

Statement by Environment Secretary Hilary Benn on 21 January 2009

An extra £4.3 million to safeguard and undertake more research into the health of bees was announced by Environment Secretary Hilary Benn today.

Mr Benn said that nearly £2.3 million over the next two years would support the work of the National Bee Unit in its efforts to help England's beekeepers deal with the problems facing their bee colonies.

This will include identifying all those who keep bees and providing expert advice to them on tackling pests and diseases and applying good husbandry.

In addition, Defra will put an extra £400,000 towards bee health research every year for the next five years. This extra funding – a total of £2 million – forms part of a comprehensive bee health strategy, which is under development.

Over the last two years Britain's bee colonies have suffered significant losses due to a combination of potential issues including the weather, the varroa mite, and other factors requiring further investigation by researchers.

Speaking today at the Royal Society of Chemistry, Mr Benn said:

"Bees are vulnerable to a number of threats. Pests and diseases, when combined with poor summers can leave colonies unable to survive the winter.

"We must get to grips with this, to see just how serious a problem it is, what the impacts on pollination are, and what we can do in response.

"So today I am announcing an additional £4.3 million of funding, targeted at bee disease surveillance, education and research."

Mr Benn also highlighted the important role science will have to play in producing enough food to feed nine billion people by 2050, while simultaneously protecting the environment.

He continued:

"We must ensure that in meeting demand today we don't destroy our ability to feed ourselves tomorrow.

"We're trying to find ways of producing more food, for more people, using less energy, less fertiliser and less pesticide, while producing fewer greenhouse gases – and we've got to do all that with limited land and limited water.

"I believe that we have the knowledge and the technology to do this, but the perfect storm of climate change, environmental degradation and water and oil scarcity, threatens our ability to succeed.

"It is science that will help steer us through that storm."

BBKA Response

The British Beekeepers Association is pleased to see that its sustained campaign to increase funding for bee health research has been recognised by the Government and that an extra £400,000 a year for the next five years will be found for much needed research.

The overwhelming support of the public for bees was clearly demonstrated during 2008 when over 140,000 people signed a BBKA petition to increase this research funding from Government.

BBKA chairman Martin Smith, said: "Honey bees are a vital part of the eco system and beekeepers are the nation's, nearly all unpaid, custodians of these important insects.

"The BBKA will continue to work with Government to ensure that funding is allocated to the most important issues facing bees and beekeeping so that we can maintain healthy stocks.

"The BBKA survey of members showed that bee numbers declined by 30% during winter 2007/8 and beekeepers are anxiously waiting to see how their bees fare this winter.

KENT BEE-KEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

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No. 42 COUNTY NEWSLETTER February 2009

Message from the President

Dear Association Beekeepers,

As this is the first News Letter of 2009, I would like to take the opportunity to express to each of you my **Sincere Best Wishes** for this New Year. We may find at times the pressures of life bear heavily upon us but if we look after our bees well I am sure they will give us a good return. May it be significantly better for you in 2009 than the last season.

If branches feel that the President can assist them by being present at any event, please let me know and I will endeavour to give you all the support that I am able to undertake.

There would seem to be a growing interest in our craft and certainly a greater awareness by the general public of needs for bees. We must build on this during the coming months.

With every good wish.

William S. Mundy

Money for Bee Research?

An extra £4.3 million to safeguard and undertake more research into the health of bees was announced by Environment Secretary Hilary Benn on 21st January. The full text of the announcement is given on the back page of this newsletter. There is some doubt as to whether this is new money or something that is being recycled, and the BBKA are investigating. This change in Defra policy is in no small way down to the efforts of our members over the last eighteen months and for which you should all be very proud. The next step is to make sure it gets invested in the right projects and you can rest assured the BBKA Executive will be working hard to ensure its voice is heard when that time comes. Let's hope the money is real and is a help to beekeeping.

More information on Defra's bee health programme can be found on the Defra website www.defra.gov.uk/hort/bees/index.htm and more on the work of the National Bee Unit (NBU) can be found on the Beebase website <https://secure.csl.gov.uk/beebase/>. Beekeepers can register with the NBU on line at <https://secure.csl.gov.uk/beebase/public/register.cfm> or by contacting the NBU on 01904 462510 or email nbu@cs1.gov.uk. On registering beekeepers can request a free apiary visit by a Bee Inspector who will provide advice on disease recognition, control and husbandry.

CALENDAR February – April 2009

Branch Events

Ashford - No meetings notified.

Bromley

Sun 1st Feb 11:30 am Morning apiary meeting. Refreshments provided.
Tues 17th Feb 7:30 pm. Dr. Max Watkins from Vita (Europe).
Sun 1st Mar 11:30 am Morning apiary meeting. Refreshments provided.
Tues 17th Mar 7:30 pm Dr. Sara Robb speaking on ‘Making toiletries’.
Sun 1st Feb 11:30 am Morning apiary meeting. Refreshments provided.
Meetings at the Branch Clubhouse, Kent House Road allotments.

Canterbury

Wed 11th Feb 7:30 pm Richard Baker on ‘Beeswax - Preparation and uses’.
At Stelling Minnis Village Hall.

Dartford - No meetings notified.

Gravesend

Mon 9th Feb 7:00 pm Annual Dinner at Ash.
Sat 28th Mar 3:00 pm Maurice Field ‘Preparing for the new season with Beginners in mind’
Sat 25th Apr 3:00 pm John Hendrie will demonstrate ‘Swarm Control’ on Dennis Blakeley’s bees.
Contact Lesley Fancote 01474 702666 for details and locations.

Mid Kent

Thur 19th Feb 7:30 pm Mary Hill speaking on Preparing honey for showing.
Thur 19th Mar 7:30 pm Mary Hill as Judge Mini Honey Show.
Meetings at The Bull, East Farleigh.

Orpington

Wed 18th Feb 8:00 pm John Hendrie speaking on ‘Queen rearing’
Wed 18th Mar 8:00 pm Sudi Austin speaking on ‘Products of the hive’
Atomwide Ltd. 2 Ravensquay Business Centre, Cray Avenue, Orpington, Kent. BR5 4BQ

Sevenoaks & Tunbridge Wells

Tues 24th Feb 7:30 pm Sudi Austin from Flynn’s Bee Farm on ‘Products of the Hive’.
Tues 17th Mar 7:30 pm Peter Hutton Practical on Microscopy and disease recognition.
St Edith’s Hall, High Street, Kemsing. See Branch newsletter for directions.

Sidcup

All Saturdays Afternoon meetings at Ruxley Apiary, Honeydale Farm.

Westerham

Wed 25th-Feb 8:00 pm Nick Withers talking on ‘Beekeeping in Slovenia’.
Wed 25th-Mar 8:00 pm Bob Smith NDB talking on ‘Raising the Bar’.
All meetings at Westerham Hall, Quebec Avenue, Westerham.

Weald and Whitstable - No meetings notified.

County and Other Events

Sat 7th March Council Meeting at 10:00 am. At Margaret Calder Pavilion, Detling.
Sat 14th March 2:30pm Medway BKA Open Lecture at Wainscott Memorial Hall.
Sat 14th March Central Association Spring meeting and AGM at Vauxhall, London.
Sat 21st March BBKA written examinations.

17th - 19th April BBKA Spring Convention at Stoneleigh, Warwickshire.
Sat 6th June 10:00 am Council Meeting and Annual General Meeting at Detling.
7th - 10th July The Royal Show at Stoneleigh.
17th - 19th July Kent County Show at Detling.
20th - 25th July Irish BKA Summer School at Gormanston. Celia Davis Guest speaker.
7th - 9th Sept Society International Conservation of *Apis mellifera mellifera* SICAMM
Conference at Aviemore., Scotland. Details from John Hendrie
15th - 20th Sept International Apimondia at Montpelier, France.
Sat 10th Oct 10:00 am Council Meeting at Detling.
29 - 31 Oct National Honey Show at St. Georges College, Weybridge.
Sun 15th Nov Lecture day at Lenham. Details in next issue.
Sat 12th Dec 10:00 am Council Meeting at Detling.

Council Meeting 13th December 2008

Thirteen representatives from nine Branches together with two officers attended the Council meeting in December.

We will ask the BBKA to produce a leaflet to advise beekeepers how to deal with different types of honeybee swarm or honeybees in buildings. Peter Springall had been given the go ahead to produce a banner for the marquee at Detling displaying our web site address.

There was discussion about the cuts to our facilities at the County Show and various options were considered. Branches were to be asked for comments about the easiest option to not have a competition at Detling, just Education, but to promote the Kent Honey Show held at the National Honey Show in October. It was also agreed to link in with the Eco Village at the County Show in July. We would also support the ‘Living Land’ in May.

The propositions for debate at the BBKA ADM were considered so that Brian Palmer could take the views of KBKA to the meeting. Julian Audsley had seen a form for a survey of winter losses and suggested this should be done by all the branches.

It was suggested we sponsor research into beekeeping through BBKA. It was agreed this should be an agenda item at the March meeting. Ideas to your Branch reps please!

Medway Beekeepers’ Association 7th Annual Beekeeping Lecture

Lecture by Selwyn Wilkins, from the NBU “Beekeeping, Today and Tomorrow”. Starts 2:30pm on Saturday 14th March at Wainscott Memorial Hall, Holly Road, Wainscott, Rochester ME2 4LG. Selwyn Wilkins is responsible for the laboratory and apiary at the National Bee Unit at Sand Hutton in Yorkshire and he will outline some of the recent practically-orientated research carried out by the bee unit and also look ahead to what Government support might look like in 2009 and beyond. The Bee Health Strategy will have been published, as will the National Audit Office’s report on the Bee Unit – things will almost certainly change!

There is no admission charge, Refreshments will be provided and Everyone is welcome!
Just buy a few raffle tickets to help defray costs Further details – contact Bob Smith 01634 721063

Visit the Kent Beekeepers web site: www.kentbee.com

Meetings in the next issue of the Calendar will cover April - June and please note that all details should be sent to John Hendrie, KBKA General Secretary, 26 Coldharbour Lane, Hildenborough TN11 9JT or email: bibba26@tiscali.co.uk or 01732 833894, by 20th Mar with items for inclusion in the next issue. Many thanks.