

Bee Health Advisory Forum 37th Meeting
9th September 2021, 13:30 – 16:00 (MS Teams Virtual Meeting)

In attendance:

Belinda Phillipson (BP) - Chair	Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) – Bee Health Policy (BHP)
Frank Petherbridge (FP)	
Louise Mount (LM)	
Rebekah Clarkson (RC) - minutes	National Bee Unit (NBU) – Animal & Plant Health Agency (APHA)
Julian Parker (JP)	
Nigel Semmence (NS)	
Cristina Ruiz Martin (CRM)	
Kathleen Carroll (KC)	Welsh Government – Bee Health Policy
Ben Jones (BJ)	Fera Science Ltd.
Maureen Wakefield (MW)	
Linsey Watt (LW)	Scottish Government
Alison Knox (AK)	
Margaret Ginman (MG)	Bee Farmers' Association (BFA)
John Heard (JH)	
John Bowles (JB)	Welsh Beekeepers' Association (WBKA)
Wally Shaw (WS)	
Anne Rowberry (AR)	British Beekeepers' Association (BBKA)
Norman Carreck (NC)	Sussex University
John Hill (JH)	British Bee Veterinary Association (BBVA)
Tom Williamson (TW)	DAERA, Northern Ireland Executive
Tahira Kauser (TK)	Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD)
Bob Smith (BS)	National Diploma in Beekeeping (NDB)
Chris Hartfield (CH)	National Farmers' Union (NFU)
Martin Smith (MS)	Bee Disease Insurance (BDI)

Apologies received from:

Maureen Wakefield (MW)	Fera Science Ltd.
Luis Molero (LM)	Scottish Government
Adam Leitch (AL)	National Diploma in Beekeeping (NDB)
Ian Fenn (IF)	Defra – National Pollinator Strategy

Welcome, introductions and actions.

BP welcomed everyone to the 37th meeting, a virtual meeting in line with covid mitigations.

RC checked that attendees were content with a transcript of the meeting to be recorded, to assist in the production of minutes.

Minutes to the June meeting had been agreed over email and [published on BeeBase](#) in August.

Kevin Beattie has gained a new job with a promotion and will no longer be attending BHAF- we'd like to thank him for all of his work.

Louisa Willows (LWs) from the pollinator team is working on the COP 26 meeting in Glasgow and will not be attending meetings for the rest of 2021.

RC gave an update on BHAF actions. The updated terms of reference are still to be circulated. TK advised action 36-2 is outstanding. BS enquired regarding questions directed to Ken Stapleton following the last meeting and TK agreed to follow this up.

BS asked regarding the Implementation plan how we might measure actions. BP agreed to move onto item 2 and how developing the implementation plan is the next challenge for the BHAF.

2 Implementation Plan Publication Update

BP thanked the Forum for their efforts and for all the work already completed towards the HBP 2030 implementation plan. The actions describes the work that we intend to do together as a Forum and the intention is to publish the English and Welsh versions together.

The implementation plan is currently awaiting Defra and Welsh ministerial approval before its publication, ideally scheduled at the end of September. The publication deadline has to work with other Government workload and messages.

AR explained whilst the BKA agrees with the aims of the plan, as an independent charity it is quite surprised that it is being asked to be involved in so many actions without support. BP thanked the BBKA for their ongoing support and contribution to bee health.

AR expressed confusion regarding the lack of clarity of the timing of the procurement, that it's been talked about for 2 years and there is no evidence of bee health procurement in the implementation plan. BP responded that it is still Defra and WG's intention to procure bee health education contracts. Whilst we would have preferred to be further along the procurement process, we are currently working with procurement experts to draft a specification for an open competition.

Concern regarding sharing BBKA members' personal data was raised in relation to Action 46. MS assured AR and the BHAF that no-one's data would be shared without their personal consent and action 46 would comply with GDPR legislation. MS also offered to discuss the matter separately if that would be helpful.

MG highlighted how the BFA feel they've been consulted during the development of the implementation plan and is looking forward to working with the BHAF to deliver the agreed actions. The BFA agreed with the measures that have been developed to date. MG asked regarding the planned communications on the publication of the implementation plan e.g. is it going to be on social media? RC to forewarn the BHAF of publication dates so the news can be shared more widely.

AR expressed concern regarding the additional burden of developing baselines to measure the progress of actions from the start of the plan which could take a lot of work and be done in various different ways. Developing baselines concerning BBKA needs to be developed with BBKA's members and have flexible timescales.

BS expressed NDB concern about how we are to develop measures in the implementation plan and explained we can't describe the measures without knowing the baselines. We need to establish a baseline to understand where we are now, what we would like to see change

and how we would like things to be in the future. The measures themselves can be defined without knowing who's going to do it and how much time they're going to put into it.

BP explained how developing measures is the next phase of work, to agree the detail together. Clearly the detail will require us to assess how much time and input that people and organisations can realistically contribute. The intention of the implementation plan is not to disproportionately burden anyone.

BP reminded the current BHAF of how the previous plans' attempts to find indicators ended in a list of things that can be measured and cautioned the BHAF that we need to think carefully about an appropriate bee health indicator. BP has discussed indicators with a Defra statistician who advised that if we can find one appropriate indicator, that would be an achievement. BP said we need to think quite carefully about how we're going to do this. An (bee health) indicator is different to a measure for an action.

The Forum will be linked to the delivery of the Implementation plan as described in the draft Terms of Reference (RC to issue shortly).

Further discussion and meetings will be needed to agree more detailed measures.

KC explained that we plan to publish the implementation plan on BeeBase

3 Asian Hornet (AH) Week update (Anne Rowberry) 14:00

The Forum meeting fell in the middle of BBKA's AH week - 6-10 September. AR reflected how the weather and timing of schools returning seems to have reduced the level of engagement.

BBKA and NBU developed a series of events including online talks and new material to update and create new engaging content to maximise publicity and encourage further sightings during September:

- [Asian Hornet Identity Parade article](#), published in Bee Craft in August written by Maggie Gill, Steph Rorke ([UKCEH](#)) and Rebekah Clarkson using [Steven Falk's](#) images will be published on BeeBase. [Asian Hornet \(A3\) poster](#) in September's BeeCraft
- [Asian Hornet Monitoring Leaflet](#) by Elizabeth Gardner
- A blog by Gordon Bull and Meg Seymour [APHA Science](#) during the week.
- Nigel Semmence delivered a presentation to update on the current Asian Hornet situation- this will be delivered on the [BBKA's YouTube channel](#) and links will be circulated next week.
- Eleanor Jones a molecular ecologist at Fera Science Limited provided 2 presentations on the molecular analysis of both Asian hornets' guts and nests.

AR thanked NS and Fera Science Ltd for Eleanor Jones' talk which had been well received, had good comments and a number of retweets. AR also thanked the team who had worked on the Beecraft Identity parade article which had been made available on BeeBase to help people identify Asian Hornet. AR requested RC to send any social media activity.

AR explained how we continue to learn so much from other countries. Peter Kennedy has been providing information about developments in Galicia, Spain, and plans to be part of the question and answer session planned for Friday together with Alastair Christie from Jersey.

The main message was to 'not be complacent' and be clear it's not just a bee keeping problem. It is challenging to keep the interest of (AH) teams engaged when no confirmed sightings had been recorded this year.

AR wants to target schools more in the future, particularly juniors aged 7-9, but sending material at the start in Asian Hornet Week of term is problematic, especially this year.

BBKA also wants to understand what happens when Asian hornets are established in the UK, who should pay for nest extractions for example?

The Asian hornet conference will be on the 5th February 2022 this year's conference will focus on research.

Finally, AR wanted to acknowledge John D Carteret's generosity in sharing media.

NS agreed with AR's summary that we also needed to improve general public and awareness not just beekeepers and requested that any suggestions e.g. for future material would be gratefully received from this panel to improve for next year.

NS advised the Forum that the BBC's One Show were planning an item on the Asian Hornet. A film crew visited Jersey to get hornet footage in the summer. The <https://www.interregeurope.eu/> project is reaching its communication phase when its goal is to do what we're talking about here; sharing relevant research to improve beekeeping practice. The BHAF Science conference could be a big part of how we communicate our science.

JH updated the Forum on sightings in NI; there was a publicised sighting of an Asian Hornet worker in Dublin and an unofficial sighting in North Belfast where a couple caught an insect in their garden.

Comfort break - 14:30

4 Science Adviser Expression of Interest

RC had circulated a draft Science Advisor (SA) expression of interest (SAEOI) to the Forum.

MS asked for more clarification about what is the advantage of being the science advisor? Could you say the role allows you to be involved in the national policy and policy making forum for bee keeping or the role allowed you to provide your input direct to a variety of beekeeping groups? AR agreed that there was a lot of work for little reward, could a research project be part of the role?

BP said that the SA would have to compete for research projects through the normal procurement routes.

MS suggested the role is a key part of the national discussion forum. The SA is able to present their ideas to all the national beekeeping organisations and interested government bodies. Could we also offer the science advisor the opportunity to explain what they or their Research Institute is doing?

BP confirmed that anyone who joins the forum would be invited to give an introduction to themselves and the types of research that they're involved in and what their interests are.

NC reflected how there hasn't been as much emphasis on science since the start of the previous healthy bees plan which had a separate science and evidence advisory group but over time scientists left the group.

BP explained how the separate groups were discontinued after a review. The burden of commitment on people involved in more than one working group was believed to be

disproportionate. She suggested that the Forum could accommodate more than one science advisor.

The board discussed whether it was key for the SA to be based in England and Wales. NC considered that although location may be helpful for logistical reasons, especially in the future when we may have some physical meetings there may be useful experience from a SA from abroad. MS, there may be scientists abroad who'd see this role as an opportunity to understand how beekeeping works in a different climate and different environments?

BP the current presumption is that the majority of meetings in future will be held virtually but we do hope to have face to face meetings again in the future.

LM suggested the wording 'knowledge of the UK BK'. BP agreed. We don't need to be prescriptive in terms of the location.

BS suggested the wording 'keep abreast of the scientific developments affecting honey bee health in the UK'.

BP asked for suggestions of scientists and explained how the role would be publicised on BeeBase, the pollinator Basecamp and BHAF members would be invited to share. MG offered to ask the BFA board and ask for suggestions.

ACTION 37-1	Finalise Science Adviser Expression of Interest, publish on Beebase and invite BHAF to share across their networks.
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The Forum agreed to advertise for a maximum of 6 weeks. The Board asked to consider the most important quality of a science advisor. BP invited the Forum to get in contact if anything else comes to mind after this discussion.

A discussion was had about whether accessibility of NBU/Fera Science data could be part of the advantages listed. BHP explained how any researcher may request access to data, but that they would have to show they will comply with GDPR legislation.

ACTION 37-2	Send any further comments on the Science Adviser Expression by the end of September
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5 BHAF Science Meeting (BP/KC)

To enable the first 'dedicated science meeting' to happen in February 2022 we wanted to discuss and agree this with the Forum. This is as per draft implementation plan action in the 'Research Collaboration' theme, Action 32) Discuss research priorities during a dedicated annual science meeting in addition to regular BHAF meetings by February 2022'.

We thought this could initially be a summary 'show and tell' of what research Forum members are involved in and what's they are funding. We don't often stop and reflect and think about what we have done and what we've researched, funded and been involved in. The meeting would not discuss the results of the science and how this applies to beekeepers, it's a snapshot of what everyone's involved in.

BP suggested sessions could last 30-40 minutes and be a highlight of the recent research we've been involved. BP shared an example MS PowerPoint summarising the projects

Defra has commissioned in the last four year to show how topics may be covered in a future science meeting. It would be good to capture the range of science and great breadth of work that people have done in the first meeting. If we want to focus on a particular area of interest at a future meeting e.g. Small hive beetle, then we invite people and put together an agenda focussed on Small hive beetle.

MS asked who is the audience of this meeting? How would we use the list of projects?

AR added that often multiple members of the BHAF support the same projects. The most valuable meeting would be to hear from the people conducting the research.

NC agreed with AR, as a trustee of the CB Dennis Trust, who fund research in the UK and would want to invite the scientists to describe their work.

LM perhaps the meeting could have two halves? Initially present work and then look at prioritising what we want to look at in the future?

AR we need to look at current work, once we have that list we can then discuss future priorities.

MG The national pollinator group put a list of science projects together (nearly 100 projects), many were related to honey bee projects in the UK.

BP said there is a considerable amount of research into pollinators and bees. However we want to find out what is most useful to beekeepers. She suggested holding a small initial meeting and then work out what would be beneficial to focus on. Researchers could be invited to come and speak, but their work should be linked to the Healthy Bees Plan 2030.

MS I think it would be useful to understand collectively what research we fund. If we add up the sum total of everything that we're all funding, including Defra funding, it will be a significant amount of money. This could be flagged up to beekeeping organisations.

BP, another valuable contribution is organisations' funding studentships, which brings new people into research and can be both applied or blue-sky/ academic ideas.

ACTION 37-3	Forum members to send RC the list of science projects to develop the agenda items for the dedicated annual science meeting by the end of October.
ACTION 37-4	RC bring a draft science meeting agenda to the December meeting.

4 AOB/comms/news - Belinda Phillipson -15:30

4.1 Mentoring LM asked for volunteers to work with BHP on Action 26 'develop framework that local associations can use to set up schemes. Reflect best practice; aim for scalability, to accommodate available resources. Previously JB shared a number of ideas from his local branch where Jenny Shaw runs the mentoring system.

AR explained how local BK associations are currently working together on mentoring and she's concerned how a BHAF/ centralised activity may disrupt the work that's already going on over the next couple of months.

LM explained how the plan was to initially agree a useful document together and how BHP was eager to involve BBKA. The plan was to eventually publish the document, but it was not meant to be prescriptive.

AR explained how there are a lot of associations already running excellent schemes and the BBKA are working to share this more widely.

LM clarified that the framework was not to lay down a mandatory approach but be a useful guide with tips to support associations and members considering mentoring.

WS confirmed how Anglesey BKA had benefited from a mentoring scheme and would be keen to share ideas. They have been very successful at getting people through their basic assessment, four distinctions out of six candidates this year.

BP was eager to continue the mentoring conversation and suggested arranging separate meetings initially.

BS reflected how mentoring is an important issue. There is a huge gap in our ability to train beekeepers. There is some great work going on and we'd love to hear area of best practice across BBKA.

If you'd like to get involved in developing the mentoring scheme, please get in touch with LM.

4.2 Future meeting dates. RC

RC confirmed 9th December at 10:30 for the next BHAF meeting and planned to send out polls to agree the next three meetings.

4.3 Unregistered Veterinary Medicines

TK thanked everyone for reminding members how to report unregistered vet med. advertisements to the VMD's enforcement team.

4.4 Bee Connected:

MS asked if there is any plan for the NFU to reinvigorate? CH confirmed how this is an action in the implementation plan. MS offered to work with CH on this offline.

5 Meeting closed 16:00