

Healthy Bees Plan (HBP)
Summary Note of 8th Meeting of the Communications Working
Group (CWG)
7 October 2011 – Room 204, Nobel House, London

Present:

Carl Reynolds	Chair
Liz McIntosh	Food & Environment Research Agency (Fera)
Rob Chilton	
Marie Holmes	
Gay Marris	
Richard Ball	
Tim Lovett	British Beekeepers' Association
Claire Waring	Bee Craft
Dan Basterfield	Bee Farmers Association (BFA)
Matthew Isted	Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) - via telephone
Bob Smith	Beekeeper

Apologies:

Helen Crews	Food & Environment Research Agency
Alison Wilson	
Trish O'Donnell	Defra PR and Partnerships
Sharon Blake	British Beekeepers' Association
Robin Dean	Bee Farmers Association (BFA)
Brian Clark	Welsh Beekeepers' Association (WBKA)
Amy Byrne	Welsh Assembly Government (WAG)

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Chair welcomed attendees to the 8th meeting of the Communications Working Group and noted apologies for absence. He proposed that during agenda item 2, we should consider how best to assess the effectiveness of Healthy Bees communications activities; whether comms plans and channels were ready for the possible arrival of exotic pests; and whether and how bee inspectors were consistent with HBP messages.

2. Comms plan for CWG during 2011/12 (CWG 8/1)

Rob Chilton introduced the near-final draft of the comms plan overview for CWG during 2011/12. Much planning work had been completed via teleconference with Sharon Blake about the BBKA communication channel and similar work would also be carried out with Claire Waring (Bee Craft channel) and Brian Clark (Welsh

Beekeepers Association channel) and also with the Scottish beekeepers' channel to plan the campaigns and/or news articles to be published each month.

At the last meeting (25 July) detailed planning notes were circulated for each activity/campaign including responsible person and campaign objectives. When developing the plan, and specifically the detailed planning notes, it was apparent there were a lot of campaigns (new and ongoing) and Rob asked the Group, were there too many campaigns for the channels we were using.

Richard Ball suggested talking to and including the beekeeping suppliers of nucs in getting Healthy Bees Plan (HBP) messages out at the same time as talking to them about identifying how to minimise disease risks from buying and selling bees. Liz McIntosh said that Kim Chadwick (Husbandry and Education Group Secretary and Fera Bee Health Policy Advisor) would set up a meeting with suppliers during November and this would be included in any discussions.

ACTION: Liz McIntosh to ask bee suppliers to act as a further communications channel for Healthy Bees implementation (subject to availability, Rob Chilton would attend the meeting of suppliers).

Tim Lovett asked how the inspectors identified the subject of their talks to beekeepers, ie, whether inspectors set their own agenda and whether talks were aligned to HBP campaigns. Richard Ball explained that the inspectors recorded the titles of their talks on the inspectors pages on BeeBase. Tim suggested working more closely with the inspectorate to ensure consistent and aligned messages.

Tim also suggested that the bee inspectors could help raise awareness and understanding about the courses in a case amongst beekeepers. This could be achieved by providing the regional bee inspectors with a set of the courses in cases in each region. Dan Basterfield agreed and suggested that the inspectors also needed to be aware of the NDB short courses and dates.

ACTION: Liz McIntosh to discuss with Martin Smith (BBKA) and Andy Wattam (Fera) about supplying a set of courses in a case for each NBU region to help raise bee inspectors awareness and understanding of these new materials as well as the NDB short courses, so that they could help inform beekeepers about these new materials and courses (which have been co-funded by Defra/Fera).

Gay Marris said that the inspectorate offered one to one training when they carried out an inspection which was specific to that person and relevant to the problem, if any, and to their level of experience. Gay noted the way in which information was recorded didn't accurately reflect what was happening.

The Chair asked who was the person at Fera who would be able to help identify how best to share HBP campaigns and key messages with the bee inspectors as a key communication channel to ensure consistent messages and effective dissemination of information. Gay said there was a repository of shared powerpoint presentations which could be used to provide presentations on this topic or at least a few slides on

the key messages. Bob Smith said that this would be timely to discuss at the next Bee Inspectors conference.

ACTION: Rob Chilton, Richard Ball, Gay Marris and Marie Holmes to meet Andy Wattam to discuss and identify how best to share HBP campaigns and key messages with the bee inspectors as a key communications channel to ensure consistent messages and effective dissemination of information. Also to find out from the bee inspectors (i) about what they want from HBP work to ensure that they are informed and contributing to the work, and (ii) date of their next meeting which the BBKA offered to attend to brief them on the courses in cases.

The Chair asked how best to seek feedback on our campaigns and advisory materials and suggested selecting a small scale qualitative group of say 20-30 people or send out a large survey to many. As restrictions were currently in place within government on this type of activity, the practicalities of a survey would need to be investigated. Claire Waring suggested adding the feedback form (which Rob Chilton had designed) onto the end of the electronic Varroa and Foulbrood leaflets as a way of seeking feedback. The Chair also recommended strongly that NBU should insert a message on the front page of BeeBase for beekeepers to join their local association and BBKA (Martin Smith) should insert a message on the front page of the BBKA website for beekeepers to register on BeeBase. These messages were already on both websites but were embedded within and not on the front page.

ACTION: Rob Chilton (and/or Linda Crossley) to insert a feedback form into the electronic versions of NBU's leaflets on Varroa and Foulbroods for posting on BeeBase.

ACTION: Mike Brown and Martin Smith to insert join an association or register on BeeBase messages on the front pages of BeeBase and BBKA website.

ACTION: Rob Chilton to add Bill Cadmore to the channel list in the comms plan.

Bob Smith said that the Random Apiary Survey (RAS) should have a higher profile in the beekeeping press and wider as it was a great accomplishment and no survey had been carried out like this anywhere else in the world. Claire informed the Group that she had a piece on the RAS scheduled for the November edition of Bee Craft and BBKA News were possibly running an update piece in the November edition but would also be publishing a fuller piece when the full report and molecular data had been collated. Gay reported that the press team at Fera (Alison Wilson) would also be drafting a press release on this topic.

A brief discussion followed on the issue of the NBU sharing copy between the main beekeeping channels, ie, BBKA News, Bee Craft and WBKA, rather than drafting individual copy to each of the channels. The Chair noted that all agreed that the NBU should share copy as far as practical and possible, rather than drafting individual copy for each channel.

ACTION: Gay to circulate to CWG the RAS article prepared for Bee Craft.

Rob opened up the discussion to consider whether and how to engage the general media, and asked which elements of the comms plan were newsworthy. The Group proposed that RAS, European Union Reference Laboratory (EURL) which was looking at colony losses and weakening of colonies on an international scale, and the Asian hornet would all be newsworthy and of interest to the wider press.

In summing up the discussion, the Chair asked the Group whether they were content to endorse the comms plan, subject to further detailed planning with Bee Craft and WBKA and the fact that it was a living document. The Group agreed to sign it off.

3. Update on medicines campaign

Liz reported on her teleconference with Matthew Isted of Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) during August. They had agreed that CWG/Fera and VMD would co-ordinate communication activities as much as possible. The Healthy Bees focus was about beekeepers' use of medicines and record keeping so the main output would be a medicines record card circulated through the beekeeping press preferably by spring.

Matthew said the VMD's focus was going to be on producing a leaflet on the bee Suitably Qualified Persons (SQPs) and the associated change in the legal status of currently available authorised bee medicines from being available over the counter to requiring a prescription (POM-VPS).

The Chair asked whether there was a minimum requirement of record keeping which VMD required. There was a legal requirement for those using medicines for bees (and other livestock) to keep records; Trading Standards were responsible for monitoring if this was being carried out. A number of examples of record cards were available. Claire Waring said that Bee Craft had issued a record card. Tim said we needed beekeepers to have a good understanding of the rules and that it would be helpful for suppliers to provide the record card with each medicine sold. Tim also said the Group should be looking to agree with VMD on an A5/A6 card to be used by all, downloadable from BeeBase, circulated by inspectors, included in courses in cases and in BBKA member packs.

The Chair suggested that an article in the beekeeping press to accompany circulation of the card could explain the rules and possibly provide examples of beekeepers who are already recording their medicine use.

ACTION: Liz to develop a medicines campaign and record card in consultation with CWG and with VMD aiming to implement by quarter 4 (and ready for beekeeper supplier meeting to be held before end of year).

Rob suggested that the SQP messages needed to come first before it was possible to roll out the record card. Due to the complexity of messages, the aim would be to try and get the two synchronised and out at the same time. Tim thought that the SQP work would take longer to develop and roll out, so the medicine card should proceed first.

In summing up, the Chair agreed that we would proceed with the record card now.

4. Gap analysis – comparison of BBKA members which are registered on BeeBase (PMB 15/6)

Marie Holmes updated the Group on the gap analysis paper which Giles Budge had prepared. The high level policy conclusions were;

- Despite a huge effort by the inspectorate, many county associations did not share data (45/64), and some had not responded to requests from Bee Inspectors to address data sharing policy (17/64)
- The regional percentage of BBKA members registered on BeeBase varies between 67% and 98.5%
- This exercise had resulted in an estimated additional 2291 beekeepers becoming registered on BeeBase
- Assuming a scheme of complete data sharing by the BBKA was in place, BeeBase would receive 1965 new registered beekeepers annually
- The large number of BBKA members that remain unknown to the NBU seriously compromises the ability of the NBU to control disease and to contain any future incursion of an exotic pest.

A brief discussion on the paper raised the following suggestions on making it more accessible and clear for a wider readership, particularly if this paper, including map, was to form the basis of an article in the beekeeping press:

- Include a brief introduction of the total number of local and country associations to help provide some context;
- Break up the methods para into the various steps (paragraphs/bullets) and explain more fully how the estimates were made (avoiding terms like bootstrapping and GENSTAT 13.1), and how confident we can be in the extrapolations/estimates;
- In the results section the data presented do not seem to fit with the data given in Figure 1 - suggest a table to show data used in Figure 1 to help transparency;
- The presentation of data in Figure 1 needed to be more easy to understand – could a different way be found to present the data rather than arrows?
- In Figure 1, why was data for Wales 4/10 - given WBKA's data sharing policy, shouldn't this be 10/10?

ACTION: Gay Marris and Giles Budge to review gap analysis paper and map on comparing numbers of beekeepers on BeeBase and BBKA members to make the results more accessible and clear before preparing an article on this work in beekeeping press. The article should also present example text for local associations to use about passing on members' details to the NBU for registering on BeeBase. It should also include, if possible, any case studies which show the benefits of sharing members' details with the NBU (eg, in Wales this has been the practice over many years – can we say that, as a result, the bee inspector has more time for quality work

as they don't need to spend time identifying and locating beekeepers and that disease control is more effective?)

Dan Basterfield asked why were there so few of the associations sharing data. Tim felt there were still some myths surrounding how shared data would be used. The Chair suggested using Wales as an example to stop this myth perpetuating, as Wales had operated a 100% progressive data sharing policy for approximately 10 years and Welsh beekeepers weren't being investigated or targeted. The Group agreed the Welsh example should be used as a case study and a narrative formed around this.

Dan felt we should be pushing the message of the importance of registration from the top of the BBKA. Tim did take the notion of notifying associations to share data to the trustee's board meeting in September but there wasn't an appetite to support it in this way. The BBKA felt they could support the registration message in other ways by issuing adverts or news pieces in BBKA News. Tim said that the associations could easily cascade information quickly to its members, if there was a pest incursion such as Asian hornet or Small hive beetle (SHB).

The Chair said that everyone needed to work together to encourage BeeBase registration many elements were necessary to engage effectively with beekeepers. Claire Waring offered to place an advert (1/8 size) in Bee Craft as a reminder to register on BeeBase.

ACTION: Marie Holmes to check with Claire Waring about advert/text on BeeBase registration.

5. Update on BeeBase Co-ordinator

Liz updated the Group with progress on recruitment of the BeeBase co-ordinator. Due to civil service wide restraints on recruitment, it hadn't been possible to get someone in post on a short-term or fixed-term appointment. As an alternative there would be two people employed as subcontractors on a short-term basis. Mike Brown (Head of the NBU) was working with Helen Crews and Oliver Wardman (Fera Head of IT Systems Development) to develop a work plan. The work plan which CWG proposed in September 2010 had been forwarded and the final work plan would be circulated to Project Management Board (PMB) and CWG for endorsement. The Chair agreed that CWG should see the workplan to check whether it was consistent with the recommendations it had developed.

Gay reminded the Group that BeeBase was initially developed as a reporting tool for the inspectorate and the public facing pages were secondary to its original statutory function. The Chair suggested that whoever was writing the content that it should be written from customer experience rather than NBU experience.

The Group agreed that email alerts could be expanded and not used only for notifying of problems but as a further communication channel and to provide regular updates on NBU and HBP progress. The Group also suggested that the co-ordinator

could look at stats of downloads relevant to campaigns of activity and correlation of communications spikes/enquiries as a result.

ACTION: Liz McIntosh to circulate BeeBase work plan currently being developed by NBU to CWG for comment and endorsement (to include downloading BeeBase stats, such as impacts of campaigns on downloads of advisory materials from BeeBase).

6. Blog monitoring results (CWG 8/2)

Marie Holmes updated the Group on observations made on various beekeeping forum. Although there wasn't a great deal of change to update from the last meeting, CWG noted that nuc suppliers and Asian hornet had been discussed. CWG agreed that there was no need to produce any new advice or information in response to discussions and suggested including Biobees in any future blog monitoring.

ACTION: Marie Holmes to include Biobees in future blog monitoring and to set up an account on various beekeeping sites to post the quarterly newsletter or any HBP updates. Also to work with BeeBase co-ordinator to develop blogs as possible communication channels and to identify key nodes which have their own contact lists for cascading information, such as Bill Cadmore's trainers' list (BBKA training activities).

7. Upcoming activities/events from the Group (CWG 8/3)

A tour de table identified the following:

- Bob updated the group about forthcoming NDB short courses over the winter;
- Gay said that she was planning to send articles wider than England and Wales to include Scotland and Northern Ireland.
- Tim updated the Group that the BBKA had a new Press Officer, Jill Mclean. Suffolk beekeepers were launching a beekeeping DVD at the London Honey Show which was endorsed by Charlie Dimmock.
- Richard Ball was in contact with the Horse Association due to a recent case of a horse being stung by bees and as a result he was writing a piece for the horse press on apiary security.

8. Draft minutes of 7th meeting – review of actions

In relation to Action 4 (All to forward comments on the 3 best practice factsheets to Richard Ball) this led to a discussion on the process for developing and clearing the templates. Liz reported that PMB had made some last minute comments on the 3

best practice templates during their meeting on 23 September which had further delayed completion and publication. When HEG met on 6 October, they asked for CWG to develop a peer review process for the templates so that this was formalised to avoid last minute comments on drafts and delays. The Group decided that a small sub-group could act as peer reviewers and once this group had signed any template off that it was final. It was agreed that Bob Smith, Tim Lovett, Wally Shaw, Dan Basterfield, Claire Waring and Selwyn Wilkins would form this sub-group.

ACTION: Liz McIntosh to report back to HEG and SEAG on peer review process for best practice templates.

9. Update from healthy Bees Project Manager including: PMB meetings; Fera's and BBKA's co-funded education project; and policy review

Liz updated the Group with actions relevant to CWG from the recent HEG and SEAG meetings. HEG had suggested development of shortened laminated versions of the best practice templates for use in the field. The Group agreed that this had already been well covered by Bee Craft (and others), it was also considered to be too expensive. Claire said that should there be any suggestions for topics not already covered in Beecraft's suite of existing apiary guide cards then she would consider adding to it.

SEAG had met in September and the main point for CWG was on the indicators for measuring progress with implementation of the HBP; the indicators had been signed off by PMB and had been circulated to CWG. SEAG had asked CWG to:

(i) ask the editors of the beekeeping press to encourage authors to include references to peer reviewed papers in their articles and to (ii) look at how we can ensure that advice and guidance given to beekeepers was based on sound evidence. CWG agreed that it would be difficult to implement across all the various types of articles but editors would encourage authors to include references in the notes to authors.

(iii) to include in future comms campaigns an item on reducing the risks of introducing exotic pests. This action was already being addressed by ongoing campaigns and planned articles on Small hive beetle and a new campaign on Asian hornet including a section on recognition.

BBKA/NDB co-funded education project

Liz updated the group on the progress with the co-funded Fera/BBKA education project. Bill Cadmore had rolled out a summer programme and planning was now well advanced for the winter courses.

Dan Basterfield observed that in his experience there didn't seem to be an appetite from Wales to attend training courses and felt that possibly they had been overlooked.

ACTION: Liz to find out from WAG whether they consider that Welsh beekeepers have sufficient information on, and access to the HBP training courses, as BBKA and NDB felt there hadn't been a large uptake from Wales.

Policy review

Liz updated CWG about the disease control policy review which was being conducted by Fera in consultation with stakeholders on PMB and SEAG. It had started in July and would continue for approximately 12 months. The aim of the review was to inform the future direction for bee health policy and delivery in England and Wales. It would ensure that government and stakeholders were clear about the rationale for government intervention in honey bee health and have in place the optimum policies and interventions on honey bee pest and disease threats including a clear understanding of the costs and benefits and aligned, as necessary, with other Defra policy areas.

The review would develop recommendations to Defra (and WAG) on a new national disease control programme with agreed outcomes on the resources needed for the programme.

Members of the policy review team included the Fera bee health policy team and WAG colleagues, the NBU, an independent scientist, an economist and a veterinary expert to challenge assumptions, analysis and proposals and three stakeholder representatives (amateur beekeeper from England, one from Wales and a bee farmer).

Liz would keep CWG informed about developments including possible stakeholder events early next year to consider emerging proposals from the review.

10. AOB and next meeting

The next meeting is due to be held by teleconference in late January/ early February 2012.

ACTION: Marie to send Doodle Poll to Group with potential dates during December.

Healthy Bees Project Team
Fera
25 October 2011