

**Summary Note of the Bee Health Advisory Forum
15th Meeting – 24 September 2015
Nobel House, London**

Present:

Richard Watkins (Chair)	Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra)
Kevin Beattie	
Willem Roelofs	
Louise Mount	
Marie Holmes	Animal & Plant Health Agency (APHA)
Mike Brown ☎	
Tim Lovett	British Beekeepers' Association (BBKA)
David Aston	
Margaret Ginman	Bee Farmers' Association (BFA)
Ken Basterfield	National Diploma in Beekeeping (NDB)
Ivor Davis	
Chris Hartfield ☎	National Farmers' Union
Jane Jones	Welsh Government (WG)
Amy Byrne	
Norman Carreck	International Bee Research Association (IBRA)
John Bowles	Welsh Beekeepers' Association
Denise Burgh	Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD)
John Hill	British Bee Veterinary Association (BBVA)

Apologies:

Steve Sunderland	Scottish Government
Wally Shaw	WBKA
Mike McGuinness	APHA
John Mellis	BFA

1. Welcome and introductions

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Introductions were given by each member of the Forum. The Chair also welcomed John Hill of the British Bee Veterinary Association who was a new member of the Forum and Norman Carreck who would be replacing Dan Basterfield on the Forum for International Bee Research Association.

2. Highlight report

Actions arising from the 14th meeting were discussed. All were complete.

Highlight report

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

Risk 1 – Insufficient project team resources. It was queried whether there would be reductions in the SBI headcount due to cuts. There is a cross-government savings review looking for substantial savings. Defra and APHA have presented various savings options to Secretary of State. When Defra/ APHA are informed of outcomes the Forum will be notified.

ACTION 1: Marie to keep BHAF informed of any cost cuts.

ACTION 2: Marie to amend risk 2 and increase due to spending review.

Risk 2 – Lack of progress with extending range of authorised medicines - See point 6.

Risk 3 – Lack of suitable indicators to measure progress of the Plan. Giles Budge would be publishing a paper which assessed the weather index on agriculture impact over last 10 years. The Chair suggested he would consider how this affected the honeybee sector and see what could be shared/ implemented from the paper.

ACTION 3: Richard to consider what could be shared from the weather index paper.

Risk 4 – Delay in commencement of 2015/16 education programmes. Marie confirmed the contracts had been awarded and purchase orders issued for 2015/16. The tender process for 2016/17 would be different and via open-competition which would be published on Bravo (Defra's e-procurement system). Further details would be provided post spending review when more was known on potential spending impacts. It was asked whether any bidding guidance would be available when the work to bid for is announced.

ACTION 4: Marie to circulate any bidding guidance when available, in the meantime circulate process map (please see Annex 1).

Risk 5 – Risk to continuation of HBP and BHAF due to NPS. This wasn't considered to be a high risk but would remain on the risk register as a low risk. Biodiversity team within Defra now handled the NPS. Policy and biodiversity liaised weekly. It was thought that biodiversity had a different line to BHAF, it was clarified that present NPS activities were largely an exercise to collate existing activity and didn't include a new strategy.

Issues

Issue 1 – Stakeholder aspirations exceeding budgetary constraints - no comments.

Issue 2 – Lack of corporate funding when IPI and other work are moved into practical beekeeping. BBSRC have conducted a questionnaire on IPI so they are collating a stakeholder view of the programme.

Issue 3 – Bumblebees imparting pathogens to honeybees. Policy was still planning to look at research covering BB to HB and HB to BB.

Issue 4 – Oxalic acid regulations – See point 6.

3. Update from BFA

Apprenticeship scheme extension – BFA had attracted further commercial backing and launched a campaign on Millennium Bridge, London tube and many radio stations which resulted in much publicity. The campaign generated 200 different enquiries and 90 CVs were submitted for those wishing to take part in the scheme.

Margaret thanked The Chair for his help on the Trailblazers contact, which BFA were using.

At present there were 11 apprentices in the field and a further 10 were being considered for next season. Each apprentice would look after around 100 hives once completed. All apprentices were assessed on a weekly basis and 3 online short films had been developed for them. The online resource had been taken further with an e-learning platform.

Congratulations were offered from the Forum on success to date.

4. Update from BBKA

David Aston provided the Forum with a little on background and future plans. BBKA are a registered charity who promote beekeeping and promote the importance of bees in the environment. In 2005 there were 8000 members, current membership was 25,500 and BBKA were trying to understand the varying demographic of members. It was noted the increasing trend of individual members joining rather than via associations. The organisation had changed and grown which needed to be managed as a different business to how it was 10 years ago. There was now a strategy and operation plans which were much more formalised. A priority was asking what members required.

Regarding education Simon Crowson had taken over from David Blower as Education Coordinator. BBKA were also keen to offer a route for beekeepers not wishing to take the formal route of studying. An education committee was looking at what NBU had launched around e-learning so not to duplicate effort.

5. Update from NDB

Ivor Davies provided an update from NDB who were principally an examination board. The aim was to create a tranche of beekeepers who could educate and train others. 4 candidates had passed the exam this year. However, there was a worry that due to numbers the teachers could be the examiners, a procedure was put in place to eliminate this. Ivor thanked the Forum for the funding which enables NDB to offer a discounted rate and receive more applications. The ambition was to raise the competency level and understanding of beekeeping. 3 out of the

4 passed had signed contracts to join the team. Ken advised that development of 2 new titles wasn't expected due to timescale and resource requirements.

6. Update from VMD

Denise Burge provided an update from VMD. On 8th September VMD authorised [API-bioxal](#) oxalic acid onto the general sale list category and would be distributed in the same way as Apilife beehive strips. Steps were being taken to relay the message to the beekeeping press that it was now available. Regarding enforcement, VMD were writing to 10 manufacturers that presently stated their products treated varroa to advise them they wouldn't be able to continue to claim treatment – this would be completed by mid-October.

EU Directive Review – There were 139 articles to read through, due to size and technical aspects of proposals negotiations were expected to continue until 2017 with EU legislation during October 2018.

The following questions were raised during discussion:

Q) *Were discussions with council yet?* – No, there wouldn't be negotiations with Council until the read-through was complete.

Q) *What would happen to current Oxalic acid stock with suppliers?* Denise would get back to the Forum when this was known

ACTION 5: Denise to investigate how suppliers could deal with current stock.

Q) *Was there a definitive list of banned products?* Denise advised not but would investigate with enforcement team.

ACTION 6: Denise to investigate and distribute a list of 10 brands that were to discouraged from claiming treatment of varroa.

Q) *What format was API-bioxal in?* Powder form to which syrup would be added.

Q) *What was the purpose? as there were numerous oxalic based products that claimed to treat varroa.* This product came with a label that was VMD approved and had guidelines for use which others did not.

Q) *With whom did 'on the ground' enforcement reside? VMD or with trading standards?* This varied depending on premises. VMD inspect agricultural merchants and have links with trading standards.

Ivor expressed thanks and the Forum supported VMD for licensing.

Q) *Was there a communication plan in place? And how could BHAF help?* Normal route would be via the veterinary press and VMD's own publication. However, this news would need to go into the beekeeping press.

Norman said there was a paper issued in the next Journal of Apiculture Research. There would also be an announcement of editorial interest issued in BBKA News.

7. Beehive census work – how can BHAF engage and influence this work?

The Chair gave an update on the National Apiculture Programme. At present £500k was apportioned from the Commission and the proposal was to count in autumn to provide an indicator of the amount of hives going into winter and would like to do some market sector analysis. The Chair invited the Forum to participate in a working group which would consider the following questions 1) what should the money be spent on 2) how should hives be counted and, 3) how to conduct a market sector analysis. All these needed to be completed by March 2016.

Q) *Did this mean the government decision on bee spending would be dependent on apiculture money?* Apiculture programme money had no implication on other bee money. This particular element was match-funded.

Q) *How far would the consultation go?* It's not specified but Defra at least needed to consult with the BHAF.

Willem Roelofs presented an overview of beehive census and market sector analysis:

- Background
 - Data requirements related to new European Commission Delegated Regulation 2015/1366 and the European Commission Implementing Regulation 2015/1368
- Census
 - Establish and trial a cost-effective and repeatable beehive count methodology
 - If unable to submit a methodology that meets the approval of the Commission, the UK would be ineligible for aid from the European CAP scheme.
 - Proposed approach: estimate number of beekeepers and hives via BeeBase, work with beekeeper associations registration lists and work with suppliers to compare estimated number of beekeepers on supplier lists.
- Timeline

- Establish and trial a cost effective repeatable beehive count methodology and carry out market sector analysis in the autumn/winter of 2015/16
- Submit approaches to the EC by March 2016
- Member States will be requested to run pilots for the census in autumn of 2016
- Official counts will start in the autumn of 2017

AOB

Small hive beetle - There had been another confirmed outbreak in Italy of larvae and adults in a 32 colony apiary. Mike would be attending an EURL meeting during October and may receive a direct update on the surveillance programme.

Q) Were there any changes to UK protocols due to what was happening in Italy? Protocols remained the same as SHB was high alert already.

Q) Was there any further information on the EFB outbreak in Shropshire? This particular outbreak wasn't an unusual number and quite commonly found although still a significant outbreak which was presently under control.

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

Date of next meeting: 10th December – Nobel House, London.

Table of Actions

No.	Action	Assigned to
1	Keep BHAF informed of any cost cuts.	Marie
2	Amend risk 1 in highlight report and increase due to spending review.	Marie
3	Consider what could be shared from the weather index paper.	Richard
4	Circulate any bidding guidance when available, in the meantime circulate process map (please see Annex 1).	Marie
5	Investigate how suppliers could deal with current oxalic acid stock.	Denise
6	Investigate and distribute a list of 10 brands that were to be discouraged from claiming treatment of varroa.	Denise

Annex 1

Consultancy Approval Process

