

**Minutes of the Healthy Bees Plan
Project Management Board
8th Meeting 21st September 2010
Defra, 9 Millbank, London**

Present:

Helen Crews	Food & Environment Research Agency [Fera] (Chair)
Helen Carter	Food & Environment Research Agency (Secretary)
Liz McIntosh	Food & Environment Research Agency (Project Manager)
Bob Smith	Amateur Beekeeper
John Home	Bee Farmers' Association [BFA]
Brian Ripley	British Beekeepers' Association [BBKA]
Chris Hartfield	National Farmers' Union [NFU]
Wally Shaw	Welsh Beekeepers' Association [WBKA]
Dinah Sweet	Welsh Beekeepers' Association

Participation via telephone conference:

Huw Jones	Welsh Assembly Government [WAG]
-----------	---------------------------------

Apologies:

John Howat	Bee Farmers' Association
Tim Lovett	British Beekeepers' Association
Martin Smith	British Beekeepers' Association
Andy Wattam	Food & Environment Research Agency [Fera]
Nick Ambrose (observer)	Scottish Executive

1. Welcome and introduction. Note of 7th meeting for posting on BeeBase. Actions from 7th meeting

Introduction

The Chair welcomed attendees to the 8th meeting of the Project Management Board and thanked Huw Jones (WAG) for attending via telephone conference. Apologies were received from Tim Lovett (BBKA), Martin Smith (BBKA), Andy Wattam (Fera) and Nick Ambrose (Scottish Executive).

Note of 7th meeting on BeeBase

The minutes of the 7th meeting were agreed by the Board and would now be posted on BeeBase.

Actions from the 7th meeting

The Chair would provide the end of year spend figures for 2009/10 to the Board prior to the 9th meeting. The Board agreed that the figures should also be provided in the business case.

Brian Ripley (BBKA) confirmed that the recruitment of a Co-ordinator to aid the delivery of the CiC was underway.

Andy Wattam had provided the Board with a list of RBI's and SBI's who had received 'train the trainer' and this was circulated to the Board. The Chair confirmed that this training had not been funded by the Healthy Bees Plan.

The Project Manager had been contacted by a number of beekeepers regarding AFB risks at honey packing plants and she had suggested that they visit the plants involved to see the improvements that were being made. The Project Manager would provide an update on this issue at the next meeting.

The issue of quality marks for honey would not be progressed at the moment due to the number of other priorities for the Healthy Bees Plan.

ACTIONS: 1. Secretary to post the minutes of the 7th meeting on BeeBase. 2. Chair to provide the end of year spend figures for 2009/10 to the Board prior to the 9th meeting and Project Manager to ensure that they are incorporated into the Business Plan. 3. Project Manager to provide an update on AFB risk at honey packing plants for the 9th meeting.

2. August Highlight report. Risks and Issues log (PMB 8/1)

The Project Manager introduced the August Highlight report and the Risks and Issues log and asked the Board if they had any comments/amendments. The Chair said that she would like to discuss all milestones, risks and issues whose status was 'red' with the Board.

Highlight report - milestones

The following key milestone has a status of 'red':

Agreed indicators of success and reporting against agreed baselines in place - the Science and Evidence Advisory Group (SEAG) had now agreed these indicators but they still needed to be circulated to the Board for comment. The Project Manager would circulate them to the Board and the milestone would remain on 'red' until the Board had signed them off.

Risks and Issues log

The following points were noted:

Risk 9 – poor partnership working with beekeeping associations to help in the delivery of the Plan – Bob Smith suggested that the status needed to be altered from 'green' to 'amber' due to concerns about engagement with local associations. The

Chair suggested that this was added as an additional risk (risk 10) leaving risk 9 as it was with a status of 'green'.

Risk 8 - lack of progress with extending range of authorised medicines available for controlling pests and diseases due to poor response from bee medicines manufacturers - the Board agreed that this should remain on 'red' for the time being.

ACTIONS: 1. Project Manager to circulate the agreed indicators of success and reporting to the Board for comment. 2. Project Manager to add Risk 10 to the Risks and Issues log.

3. Update on draft contract with BBKA for education project

The draft contract was currently with the BBKA for their authorisation and the Chair thanked the Project Manager and Martin Smith (BBKA) for their hard work in getting the contract to this stage. It was noted that the NDB had not entered into a contract with Fera but was instead a nominated sub-contractor.

The Project Manager intended to hold fortnightly meetings with Martin Smith (BBKA) to monitor progress against the programme milestones. The contract had stipulated that the BBKA would be paid following the delivery of each of these milestones. John Home (BFA) requested that the Board was made aware of the progress against each of the milestones so that they could also monitor developments. The remainder of the Board agreed that this would be beneficial.

Brian Ripley (BBKA) reminded the Board that the BBKA was a charity and that much of the work was done on a volunteer basis. Without the funding from the Healthy Bees Plan, the BBKA would not have been able to roll out the CiC within the timescale achieved. In addition, due to funding from the Healthy Bees Plan, the BBKA had been able to channel more resources into research which they saw as another significant benefit.

The Project Manager was liaising with the Defra Press Office to raise awareness of the contract with the BBKA and also of the Study of Beekeeping Practices. Huw Jones (WAG) asked whether the Board could be provided with some standard lines to take should they be approached with queries directly. The Chair agreed that she would liaise with Tony Harrington, Fera's Director of Policy & Regulation, to draft this.

ACTION: 1. Project Manager to circulate progress against contracted milestones to the Board. 2. Chair to provide the Board with standard lines to take regarding the contract with the BBKA.

4. Reports from HEG, SEAG and CWG

The Project Manager wanted to make the Board aware of any issues from the workstreams which were of significance to the business case.

Education and Husbandry Workstream (HEG)

The Project Manager had been disappointed at the poor turnout at the working group meetings and lack of comments on materials/drafts circulated out of the workstream.

The Chair, Norman Houston (South Staffs College), had taken severance from the college at the end of August and so had rescinded his position as Chair of the Education and Husbandry Workstream. The Chair of the Project Management Board had replaced him as interim Chair and would continue in this role for the final 6 months of the workstream.

HEG had queried whether beekeepers should be charged for training e.g CiC and 'train the trainer'. The Board commented as follows:

- Brian Ripley (BBKA) thought that there was a potential conflict with the British Beekeepers' Association's charitable status since part of their remit was the education of beekeepers. However, he would not prevent a charge to cover the expense of hiring facilities if required, as opposed to charging for training.
- John Home (BFA) saw the choices as follows: not to charge; charge to cover costs (hall hire etc); charge to make a profit. Wally Shaw (WBKA) said that his local association was currently developing a system for a nominal charge which would cover the cost of hall hire etc.
- Dinah Sweet (WBKA) suggested that beekeepers may consider free training to be less valuable than training which was charged for.
- Bob Smith thought that a self-sustaining system was needed in the future once funding from the Healthy Bees Plan was no longer available. Brian Ripley (BBKA) agreed that the BBKA needed to find a way to fund CiC in future years and he agreed to explore this further with the Project Manager and the NDB. The Board agreed that 'train the trainer' also needed to be considered in the same way.

Science and Evidence Workstream (SEAG)

The Board considered PMB 8/4 – 'Provisional findings from the Random Apiary Survey'. This was an interim document and the interpretation of the Random Apiary Survey (RAS) data would not be available until late summer/early autumn when it would be distributed to the Board. The Chair offered to invite Giles Budge (NBU) to the next meeting to give an update on the RAS and the Board agreed that this would be beneficial.

The Project Manager asked for the Board's opinion on the assumptions made in the document, in particular, assumption 1) that BeeBase was currently a true representation of the total honey bee population across England and Wales. Wally Shaw (WBKA) suggested that there were 3 ways to achieve this:

- 1) target one area and scale it up across England and Wales
- 2) check with the associations

3) cross match BeeBase with the databases held by the BBKA

The Chair said that she and the Project Manager were currently in discussion about data protection issues which may impact on cross matching BeeBase with the BBKA's databases.

Brian Ripley (BBKA) suggested that individual beekeepers still needed re-assurance regarding data protection issues. The Chair asked the Board if they were content for a letter to be drafted from the Board for circulation to associations to both data protection issues and also promote BeeBase registration, aiming for December's BBKA News. The Board confirmed that they were content and the Chair and the Project Manager agreed to circulate a draft letter from comment.

ACTIONS: 1. Project Manager, BBKA and NDB to discuss a self-sustaining system for funding the future education of beekeepers. 2. Project Manager to invite Giles Budge to the 9th meeting to give an overview of the Random Apiary Survey. 3. Chair and Project Manager to draft a letter from the Board to associations reinforcing the data protection issues and requesting that they encourage BeeBase registration.

5. Development of business case

The Project Manager thanked Andy Wattam (Fera), Bob Smith and Brian Ripley (BBKA) for their input into developing a business case for the next phase of the Healthy Bees implementation. The following points were then discussed:

Process and timing

The Project Manager was aiming to have a first draft business case available during week commencing 1st October. Input from Ministers and Brian Harding, the Defra lead on bees, was still needed before the business case could be finalised. It was expected that the final position regarding funding for Healthy Bees would not be clear until after the government's comprehensive spending review on 20th October. The Chair was aware, however, that there was a commitment from the current government for full recovery of economic costs.

Input from stakeholders

The Healthy Bees Programme was about partnership working and we needed to consider the input of all stakeholders including beekeepers, NBU, inspectors, Fera Policy Team, Fera Directors. The Chair had discussed the Business Case with Fera Directors and their input was as follows:

- Maintain the number of additional inspectors (recruited for 2009/10 and 2010/11) during year 1 of second phase (not least due to National Audit Office/Public Accounts Committee concerns about lack of inspectorate resources and, as a result, the sub-optimal understanding of incidence of disease problems nationally). This would be an interim position until we

undertake a thorough review of inspectorate resources during year 1, when the results of the 2 year random apiary survey are available.

- Further funding for education and training delivered by beekeeping associations over next 3 years, building on new approach started in 2010 (and part-funded through Healthy Bees), on condition that associations secure 50% of the funding required from other sponsors and sources e.g. supermarkets etc. BUT
 - before Defra provides any additional funding for this, we would want evidence during year 1 (2011/12) of the usefulness and effectiveness of the associations' new approach to education and training. This would suggest that any additional funding from Defra only would be made available in 2012, subject to satisfactory evidence that the associations' new approach was being effective.
- (towards the Exec's new model of the inspectors auditing beekeeping standards), funding to help establish national beekeeping standards (co-funded if possible with the associations).
- (towards the formation of a beekeeping sector group ? club/forum), funding to help establish such a club and for Fera to provide secretariat. The aim would be to position this as a group operating the principles of cost and responsibility sharing, which includes statutory inspections, training and R&D. It then follows that it will co-ordinate funding from industry and government for these activities.

The Board would support the formation of a beekeeping sector/group as they felt that there were many sources for funding for research relating to bees but awareness was currently low. Brian Ripley (BBKA) also felt that applied research would achieve quick results and it would continue what the Research Funders Forum had started. However, Chris Hartfield (NBU) suggested that we needed to investigate the feasibility of funding from industry as organisations generally had their own specific agendas.

Draft package of proposals (PMB 8/2)

The Board discussed each of the proposals contained in the document as follows:

1. BBKA-led rolling programme of education and training

Education

The Board agreed that they were content to retain funding to expand the cadre of trainers for delivering CiC up until the end of year 1 (April 2011). However, they felt that we needed to take stock of the numbers of trainers operating at the end of year 1 rather than continuing irrespective of this with years 2 and 3.

Huw Jones (WAG) felt that we needed to be clear on how many trainers we were aiming to have. The Project Manager confirmed that we were aiming for 400 by the end of March 2011 which translated as 2/3 per branch or 4 per association. Brian Ripley (BBKA) confirmed that there were 62 associations and 166 branches in England and 19 associations in Wales. Wally Shaw (WBKA) suggested that the associations also needed to record how many beekeepers were attending the courses.

Brian Ripley (BBKA) said that the white CiC would standardise beginner level beekeeper training which had never been done before. All CiCs would contain a questionnaire to be returned to Chris Deaves at the BBKA who would compile the data for feedback to Fera and the Project Management Board. The Board agreed that it would also be useful to see feedback from individual courses and Brian Ripley (BBKA) agreed to provide feedback from the next train the trainer course which was taking place on 23rd October at Edge Hill University.

Incentives to trainers/associations

The Board went on to discuss ways to incentivise associations and/or trainers in order to make the education of beekeepers self-supporting financially. The following points were mentioned:

- Chris Hartfield (NBU) queried whether those completing 'train the trainer' were aware of how to organise training. The Project Manager said that it was one of the modules contained in the course and those completing the course were expected to deliver training.
- Brian Ripley (BBKA) suggested that, since the associations had access to free facilities, they should be the 'push point' rather than incentivising the individual trainers. The Chair queried whether associations might raise their fees to cover additional training but Brian Ripley (BBKA) said that this would be very unpopular with beekeepers.
- Bob Smith felt that a system based on 'pull' might work so that new beekeepers were aware of the training and requested it when they joined the associations.
- Chris Hartfield (NFU) suggested that we could not expect the system to work without setting up a national framework. He also felt that, if we were to incentivise via associations, we also needed to consider non-affiliated associations.

It was agreed that feedback from the BBKA regarding incentives to associations and/or trainers was needed and Brian Ripley (BBKA) agreed to action this.

2. Retain the current seasonal bee inspectors in England and Wales

The Chair said that there were currently 33 full-time equivalent seasonal bee inspectors. She needed to know whether the Board were content with declining bee

inspector numbers over the next 3 years of the business case, due to improvements in beekeeping. John Home (BFA) said that, since inspectors had an advisory role, he would not want to see their numbers reduced. The Board agreed saying that they did not consider current bee inspector numbers to be significant. They were also aware that the National Audit Office had suggested an increase in bee inspectors was needed.

Wally Shaw (WBKA) was concerned that reducing bee inspector numbers would adversely affect the results of the Random Apiary Survey. Huw Jones (WAG) agreed and Bob Smith suggested that numbers were maintained at their current level and reviewed at the end of year 1. The Board agreed with this way forward.

John Home (BFA) felt that Regional Bee Inspectors were spread thinly across the regions with each of them covering a large area. The Project Manager said that she would let the Board know what costs were involved in keeping Seasonal Bee Inspectors employed over the winter months.

Huw Jones (WAG) said that he needed to submit a Business Plan to his Minister in October which included the Bee Health work and he would know soon after that what the impact was on bee funding. He did not expect to have the same budget as in previous years and would need to make decisions regarding where to cut back.

The Chair then briefed the Board regarding a charging review covering all of Fera's inspectorates. Fera needed to provide details to the Treasury regarding the cost of providing inspection services, together with the evidence base for public good. The Treasury would then decide which services would be subject to charges and how much those charges would be. Huw Jones (WAG) said that charges were also being reviewed in Wales but there was currently no suggestion of charging for bee inspections.

The Board could see a number of negative impacts including the following:

- beekeepers were not making a living out of bees so they may be driven away if they had to pay for inspections. Bob Smith said that any decrease in beekeeper numbers would have a negative impact on biodiversity.
- John Home (BFA) suggested that, as there were not enough bee inspectors to provide a full inspection service, it was not acceptable that those who were inspected paid while those who were not inspected did not.

3. Suitably Qualified Persons (SQPs) across England and Wales

The new system on prescribing bee medicines was to be in place from 2012 onwards. Huw Jones (WAG) said that he does have SQPs on the agenda in Wales and is looking at the links with the Inspectorate.

Brian Ripley (BBKA) said the SQPs would be able to sell medicines to beekeepers. Huw Jones (WAG) was concerned that government funding was being used on a scheme which allowed SQPs to make money. Brian Ripley (BBKA) said that funding

was needed to ensure that we had SQPs who were evenly spread across the country otherwise the system would not work. The Board agreed that a policy decision was needed and the Project Manager said that she would explore this with WAG and VMD. The Board also asked that this group considered the following: additional duties of SQPs, proposed honorarium of £500 per annum and how stocks of medicines would be accessed.

The Chair agreed that the Regional Bee Inspectors and the Seasonal Bee Inspectors would be trained as SQPs. The estimated cost of £500 per person per course was to be taken from the core Bee Health programme rather than from the Healthy Bees Plan. She went on to say that RBIs and SBIs would not be able to charge for these services.

4. NBU-based co-ordinator

It was proposed that a BeeBase editor was recruited to carry out the following tasks:

- Manage BeeBase more proactively (issue alerts, update pages, relevant information etc)
- Updating Wikipedia entries for BeeBase and NBU
- Ensure dissemination of research results including development of practical advice
- Develop a strategy for implementing already identified proposals
- Regular review of advice on varroa treatments and ensure it is available to beekeepers and regularly updated
- Awareness raising to ensure beekeepers join their local association and register on BeeBase
- Coordinate inspectors participation in training courses with local associations to minimise costs and NBU resources
- Triage and follow up emails/general enquiries received by NBU inbox
- Engage and seek feedback from beekeepers on advice/leaflets received from the NBU
- Review issues and themes emerging from beekeeping blogs and tweets and, as necessary, develop advice to address these issues for posting on BeeBase
- Data protection issues, including reviewing and updating records

Ian Homer and Richard Ball were currently the NBU Education and Extension Officers and their contracts were due to come to an end in March 2011. The Chair proposed that this post should evolve into the proposed role of the NBU-based co-ordinator and the Board agreed. The Board suggested that the essential skills for the post were: competent communicator, web editor, PR experience and that beekeeping experience was beneficial.

5. Enhance and further develop BeeBase

Huw Jones (WAG) requested that registrations were split into separate figures for England and Wales and the Project Manager agreed to provide this information.

6. **Association-led assurance scheme on the health and quality of bees for sale**

Brian Ripley (BBKA) said that he would not support Healthy Bees funding being used to set up such a scheme. As an alternative he said that BBKA could provide advisory leaflets to reinforce advice on biosecurity. John Home (BFA) said that the NBU had inspected bees before auction in the past but there needed to be a consistent system. Bob Smith agreed saying that there were no records of where bees had been sold to and that a publicised version of what to expect as both a buyer and a seller was needed. It was agreed that this issue would be referred to the Communications Working Group for action.

7. **Establish and resource one routine randomised survey of winter losses across GB**

Martin Smith (BBKA) had discussed this with Giles Budge of the NBU and they were both keen to get this established. They intended to carry out the full survey both in terms of managing the survey and interpreting the results. As an estimate of expenditure Brian Ripley (BBKA) said that the honey survey run by the BBKA had cost approximately £2,500.

8. **Management costs**

The Chair said that during December she intended to review how the Board and Working Groups were operated.

The Project Manager said that she would collate the 2009/10 spend for travel and subsistence for the Board and each of the Working Groups and would circulate this to the Board. She would also provide a pro-rata spend for 2010/11 for the BBKA education project.

Draft business case (PMB 8/3)

The Board were concerned that some of the extracts taken from the previous business plan did not reflect the current position and Chair and the Project Manager agreed to review these.

Bob Smith thought it would be beneficial to include the exotic pest threat in the business case and the Chair agreed that this would be useful.

The Chair asked the Board to consider the full draft business case and provide the Project Manager with their comments by 1st October.

ACTIONS: 1. Brian Ripley to provide the Board with information regarding incentives to associations and/or trainers. 2. Project Manager to let the Board have the cost of employing the Regional Bee Inspectors over the winter months. 3. The Project Manager and Huw Jones (WAG) to agree a policy decision regarding the funding of SQPs, additional duties of SQPs, proposed honorarium of £500 per annum and how stocks of medicines would be

accessed. 4. Project Manager to split BeeBase registrations into separate figures for England and Wales. 5. Chair and Project Manager to review extracts taken from the previous Healthy Bees business plan. 6. Board to provide comments on the draft business case to the Project Manager by 1st October. 7. Project Manager to include the exotic pest threat in the business case.

6. Any Other Business

EU Apiculture programme

The Board had seen the following link to a EUROPA press release regarding an increase in EU support for the beekeeping sector:

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/10/1121>

The Commission had approved the national programmes of the 27 Member States to improve the production and marketing of apiculture products for the period 2011-2013. The EU contribution to the financing of the programmes had increased by almost 25% compared to the previous period (2008-10) from €26 million to €32 million per annum. This had led to the UK receiving some additional funding.

Date of the next meeting

12th October 2010 at 12.00 - 15.00 in room 806, Nobel House. Lord Henley, Parliamentary Under-Secretary with responsibility for bees will attend the meeting from 14.00 – 14.30. The Project Manager asked the Board to let her know of any items which they would like to see in the brief which would be provided to Lord Henley.

Provisional Agenda:

Progress with the draft business case
Random Apiary Survey (Giles Budge attending)
Liaison with honey packers
Lord Henley attending

The Project Manager asked the Board to let her know of any additional items they would like to discuss.

ACTIONS: 1. PMB to let the Project Manager know of any items they would like to see in the brief to Lord Henley. 2. PMB to let the Project Manager know of any additional items they would like on the agenda for the 9th meeting.

Fera
September 2010