

# The Healthy Bees Plan 2030

## renewed commitment to work together to improve honey bee health

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This November, Defra and the Welsh Government launched the *Healthy Bees Plan 2030*. The publication follows a review of the first ten-year *Healthy Bees Plan*. Both documents are available in English and Welsh on BeeBase ([www.nationalbeeunit.com](http://www.nationalbeeunit.com)), the website of the National Bee Unit (NBU).



Both the review and the new plan have been written during a period of extraordinary change across Government: as the UK left the EU, during the covid-19 pandemic and while dealing with multiple Asian hornet sightings and nest destructions.

Experts in honey bee health, including researchers, beekeepers, bee farmers and policy makers, worked together on the review to understand the impact of the first plan's five outcomes. Both the review and the new plan called upon the expertise and guidance of the Bee Health Advisory Forum (BHAF), which normally meets quarterly to share knowledge, discuss and review bee health priorities.

The quarterly BHAF meeting was held virtually over Zoom in June and September 2020.

Increased numbers of people now enjoy beekeeping as a hobby as well as a way of connecting to the natural world. At the start of the first plan in 2009, 9,000 beekeepers were registered on BeeBase but over the past ten years, with beekeeping's increasing popularity and with the support of associations

across England and Wales, the number of registered beekeepers has risen to more than 40,000.

### The review looks at evidence for the five outcomes of the first plan to:

- 1 minimise levels of pests and diseases
- 2 promote good standards of husbandry
- 3 encourage effective biosecurity
- 4 ensure sound science supports bee health policy and its implementation
- 5 work together to protect bee health.

In line with the aims of the 2009 plan, effective working relationships have been developed, and education and training provision for beekeepers and bee farmers have increased substantially. The *Healthy Bees Plan* review focuses on the benefits of collaborative working and the review's recommendations provide direction and focus for the future.

### The *Healthy Bees Plan 2030* sets out four key outcomes for beekeepers, bee farmers, associations and government to work towards the protection of honey bees:

- 1 effective biosecurity and good standards of husbandry to minimise pest and disease risks and so improve the sustainability of honey bee populations
- 2 enhanced skills and production capability/capacity of beekeepers and bee farmers
- 3 sound science and evidence underpinning the actions taken to support bee health
- 4 increased opportunities for knowledge exchange and partnership working on bee health and wider pollinator needs.



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The *Healthy Bees Plan 2030* was developed in consultation with bee health stakeholders. It aims to sustain the health of honey bees and beekeeping in England and Wales and intends to build on what worked well in the first plan, recognising where more effort is required as well as taking forward new actions.

Defra's Bee Health Policy Team, Welsh Government and the NBU are grateful for everyone's work on both the review and in developing the new plan, which would not have been possible without their commitment and support.

### Training to ensure effective honey bee husbandry

In the review, good quality education and training, accessible to beekeepers of all levels of ability and experience, was recognised as a key element of delivering the aims to improve the health of honey bees. Previously, funding was made available through Defra and Welsh Government to contribute towards a range of training opportunities for beekeepers. The organisations that won contracts to deliver training during the first plan included the BBKA, the National Diploma in Beekeeping and the Bee Farmers'

Association. Courses were provided to train beekeepers at both an intermediate and advanced level and to support the needs of professional and prospective farmers respectively.

Education and training will continue to be a key priority for the *Healthy Bees Plan 2030* and will be provided in a variety of formats, including courses (online and classroom-based learning) and hiveside training and mentoring. There are clear benefits that come from maintaining good standards of husbandry when beekeepers have access to practical support and advice from other beekeepers through apiary training sessions and mentoring. Sharing skills and experiences is important for developing capability, so we will aim to provide more opportunities for beekeepers to do this.

### Continued commitment to cooperation

'Ways of working', Chapter 3 of the *Healthy Bees Plan 2030*, outlines how we can deliver the four outcomes to improve honey bee health and husbandry in England and Wales together. Key to the delivery of the plan is regular communication between all those involved in bee health, including supporting actions relating to wider pollinator needs, as co-ordinated by the Action Plan for Pollinators Taskforce (Wales) and the Pollinator Advisory Steering Group (England).

Julian Parker, head of the NBU, explains: "The *Healthy Bees Plan 2030* builds on the experiences and successes of the previous plan. Its implementation plan will define how the Agency works with stakeholders, Defra and Welsh Government across the next decade to protect and improve honey bee health, recognising the importance of

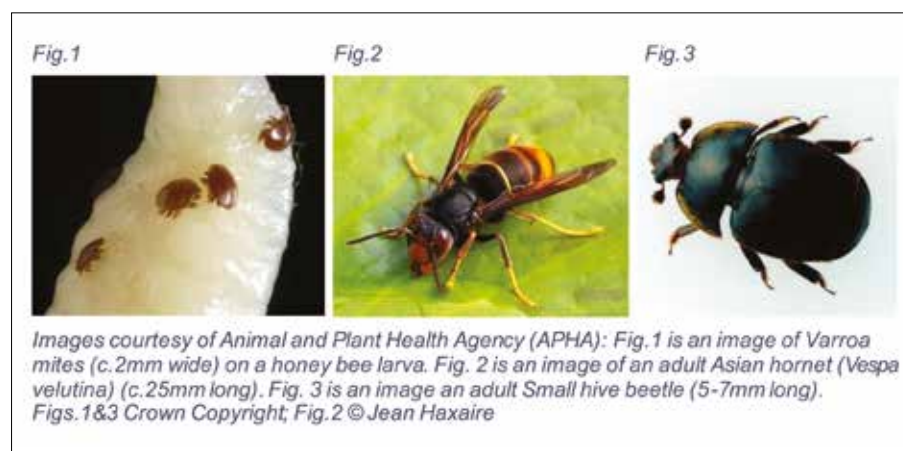
honey bees as pollinators and their impact on food production and the economy."

### How does the plan impact on beekeepers?

Underpinning the *Healthy Bees Plan 2030* is the renewed commitment to work together for the next ten years to ensure our bees' health today and in the future. The BHAF is committed to working together through participation, exchanging knowledge, sharing experiences and research findings to achieve a sustainable and healthy population of honey bees for pollination and honey production in England and Wales. It is important that we continue to listen carefully to each other to understand current issues as well as the new challenges that will inevitably arise. This ability to listen and learn from each other will be crucial to the delivery of the new plan's outcomes.

The next step for the *Healthy Bees Plan 2030* is for the BHAF members to work together to develop an implementation plan. This will include agreeing measures by which our progress towards achieving outcomes can be reviewed at regular intervals. Two BHAF meetings have already taken place to discuss the implementation plan and a first draft is planned in 2021.

If you have any feedback or thoughts about the *Healthy Bees Plan 2030*, please do get in touch: [nbu@apha.gov.uk](mailto:nbu@apha.gov.uk)



#### REFERENCES

Defra press release: [tinyurl.com/BC2021-01-11](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/defra-press-release-2021-01-11)

BeeBase *Healthy Bees Plan 2030* [www.nationalbeeunit.com/index.cfm?sectionid=41](http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/index.cfm?sectionid=41)

Bee Health Advisory Forum minutes available at: [www.nationalbeeunit.com/index.cfm?pageid=339](http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/index.cfm?pageid=339)