meeting:** Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> September, York (location - Foss House or Sand Hutton, tbc)

### **Table of Actions**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Assigned to</b>
1	Investigate whether the BBKA funded project with Keele university had concluded and send to Marie (or replacement) to circulate an update or final report to the Forum.	Margaret Murdin