

**Minutes of the Healthy Bees Plan
Project Management Board
11th Meeting, 10th March 2011
Teleconference**

Present:

Helen Crews	Food & Environment Research Agency [Fera] (Chair)
Helen Carter	Food & Environment Research Agency (Secretary)
Liz McIntosh	Food & Environment Research Agency (Project Manager)
Andy Wattam	Food & Environment Research Agency
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]
Wally Shaw	Welsh Beekeepers' Association [WBKA]
Dinah Sweet	Welsh Beekeepers' Association
Huw Jones	Welsh Assembly Government [WAG]
Bob Smith	Amateur Beekeeper
Steve Sunderland (observer)	Scottish Executive

Apologies:

Brian Ripley British Beekeepers' Association

1. Welcome and introduction

The Chair welcomed attendees to the 11th meeting of the Healthy Bees Plan Project Management Board. Apologies were received from Brian Ripley (BBKA).

2. Review of draft minutes from 10th PMB and progress with actions [surveys; foundation wax]

Survey of beekeepers' husbandry practices and overwintering losses

Wally Shaw (WBKA) had taken away an action from the 10th meeting to provide technical input into discussions between the BBKA and their survey agency in order to arrive at a unified survey method for overwintering losses. Wally had since spoken to David Aston (BBKA) and sent his draft proposal to Mike Brown (NBU) and Giles Budge (NBU) but had not received any feedback.

Martin Smith (BBKA) said that the BBKA were of the view that the unified survey needed to be agreed by the PMB prior to approaching the BBKA or the NBU. Andy Wattam (Fera) agreed saying that he had discussed the proposal with the National

Bee Unit but they were of the same opinion as the BBKA. Andy went on to say that there was now a random element to BeeBase so they were in a better position to undertake the survey. Steve Sunderland (Scottish Executive) suggested that, since Scotland and Wales had access to BeeBase, this could cover the whole of Great Britain.

The Chair suggested that Wally sent his recommendations for the consolidated survey to the Project Manager so that it could be agreed by the Board. This would only apply to the winter survey in 12 months time (winter 2011/12); for the time being the NBU, BBKA and BFA would continue with separate surveys.

NBU-based coordinator

The Board had previously agreed to the recruitment of an NBU-based co-ordinator. The Chair said that funding was available for the next financial year (2011/12) but that the recruitment process had been slow. She would discuss this with the Project Manager and Mike Brown (NBU) and update the Board regarding progress.

Foundation beeswax

At the 10th meeting Wally Shaw (WBKA) had raised concerns about the purity of foundation beeswax due to recent studies which had shown increased levels of varroacide and pesticide residues in this wax. The Project Manager agreed to check whether this was covered by EU Animal Health legislation. Wally said that he was mainly concerned about pesticide residues and whether samples of imported beeswax were being analysed. The Project Manager said that the legislation did cover where foundation beeswax was imported from but was not certain that it covered pesticide residues. Martin Smith (BBKA) was aware that foundation wax was often held in customs but he was not aware of who inspected it and what the exact process was. The Project Manager said that she would circulate the EU guidance to the Board.

Honey packers – draft code of practice

Martin Smith (BBKA) suggested that it would be beneficial for the Board to see the code of practice prepared by the Honey Association and to understand if it had now been agreed by members and was being implemented. John Howat (BFA) said that he would discuss this at the next meeting of the Honey Association and then subsequently with the Project Manager.

ACTIONS: 1. Wally Shaw to provide recommendations for the consolidated survey of wintering losses to the Project Manager for distribution to the Board. 2. Chair to provide the Board with an update on the recruitment of the NBU-based co-ordinator. 3. Project Manager to circulate the EU Animal Health legislation affecting foundation beeswax. 4. John Howat to discuss the code of practice for honey packers with a view to providing this to the Board.

3. Update on progress with business case (PMB 11/01)

The Project Manager reported that she had put the business case to Defra at the end of January 2011, and the Local Approvals Panel had just this week approved (informally) Phase 2 of the business case for the first year only. The subsequent 3 years would be subject to a Gateway Review by the Office of Government Commerce and a more refined assessment by Fera of the benefits to be gained by continuing with HBP implementation.

The Project Manager was waiting for formal approval from the Panel, after which she would update Ministers.

Tim Lovett (BBKA) asked for the Chair's views regarding the outcome. The Chair thought that it was appropriate that Defra wanted 3rd party assurance about projects with long timeframes for delivery. Martin Smith (BBKA) queried how much the review was likely to cost and the Project Manager estimated it to be in the region of £10,000 - £20,000. [Note - following the meeting it was confirmed that the review would be funded by Defra rather than the Healthy Bees Plan].

Bob Smith said that he was disappointed about funding only being approved for year 1 and was concerned that, as the delivery of CiC and NDB training were only recently underway, we would not expect to see the benefits of this in the first year of Phase 2 ie, 2011/12. Tim Lovett (BBKA) agreed with this view and said that the Healthy Bees Plan needed to be a long term commitment.

The Chair asked whether Wales and Scotland had experienced similar issues. Huw Jones (WAG) said that he was not surprised by Defra's approach. WAG had also approved funding for one year, with future years subject to the bee health policy review which Fera was planning in consultation with WAG for later in 2011/12. Steve Sunderland (Scottish Executive) said that the Cabinet Secretary had been very supportive of their bee health strategy, published in mid 2010, and they had invited proposals from Scottish beekeepers on specific project to implement. He confirmed that the proposal for Scotland to part fund CiC has been agreed.

The Board agreed that item 10 (PMB 11/01), consisting of £20,000 in 2011/12 to identify and implement innovative approaches to securing funding for research activities to support phase 2 implementation, needed to be discussed further at the extended meeting of the Board on 14th March 2011.

ACTION: Board to consider item 10 (PMB 11/01) at the extended meeting of the PMB on 14th March 2011.

4. Highlight Report (PMB 11/02) and specific actions from SEAG, HEG and CWG

Science and evidence advisory group

The Secretary of SEAG was due to re-draft the list of research priorities, removing duplication and adding categories for what further work was required. Wally Shaw

(WBKA) said that there was plenty of information about bees but it needed drawing together and compiling into a usable format in order to avoid duplication. Martin Smith (BBKA) and Chris Hartfield (NFU) agreed saying that a strategic approach to research was needed to avoid duplication. Wally Shaw (WBKA) queried whether the draft list of research priorities identified by SEAG had been circulated to the Project Management Board and the Project Manager agreed to circulate them. Tim Lovett (BBKA) said that SEAG had been in existence for 2 years but had met infrequently, although the need for scientific input into the Healthy Bees Plan was, he felt, as great as ever.

Communications working group

The Project Manager said that the CWG had organised an advisory leaflet under the Healthy Bees blue banner on buying and selling bees to be circulated with Bee Craft and BBKA News.

The Communications working group felt that they had been working on their own and needed more work to be commissioned from the PMB.

Husbandry and education working group

The work of HEG was covered later in the meeting.

ACTION: Project Manager to circulate the draft research priorities to the Board.

5. Contract deliverable – paper on accreditation options (PMB 11/02a and 11/02b)

Papers 11/02a and 11/02b were produced by Chris Deaves of the BBKA, with the purpose of addressing the following:

- 1) How can beekeeping tutors be 'accredited' and
- 2) How can a system of transferable beekeeping qualifications be created.

The Project Manager reported that this paper was a deliverable under the contract with the BBKA. She had circulated the draft to Ken Edwards (HEG) to look for a 'reality check' of the recommendations given Ken's further education background. Ken had made some very helpful comments and observations on the recommendations and was in favour of accreditation of trainers based on portfolios of evidence and their assessment by a suitable person or a review panel, as well as on the accreditation of training or available qualifications through national award systems. In relation to the recommendation in the paper about BBKA recruiting a CPD external advisor to lead on the accreditation work, the Project Manager suggested instead that there was likely to be someone, such as Ken, from within the ranks of the BBKA/LBKA who might be persuaded to take this on rather than recruit externally.

Martin Smith (BBKA) felt that if the Healthy Bees Plan was to go down the accreditation route then it needed to be done properly. This involved external advice and/or an external provider at a potential start up cost of £10,000 plus continued accreditation costs to meet thereafter. Dinah Sweet (WBKA) agreed that accreditation needed to be provided by an external body. The Project Manager said that the Phase 2 business plan did not include accreditation so if PMB were to recommend that we proceed with implementing accreditation, it was not obvious where we would find the funds.

Bob Smith queried whether accreditation was required at all now that the CiC was leading to more consistency. Andy Wattam (Fera) felt that there needed to be tangible benefits to accreditation since certificates alone did not make good beekeepers or trainers. Tim Lovett (BBKA) was concerned that, if we did follow the accreditation route, we needed to ensure that we did not discourage volunteers. Martin Smith (BBKA) suggested that a decision on accreditation of tutors was delayed to allow further discussion to take place, with an agreed way forward including funding agreed for 2012/13.

Turning to accreditation of beekeeping qualifications, again there were mixed views. Tim Lovett suggested that this was not a priority at the moment, although the recommendation on developing training for bee suitably qualified persons did need to continue this year.

The Chair summarised by saying that there had been some support from the Board for accreditation but there had also been some concerns and these would be discussed at a future meeting. The Chair then formally thanked Chris Deaves for providing the paper.

6. Progress with BBKA/NDB contract with Fera on education

Martin Smith (BBKA) reported that the red and green courses in cases were close to being finalised and would be delivered on time as part of the contract. BBKA would continue in 2011/12 to develop the blue and black courses. The regional training events to recruit some 400 beekeeper trainers would be completed by end of March. BBKA would continue these events during 2011/12 including presenting the new colours when ready.

NDB's report to PMB (PMB 11/03a)

Bob Smith said that 4 out of 5 NDB short courses had been completely developed and run and the 5th was ready and will run twice before April. In total 12 of the 14 short courses had been delivered with the remainder to run during mid-March. A total of 140 students will have been trained by the end of March 2011.

Dinah Sweet (WBKA) said that she was disappointed that the NDB had not offered any courses in Wales or on the border and it had been difficult for Welsh beekeepers to travel to the nearest locations. Bob Smith said that, although much had been achieved in a short space of time, location had been an issue in both Wales and

Northern England. It was, however, intended that coverage for the whole of England and Wales was achieved.

Bill Cadmore (BBKA) and Ken Basterfield (NDB) were keen that there was a more joined-up approach between the BBKA and the NDB but this approach still needed to be agreed by the NDB. Bob Smith offered to discuss this with Ken Basterfield and then update the Chair and the Project Manager. The Healthy Bees Plan was continuing to co-fund the BBKA education coordinator – Bill Cadmore – in 2011/12 and an early decision was needed by Fera, BBKA and NDB about whether and how to extend his role to act as a central co-ordinator for both the courses in cases and the NDB courses.

The Chair summarised by saying that the BBKA and NDB had achieved a great deal in a short space of time and the Board were minded to support a more joined-up approach provided that both the BBKA and NDB were in agreement.

ACTION: Bob Smith to discuss a more joined up approach between the BBKA and NDB including the need for a central co-ordinator.

BBKA's proposals for beekeeping education (PMB 11/03b)

Martin Smith (BBKA) presented main points from PMB 11/03b which was a paper for PMB and the BBKA Trustees on 'Proposals for Beekeeping Education Activities 2011-2012' prepared with input from the NDB. The current year's work was due to be completed by the end of March 2011 as planned, including production of the red and green courses. Subject to budgets the blue case was due to be completed by March 2012 and the last level, black, will be completed by the end of March 2013.

Martin Smith said that the BBKA Executive had approved the proposals for 2011/12 on the 28th of February and he now asked for agreement from the Board on the following:

1. That the budgets for 2010/11 and 2011/12 were approved.
2. That the regional co-ordinator was given a contract extension of a further 12 months to execute the work outlined in the proposal.
3. That planning was undertaken on the basis of provisional approval of the budgets for 2011/12 and 2012/13.

The Healthy Bees Plan would contribute £5000 in 2011/12 to continue the 50% co-funding of the BBKA coordinator.

Huw Jones (WAG) was content with the proposal but was concerned that provision was made for Wales, Scotland and non-affiliated groups. Martin Smith (BBKA) said that non-affiliated groups continued to be included on the same terms as BBKA/WBKA members.

The Board endorsed PMB 11/03b.

7. Review of disease control policy during 2011/12

The Project Manager said that the review of disease control policy would lead to recommendations with possible implications for the future of Fera's inspection services and would include the OGC review. The Project Manager would draft a terms of reference for the review and circulate to the Board for their comments.

ACTION: Project Manager to draft a terms of reference for the review of disease control policy/inspection service/OGC and circulate to the Board for their comments.

8. Asian Hornet

Gay Marris (Fera) had produced an article for the February 2011 edition of the BBKA News. This was a policy area which Fera shared with colleagues in Defra's Wildlife Unit and the Chair said that she would continue to keep the Board informed of progress.

9. Costs of delivering NBU services

The Chair said that a fees and charging review under statutory and regulatory services was planned and, where appropriate, the government wanted to achieve full cost recovery. For the plant health inspection service in general there was a large gap between costs and income and clarity was needed regarding how much it cost to provide each of the inspection services. Data collection was currently underway on the plant health side and would be available for consultation during spring/summer 2011. Bee inspection services were also part of this review, although no firm plans to share at this stage.

10. EU Presidency – progress

The Project Manager thanked the Board for their views on the document titled 'Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on Honeybee Health'. The conclusions were now being drafted by the Council working group with the aim of endorsement by Council at their May meeting. Huw Jones (WAG) thanked the Project Manager for prioritising biosecurity in the document.

11. Next steps and plans for next PMB meeting on 14 March

Lord Henley was due to attend the meeting for approximately 1.5 hours. It was suggested that, should there be any time before the meeting, he would visit the BBKA or NBU headquarters. The Board would let the Project Manager know of any additional items for discussion before Monday.

Fera
April 2011