

South Chiltern Beekeepers' Association Committee Meeting
Wednesday, 16th September 2015, 7.30pm
Woodcote Community Centre
MINUTES

Present: Caroline Bushell, Linda Clark, Reg Hook, Margaret Moore, Tim Selwyn, Meryl Toomey, Max Vine, John White.

1. **Apologies:** Sue Remenyi, Max Stone

2. **Minutes** of 10th June 2015 committee meeting approved with the following amendments:

Minute 5) 2nd sentence...Members may join as associates at this time of year, ~~after completing the BCA course, or~~ to be able to attend apiary meetings.

*Minute 9) Vote to spend £100 on plywood **or polystyrene** national nuc boxes*

3. **Matters arising:**

Minute 9) swarm report vote: Max V noted that swarm collectors are already told of this requirement. Nuc boxes have not yet been purchased. **Action: MS/MV**

4. **Treasurer's report**

Deposit account: £2196

Current account: £4168.41 with one un-cleared cheque for £43.56

Cash: not reported

Max S will be standing down at the AGM; Bob Busby has offered to stand as Treasurer, and Max V read out details of his previous experience in such a role.

5. **Membership report**

Caroline explained why membership records are a considerable burden, requiring not only payment records, but submission of data to BBKA, BDI and Beecraft – a different set of data to each - several times a year, plus data reconciliation, adding up to a full week's worth of unpaid and very tedious work.

Dave Moss with Caroline and Max S have done a lot of work to select an appropriate online membership system to reduce this burden, and WebCollect is the preferred option. Cash, cheque and bank transfer payments are free but impossible to reconcile; credit, debit, PayPal and direct debit payments incur fees. After discussion of the various fees applicable, a one-off Direct Debit mandate was proposed as the most cost-effective option for the association at £75 setup fee plus 60p per transaction, with the proviso that it's made very clear to members that this is not a repeating direct debit, but a single payment authorisation only. The committee can offer help to anyone struggling to cope with this computer-based system.

Vote to adopt this system: carried by majority with 2 abstentions.

Subscription rates for 2015 were discussed as BBKA have increased capitation fees, Beecraft has increased in price, and there may be increases in the complex hive count structure of the cost of BDI. John suggested we absorb the BBKA increase rather than pass it on, and advise members they are getting good value from the

association. Caroline pointed out that to absorb the Beecraft and BDI increases would be unfair to those members who do not subscribe or have few hives, so these costs should be passed on to the membership. The cost for associate membership can be frozen at £8, as associates are not BBKA members.

Vote to adopt this pricing plan: carried unanimously

6. Federation report

Caroline reported that the Special Delegates Meeting of the BBKA on 20th June, called to seek approval for moving the Annual Delegates Meeting from January to June in order to be able to approve the proposed budget in advance, rather than in arrears as at present, did not succeed in this aim. The Executive Committee then set up a Working Party, for which Caroline is one of the project managers. An online questionnaire to elicit proposals for a solution has been set to all BBKA member and branch associations, with responses required by mid-October, and the working party will then compile and assess these ready for a vote at January's ADM. See also Minute 15.

7. Training report

John presented Sue's report in her absence. There is interest from others in taking the Basic Assessment and the General Husbandry Part 1 next year (see also Minute 11). She suggested conducting a survey of members who completed the Summer Experience, inviting suggestions. Apiary days have been very successful and informative and form a good platform for contact between members. It's time to start promoting winter workshops, and to seek co-presenters for a variety of suggested topics. Reg reported that conversations with attendees of previous winter workshops proved them of value only as a refresher; John commented they were full to capacity, with positive feedback returned in the satisfaction survey.

8. Federation Bee Health Day 4th July

Caroline reported that this training day presented by Nigel Semmence and three of his bee inspectors was very successful and well-organised with about a hundred attendees.

9. Apiary report

Reg is pleased with a really good year in the apiary where every activity was covered, including swarming and unmated queens. The aim of using it to keep members interested and able to cope with their bees proved very successful, and it prevents people getting despondent in isolation and giving up. The log colony was robbed out, and one hive lost one half of its artificial swarm. Hive 6 died out, losing both AS halves, as a result of unmated queens, but fortunately this can be replaced with one of the two successful AS splits of no. 3. The Langstroth no. 7 will probably be left to die out and its replacement nuc over-wintered ready for next spring. An unprecedented 7-week wait for No 8's queen to start laying was fruitless when she proved to be an unmated drone layer and was despatched, so this one will be united with one of Reg's own nucs. Queen performance is getting seriously worse; they no longer live for up to 5 years. Wasps have been a huge problem this year for

everyone, including the apiary. Kate extracted 9 x 30lb buckets of honey, of which 4 were given to Peter Mikic as rent for the apiary site.

10. Show report

Linda reported a good year for shows, with Cliveden's Wild Wednesday for children on "Butterflies and Bees" being particularly successful. Margaret and Jemima also helped children make 50p beeswax foundation candles at the rate of one every three minutes, making a total of £40 taken. The organiser was pleased with the activities, colouring sheets and observation hive, and we hope to get invited back next year.

11. Basic Assessment

There were 8 entries, 6 from South Chilterns and two from Reading, who all achieved a pass with credit. Max V formally thanked John for his excellent organisation, time and effort and understanding of the safety aspects. John said the assessors were reassuring, compassionate and understanding with the applicants, and very willing to spend time talking bees and giving good tips. He also thanked Max V for the use of his home and garden. Helen Walkington helped devise an online survey to solicit feedback, which has been published, and shows very positive feedback with several members wanting to get more involved with the association as a result, and being willing to mentor others.

12. Risk assessment draft document

Max V had circulated a draft document for a simple risk assessment for discussion. When Margaret asked why it was needed, Caroline told us that the BBKA's view is that in the event of any insurance claim we would be expected to have one, so potential pay-outs might be affected without one, and it would help avoid potential legal action. This draft simple checklist would be completed by the appropriate apiary host as responsible person. It prompts awareness of safety such as: trip hazards; serious sting allergy and location of epipens; mobile coverage and apiary location if paramedics have to be called; and appointment of a deputy in the event of the apiary host's being affected. Max told us that Oxford, Fleet and Reading associations all have a risk assessment, and John felt that we should have one too as part of our duty of care to members. Reg felt it is unnecessary as it's all obvious, and Caroline pointed out that even though it's only common sense, it's mandatory for any shows involving the public anyway. As she is continuing as Programme Secretary, Margaret was concerned about exactly how it would work in practice and whether it would put off members from offering their apiary for summer apiary days. The committee agreed to re-visit the topic, and in the meantime Margaret will examine the draft text with a view to identifying improvements.

13. Services document

As part of updating the website, Caroline prepared a list of services offered by the association for the committee to review the current workload, asking if we are trying to do too much. Linda felt that the winter workshops might take people away from the summer experience, and John suggested removing Mentoring, as it has not

elicited any specific response from members. After further review of the services, it was agreed that Mentoring is the only one we can remove.

14. Review of needs to fill committee posts

Max V noted that under the constitution, which requires ordinary committee members to stand down after 5 consecutive years for a minimum gap of one year, we are due to lose Max S, Tim, Reg and Linda this year. We already have an offer from Bob Busby to stand as Treasurer in lieu of Max. Margaret suggested we change the constitution to include a waiver for a committee member to be able to choose to continue if there is no-one else willing to take up the post, similar to that already existing for the committee officer posts (which are Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary, who can normally only stand for 3 consecutive years); otherwise there is a risk that the committee might become so depleted as to be inquorate (quorum is 7 members). Both Margaret and Caroline made the point that we can already co-opt any member to do a job, and come to the committee to report as a non-voting member. John felt that changing the constitution would preclude change, which is positive and desirable. Caroline suggested that proposing a significant change to the constitution should involve all committee members, so in the absence of three of them [*two apologies, one had to leave the meeting before this point*] we should contact all the committee with a request to vote on whether we propose such a constitutional change at the AGM. In order to leave time to inform the full membership in the event of this change being agreed, response is needed by 7th October.

Action: MT

[Note: contacting the committee was done by the secretary, MT, the next morning, but in fact the Action agreed at the meeting was for Margaret and Linda to formulate the proposal, not the secretary. Meryl subsequently apologised to them for this error].

15. Help with response to BBKA annual cycle working party

See also Minute 6. As Caroline is helping on the working party, she must be divorced from our branch response. Max V asked for a volunteer to do this, and in the absence of any offers from the committee members, undertook to formulate our response himself.

Action: MV

16. Honey Show

At the last committee meeting Margaret suggested that someone other than the Programme Manager should take on organising the honey show, and Sue offered to do so (see Minute 14 of 10th June meeting). Sue sent in a discussion document with a series of proposals:

- Change date to a Saturday to increase attendance.
Reg said it has always been Wednesday evening, and Margaret reported that previous canvassing of members suggested Saturday afternoon was not a popular time, so suggested Sue checks with members first. Margaret needs to know ASAP if there is a change in the room booking. **Action: SR**
- Reg and Tim to share judging, using a points system, and more classes.

Reg said he had always done the judging, and the schedule was over-complicated with too many classes. As Tim had to leave the meeting before this point, Sue will be asked to talk to Tim to see if he is willing. **Action: SR**

- Audience to taste winning honey.
Committee felt it would be messy and time-consuming, and Linda suggested an evening of honey tasting instead.
- Invite others to judge non-honey classes.
Yes in principle, though obviously entrants cannot judge; Sue will have to find judges **Action: SR**
- Fun quiz during judging.
Not appropriate, as Margaret is already planning a quiz evening.
- Have tea and cake after the judging so that we can eat the cake entries.
Better to have tea and different cake as a time-filler during judging.
- Create photo calendars of members' pictures as prizes.
Yes, if it can be done in time! **Action: SR**

Sue also sent in a draft schedule of classes, so to save time as it was getting very late, Caroline suggested circulating the draft schedule to committee members, to be returned with comments within a week. *[Note: all committee members were provided with a paper copy, but will be sent an electronic one for ease of annotation]*

Action: MT

17. BDI Research funding request

John noted that we already have a research fund which is going to the same cause, so we will not respond to this request.

18. Any other business

- Sue had requested an increase in the book budget to £200.
Vote to increase book budget: carried by majority, 1 abstention
- Linda reported that Dave Moss is keen to organise bulk buying from John Belcher (a member of our association) as he did with the Apiguard.
Vote to sanction this: carried unanimously
- Linda has unsold association granulated honey in labelled jars. Max offered to use his warming cabinet to clear it for sale whenever required.
- Margaret sought confirmation that she can go ahead with making room bookings for next year's committee meetings, which was agreed, and noted she needed to know ASAP if the honey show is to change dates.

19. Date of next meeting:

Wednesday 4th November 2015, Woodcote Community Centre, 7.30pm