

BEE HEALTH ADVISORY FORUM (Bhaf)
40th MEETING – Thursday, 7th July 2022
MS Teams
10:30 – 13:00

Attendance (22 attendees):

Belinda Phillipson (BP) - Chair	Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) – Bee Health Policy (BHP)
Louise Mount (LM)	
Shaun Cook	
Rebekah Clarkson (RC) - minutes	National Bee Unit (NBU) – Animal & Plant Health Agency (APHA)
Julian Parker (JP)	
Dhonn Atkinson	
Kathleen Carroll (KC)	Welsh Government – Bee Health Policy
Raluca Herascu	Scottish Government
Wally Shaw (WS)	Welsh Beekeepers' Association (WBKA)
Jenny Shaw (JenS Item 5)	
John Bowles (JB)	
Anne Rowberry (AR)	British Beekeepers' Association (BBKA)
Jane Medwell (JM)	
Norman Carreck (NC)	Science Advisor – Sussex University
Giles Budge (GB)	Science Advisor – Newcastle University
Kirsty Stainton (KS)	Science Advisor
Ben Jones (BJ)	Fera Science Ltd.
Tom Williamson (TW)	DAERA, Northern Ireland Executive
Tahira Kauser (TK)	Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD)
Chris Hartfield (CH)	National Farmers' Union (NFU)
Martin Smith (MS)	Bee Disease Insurance (BDI)
Paul Simpson (PS)	Defra – National Pollinator Strategy

Apologies received from:

Frank Petherbridge (FP)	(Defra) – Bee Health Policy (BHP)
Nigel Semmence	
John Heard	Bee Farmers' Association (BFA)
Rob Nickless (RN)	
Maureen Wakefield (MW)	Fera Science Ltd.
Alison Knox	Scottish Government
Luis Molero	
Claire Gill	
Adam Leitch (AL)	National Diploma in Beekeeping (NDB)
Tim Andrews	Defra – National Pollinator Strategy
Stephen Rogers	

1. Welcome and introductions

The Chair welcomed new members to the Forum; Shaun Cook, Paul Simpson and Raluca Herascu. Minutes of the 39th meeting had been published on BeeBase following email agreement. No actions were outstanding.

RC began the automatic transcription with attendees' consent.

2. Healthy Bees Plan 2030 Implementation Update (RC)

RC provided an update on stakeholder meetings held since the last BHAF. A meeting had been held with BFA to discuss detailed DASH actions in 2021. Further meetings are to be arranged with other Forum members.

RC asked the Forum for feedback on the detailed implementation plan circulated prior to the meeting.

MS it feels too early to comment on the implementation plan but suggested highlighting the top five actions to focus on.

Despite it being a later agenda item (5), some discussion was generated on the draft mentoring paper. BBKA (AR & JM) expressed that it would have been beneficial to have been consulted prior to the meeting as BBKA have conducted significant work to support mentoring across associations and wanted to avoid duplicating effort.

JM agreed to circulate the paper to the education and husbandry committee and request comments.

LM emphasised that the mentoring framework was not supposed to replace what BBKA is currently doing and would be discussed further later in the meeting.

JB WBKA felt that the mentoring framework is a useful guidance document but goes further than the simpler mentoring models that WBKA uses.

RC redirected the conversation to the HBP 2030 implementation report.

PS asked for clarification on HBP 2030 reporting schedule, RC outlined how the published plan included two reviews between now and 2030 with a full review at the end of the 10-year period. The document being discussed was the first attempt at a shorter more succinct quarterly report to the Forum which is not captured in the reporting schedule.

MS suggested publishing quarterly reports may be counterproductive as people may be reluctant or slower to produce updates if they are all published.

CH it is a helpful platform for moving forward, tracking actions and may incentivise progress.

RC the next step is to produce a quarterly report in September. Following recent discussions, it would be useful to focus on the knowledge exchange outcome in the next meeting e.g. actions 44, 45, 49 and 50.

3. NFU 'Farming for bees' leaflet (CH)

CH outlined the content of the NFU 'Farming for bees' leaflet (action 48) and asked for feedback. The leaflet promotes best practice for helping pollinators on farms. It needs to be updated with the current CFE guidance. It also explains about BeeConnected a 'sites for honey bees page' which was developed with the BFA.

GB had several suggestions to include:

1. The importance of early tree pollen such as hazel and willow which are a significant source of protein for rearing brood.
2. There's a lot of evidence about to how to manage hedgerows and how the timing of hedgerow management can make a big positive impact.

CH recorded the feedback although CFE already produce a leaflet on managing hedgerows for pollinators.

MS: The balance is good between honey bees and wild pollinators, but suggested farmers contact the main BKA/ BFA website instead of BeeConnected.

CH agreed that the leaflet could direct farmers directly to all the relevant websites.

JM asked if it could have a wider dissemination to farming contractors?

CH said JM had made a good point about distributing the leaflet to contractors. Contractor's value 'BeeConnected' as it reduces the number of calls because of the large areas they operate.

KS Said farmers need to consider access issues when providing sites for honey bees on farms and that some infrastructure is required to maintain apiaries.

JB As farmers are asked to devote land towards trees by government, this could be an opportunity to promote bee friendly trees and vegetation and a joint approach could be developed.

WS noticed the leaflet highlights pesticides, but it was not clear about herbicides which may have a longer-term effect on the availability of forage.

CH: We will be led by the evidence and tailor the information accordingly.

Action 1 CH to update the leaflet with the feedback received and bring back to the Forum

4. Pre keeping comms - What to think about before you get bees (KC)

Action 23 is to 'Develop a pre-keeping product. The approach taken was 'reasons not to keep bees'.

WS felt the questions were quite abstract and taster days already address these points as many people do not go on to keep bees.

KC asked the Forum to rank the points in order of importance as this may help identify which of them to focus messaging on.

JM explained that all the questions were important and what's most important depends on individual's point of view and experience, which the room generally agreed with.

NC said that talking to your local beekeeping association was a key message that was missing.

AR agreed with NC and said that courses are important in educating would be beekeepers and there are other ways to help pollinators such as planting certain species of vegetation.

JM said that the BBKA and WBKA websites have extensive materials about most of the points and suggested putting links or QR codes to these on pre keeping resources.

KC reflected that planting bee friendly vegetation, courses and learning via taster days are all important aspects of educating would be beekeepers.

JM said another point should be to direct people away from US YouTube videos as they were not a useful resource for beekeeping in the UK.

5. Mentoring Framework (LM)

JenS from WBKA joined the Forum for this item.

LM introduced the draft mentoring framework paper that had been circulated and asked for the Forum's views on how we could change or improve it, to ensure it was useful.

JenS said that mentoring is offered by WBKA as an adjunct to the course, the circulated document is too abstract and general.

JM: suggested that whether mentoring by is offered by BBKA courses does depend on the individual operator.

JenS: Once people have attended a course and are interested in teaching, WBKA introduce it in a gentle way. WBKA have 20 mentors, so individual mentors rarely get overloaded. A pyramid of Bee-buddies exists, and it's a learning experience for both the mentee and

mentor- both maximise their experience and mentors are then supported by more experienced mentors. If someone feels unable to answer a question, they ask someone who's more experienced.

LM explained how we were aiming for a flexible framework we can review and make it less formal than it is now.

MS suggested using case studies would be a more valuable way of providing this information.

JenS and AR agreed with MS that case studies would work. She'd already published case-studies in the WBK Magazine.

JB felt the framework is a useful guide and gives some useful pointers.

LM thanked everyone for their comments and agreed case studies could make the document more user- friendly and asked for everyone's help to write them. MS and Jen B JM offered to ask associations for their experiences and send case studies.

BP thanked JenS for joining the Forum for the mentoring item

Action: BBKA/WBKA to ask associations for mentoring experiences and send case studies by the end of September.

6. Apiculture Programme BHP

LM shared a slide and explained that BHP are preparing for a new funding programme to begin on 1 January 2023. The current Apiculture programme runs to the end of 31 of December 2022.

BHP plan to prepare a range of options for the Forum to discuss at the next meeting. Currently the programme funds work carried out by the National Bee Unit and education/training courses.

MS asked if the budget remains the same following Brexit.

BP confirmed the budget is the same as the last 2 years, but there is a level of uncertainty as it is only agreed for one year.

MS: Does the UK legislation specifically say funding is linked to the numbers of beekeepers?
BP explained that the legislation makes a commitment to do an annual hive count and LM explained that as honey bees are a devolved legislation area, each country has its own legislation and funding is not planned to be split across devolved countries.

MS: was concerned if the funding is linked to hive numbers it could skew decision making.

LM confirmed that no set asset value is used to allocate funding dependent on the hive count, so Hive numbers are not as relevant.

AR explained that the accuracy of the count is important as this impacts Apimondia membership fees. I can get numbers from Scotland and Wales but how accurate are the numbers provided by the National Bee Unit? I know JP and others are trying to improve the accuracy and remove BK's that have given up.

BP: We've made efforts in the last four years to improve the accuracy of hive count and are satisfied that the process is robust. The figure will never be fully accurate because of the unknowns.

7. Trade Process Update BHP/NBU

The Chair explained that we had optimistically hoped to share an update, but there is no further information about the import process.

8. AOB/comms/news Belinda

8.1 Action 46 Transfer association membership data (er2) to BeeBase.

MS has written a detailed overview of action 46 which has been reviewed by Adam Parker in NBU.

Action: RC to circulate the detailed information to the Forum with the Minutes.

8.2 NBU's video regarding chronic bee paralysis virus (CBPV).

AR raised BBKA concerns regarding information given in an NBU YouTube guidance video. The video suggests that the virus only affects strong colonies, and the BBKA was also concerned about guidance to remove the floor this time of year, which may make it easier for robbing and from wasps and bees..

JP responded that CBPV tends to affect strong colonies more visibly because they're more often congested which exacerbates the problem. NBU have found less experienced beekeepers have difficulty telling the difference between poisoning symptoms and CBPV. The NBU video shows clearly what symptoms of CBPV look like and how to identify it.

The advice to remove floors is based upon some research that GB has been doing at Newcastle. If a colony needs to purge sick bees and the floors are removed they drop out rather than having to be cleansed out of the hive, this reduces contact with sick bees which provides a benefit to the colony as a whole.

The video is not aimed at any particular time of the year. It's aimed as advice /guidance to beekeepers that are seeking it for CBPV whenever they're experiencing it. We clearly say in the video that any beekeepers considering the suggested approach need to give consideration to their local robbing risk. We have a huge volume of queries from beekeepers that have issues with CBPV.

8.3 Asian Hornet Contingency Plans

BBKA asked Rebecca Pow recently in a pollinator meeting about how the National Bee Unit is planning to move forward on a 5 year contingency plan?

BP explained that we had an extensive discussion about this in the last meeting. We are continuing to take contingency action for incursions and will review this each winter. No actions were required at present.

AR clarified that BBKA members continue to be concerned about the Asian Hornet and she had a duty to raise questions.

8.4 Healthy Bee Plan Education contract.

AR asked if it was possible to have an update on the contract?

RC advised the contract was awarded to a Welsh company called 'menter a busnes' and work has already begun on developing the online courses.

9. 9 Meeting closed 13:00

Future Forum meeting dates:

No	Dates/info	Location
41	Thursday 8 th September 2022 10:30 - 13:00	Virtual - MS Teams
42	Thursday 8 th December 2022 10:30 - 13:00	Stoneleigh
	Science Meeting February 2023	TBC
43	March TBC	TBC