

**Minutes of the Healthy Bees Plan
Project Management Board
2nd Meeting 8th September 2009**

Present:

Helen Crews	Food & Environment Research Agency [Fera] (Chair)
Helen Carter	Food & Environment Research Agency (Secretary)
Liz McIntosh	Healthy Bees Project Manager Fera
John Home	Bee Farmers' Association [BFA]
John Howat	Bee Farmers' Association
[Tim Lovett	British Beekeepers' Association [BBKA]]
[Martin Smith	British Beekeepers' Association]
Chris Hartfield	National Farmers' Union [NFU]
Amy Byrne	Welsh Assembly Government [WAG]
Huw Jones	Welsh Assembly Government
Wally Shaw	Welsh Beekeepers' Association [WBKA]
Jenny Shaw	Welsh Beekeepers' Association

1. Introduction. Note of 1st meeting. Highlight Report

The Chair welcomed attendees to the 2nd meeting of the Project Management Board and thanked the BBKA for hosting the meeting in Stoneleigh.

Tim Lovett (BBKA) asked the Chair if he could make an important announcement to the Board prior to the start of the meeting and the Chair welcomed him to do so. The BBKA had met with their trustees on Saturday 6th September and at that meeting they took the unanimous decision to withdraw from the Project Management Board. The Chair was given a copy of a letter which the BBKA had sent to Adrian Belton informing him of this decision and their main reasons for no longer wanting to be represented on the Board.

The Chair asked the BBKA if they would summarise these reasons to the Board members. These were given as:

- They believe the structure of the Project Management Board to be flawed as there are too many different interests involved leading to difficulty in reaching a collective view.
- They have 3,000 – 4,000 new beekeepers to train and are over-stretched.
- They believe that there has been a lack of consultation in the past.

In conclusion, the BBKA said that they were still committed to elements of the Healthy Bees Plan and had a keen interest in the emerging research programme which they intended to remain fully involved in.

The Chair said that Adrian Belton (CEO Fera) would respond to their letter.

Tim Lovett (BBKA) and Martin Smith (BBKA) then left the meeting.

A discussion then followed on the impact which the withdrawal of the BBKA would have on the Board and on the delivery of the Healthy Bees Plan. The main points from the discussion were as follows:

- The Project Management Board (PMB) were saddened by the BBKA's decision to withdraw from participating in the PMB and in the related workstreams for implementing the Healthy Bees plan.
- The PMB (Bee Farmers' Association, Welsh Beekeepers' Association, National Farmers' Union, Welsh Assembly Government and Fera) was happy with governance and terms of reference for implementing the Healthy Bees plan. They wanted a voice at the main table and got this through membership of the Project Management Board.
- The PMB reiterated their agreement to the common goals underpinning the delivery of the Healthy Bees plan and also agreed the key priorities for the education and training of beekeepers.
- The members of the PMB stressed their commitment to the aims and success of the Healthy Bees plan whilst accepting that they may not be able to support every individual decision.
- The PMB wanted to ensure that the plan moved forward to deliver results of benefit to both amateur and commercial beekeepers and other interested groups on a fair and equitable basis.
- The Project Management Board agreed to look at options for continuing to work with the BBKA and hoped that they would be able to rejoin the Board at some point in the future.

The Project Management Board suggested that other representatives of amateur beekeepers could be invited to join the Board. **ACTION: Liz McIntosh to identify possible new members in discussion with the National Bee Unit's Extension Officers.**

The Chair had submitted an article on the Project Management Board for the October edition of the BBKANews. Current feedback from Sharon Blake (BBKANews) had been very positive and it was planned that Fera would provide regular briefings to BBKANews on progress with implementing the plan. The Chair would revise and re-submit the article in light of the BBKA's decision. **ACTION: The Chair will circulate the revised article to the PMB for information.**

The Chair reported that other recent communications activities included Thornes Beekeeping Supplier distributing leaflets about import rules and Beebase registration on our behalf and we were also planning to work with other Government departments who had hives on their land e.g. Ministry of Defence, National Trust, Forestry Commission and ask them to encourage beekeepers to register on Beebase.

The minutes of the 1st meeting were not discussed but the Board had previously commented on them and the final version had now been posted on Beebase.

The first Highlight Report from the Healthy Bees Implementation Plan had been produced and was circulated to the Board. This would be produced on a monthly basis with the next one due at the end of September. **ACTION: Liz McIntosh.**

2. Healthy Bees Implementation structure, governance, terms of reference (PMB 2/1)

Following the first meeting of the Board, the implementation structure had been revised to manage implementation activities under 3 workstreams: 'Husbandry and Education', 'Communications' and 'Science & Evidence'. The Chair asked whether attendees were content with this revised structure. The Board were content although a revision will be made to make it more clear that the workstreams and supporting networks report directly in to the Project Management Board. The Board agreed to the principle of having Independent Chairs of the supporting networks.

Para 3 of PMB 2/1 would be amended to reflect that the interests of both commercial and amateur beekeepers were represented on the Board.

Para 9 (terms of reference) would be strengthened to reflect that:

- We would work in the best interests of the public purse as we were administering funds on behalf of both Defra and the Welsh Assembly Government. The Chair confirmed that, since we were working with public funds, there would be an end of year financial appraisal of the project (to be added to para 12).
- We would make decisions on a consensual basis.

ACTION: Helen Crews and Liz McIntosh to revise and circulate the governance and terms of reference to the PMB for their agreement.

John Howat (BFA) suggested that there should be marked changes to the document to avoid re-reading sections which have not been altered.

ACTION: Liz McIntosh.

The Chair questioned whether the Board was content with the quality assurance of its decisions i.e. was it suitably open to challenge and whether members were happy to challenge each other. The consensus was that the Board was content with internal challenges and they also welcomed any comments/input from outside the group.

3. Education Workstream

It was proposed that all of the workstreams should have met by the end of November so we needed to progress the decisions on their core membership. The Chair suggested that the Board consider the Husbandry and Education Network in the first instance as a key area where we can achieve outcomes in the shorter term. The Chair invited suggestions/nominations for an

independent Chair who would need to be a trained educational professional and communicator. An interest in bees was not vital but would be beneficial. Richard Ball and Ian Homer have already suggested some names and the Project Manager would circulate their names and affiliations to the Board. Fera will fund travel and subsistence for an independent Chair. **ACTION: Liz McIntosh.**

Wally Shaw (WBKA) suggested that Fera could consider extending contracts for some Seasonal Bee Inspectors to enable training of beekeepers over the winter period. He suggested that take-up of training courses over the busy season would not be an option for many. **ACTION: Helen Crews to consider.**

The Project Manager introduced a brief discussion on priority activities for the Husbandry and Education Workstream and proposed that this workstream could be divided in to 3 phases as follows:

1st phase – short-term – before the end of this financial year.

2nd phase – medium-term – from April 2010 to October 2010.

3rd phase – long-term – from October 2010 to March 2011.

The Project Management Board suggested ideas for each phase as follows:

1st phase (short-term):

- Leaflets
Update old MAFF leaflets.
Review of what leaflets we have got – priority to get what information out – to a wider audience e.g. non-conventional beekeepers.
Suggestions for useful leaflets are: siting an apiary; starting right with bees; responsible/effective beekeeping
- Open evenings with a Regional Bee Inspector
- Surgeries with a Bee Inspector
- Training the trainers
- Roadshows
- Countryside events
- Training DVD's – NBU has some videos which could be updated
- Interactive learning
- CBT (computer based training)
- Piloting a demo hive – need to investigate the cost and how to operate
- Access to mailing lists e.g. WI.

2nd phase (medium-term):

Jenny Shaw (WBKA) would like the Board to consider Continuing Professional Developments (CPD's) which would keep beekeepers' training up-to-date. This would also help to ensure consistency in training between regions and could compliment the BBKA's educational system. John Home (BFA) suggested that an NVQ/hands on style training would also compliment the more formal book-based training currently offered to beekeepers. This could consist of modules and ultimately lead to an assessment of being a competent beekeeper at a hive. The Chair would ask Richard Ball and Ian Homer to review the current educational packages and assess what was working and what was not. **ACTION: Richard Ball and Ian Homer.**

With regard to accreditation, the Chair suggested that it might be useful to invite Lantra to a future meeting to help us decide whether to go down the route of training the trainer or full accreditation.

3rd phase (long-term):

Approach the television channels.

Articles in magazines such as Smallholder Magazine, Bee Craft, Beekeepers Quarterly.

Use of Beebase.

John Howat (BFA) suggested that before we progress any of the above suggestions we should ask Ian Homer and Richard Ball to consider the activities and timeframe of the Education Workstream. The Chair suggested that they could bring a draft workplan to the next meeting to be reviewed and signed off by the Board. This was agreed by the Board.

ACTIONS: 1. Liz McIntosh to summarise ideas from the Board and share with Richard Ball and Ian Homer, copied to the Board.

2. Helen Crews to invite Richard Ball and Ian Homer to the next meeting to present their workplan.

3. Liz McIntosh to identify a Chair based on suggestions from the Board and invite to the next meeting.

4. Science & Evidence Advisory Group

The Chair invited suggestions/nominations for an independent Chair who would need to have a strong science background but also be familiar with policy development and constraints. We also needed suggestions for members of this Workstream. The following suggestions were made:

- The BFA suggested Dan Basterfield, Robin Dean, David Aston as members and Lord May and Stephen Hunter as possible Chairs.
- The Chair suggested that Mark Thatchell, who was previously involved in the Research Funders Forum, may be a good choice.

ACTION: Liz McIntosh to initiate this Group by identifying and approaching possible Chairs to seek their involvement and to set up a first meeting by the end of November.

5. Communications Workstream

The Chair invited suggestions/nominations for an independent Chair and members of this Workstream. The following suggestions were made:

- The BFA suggested David Bancalari and John Howat as members. They reported that Margaret Thomas had volunteered for the Education and Training working group.

- WAG suggested Lynfa Davis, Secretary of the Welsh Beekeepers Association, as a member.

The Chair and the Project Manager recently met with Trish O'Donnell, Strategic Communications Advisor in Defra. She has agreed to be part of the Communications Workstream.

The Chair would also like to approach Sharon Blake from the BBKA.

ACTION: Liz McIntosh to initiate this network by identifying and approaching possible Chairs to seek their involvement and to set up a first meeting by the end of November.

6. Indicators for monitoring progress

This will be discussed at the next meeting.

7. AOB/date of next meeting

The Chair circulated a diagram showing the workings of the random apiary survey. John Howat (BFA) queried whether it would make sense to also look for pesticides in the samples. The Chair agreed that it would be sensible to consider this further. **ACTION: Helen Crews to discuss further with Mike Brown.**

The BFA also suggested that beekeepers did not understand why the random survey was being carried out, particularly when it was at such a busy time of year for them. Inspectors carrying out the survey were not explaining why it needed to be done which had led to some problems between Inspectors and beekeepers. The Chair clarified that all Inspectors should have been provided with a core brief and should be prepared to explain the importance of the survey to the beekeepers. The Chair would check that this was the case and would also circulate the links to the background of the survey to the Board members. The Chair would also consider whether Mike Brown should attend the next meeting to discuss the survey with Board members. **ACTION: Helen Crews to clarify that all Inspectors have been provided with the core brief and circulate links to the background of the survey to the Board.**

The Chair noted that 1% of beekeepers are bee farmers and they have 15% of the hives in England and Wales. The figure for Scotland is 50%.

The next meeting will be hosted by the National Farmers' Union in Stoneleigh during week commencing 12 October 2009. Helen Carter will contact Board members for their availabilities.

**Fera Healthy Bees Plan Secretariat
2 October 2009**