

South Chiltern Beekeepers' Association Committee Meeting
Wednesday, 1st April 2015, 7.30pm
Woodcote Community Centre
MINUTES

Present: Linda Clark, Reg Hook, Margaret Moore, Sue Remenyi, Filipe Salbany, Tim Selwyn, Meryl Toomey, Max Vine, John White.

1. **Apologies:** Caroline Bushell, Ron Crocker, Max Stone
2. **Minutes** of 4th February 2015 committee meeting approved
3. **Matters arising:**
Minute 4) action on signatories outstanding; Treasurer not present
4. **Treasurer's report**, supplied *in absentio* by email by Max S
Deposit account: £2195.52
Current account: £7234.98
Cash: not reported
From this total of £9430.50 we have yet to pay: £357.90 to BDI; £ 607.50 to BeeCraft; £72.21 to Bev Woodford for Refreshments; £ 20.00 for the Federation Meeting Room; £60.11 to Dave Moss for Webs.com. Net Balance as of 1 April 2015 is £6117.26. Still outstanding are the Federation and BBKA fees of about £1300, leaving us £7012.78 plus petty cash.
5. **Membership report**, supplied *in absentio* by email by Caroline
Electronic certificates of insurance from BDI have been sent out to members.
Our membership currently stands at 117: 91 full; 10 partner; 3 country; 13 associate, and we lost 10% and gained 17%. Membership has increased by 27% over 3 years, showing good growth - on average 9% per annum.
6. **Federation report**, supplied *in absentio* by email by Caroline
Run by Vice Chairman Michael Sheasby, the AGM on 18th March 2015 voted to subscribe to the National Honey Show; the two free tickets which are provided as part of the subscription will be circulated around the member associations in turn each year. Elected officers were Caroline as Chairman, Martin Moore as Secretary, Ian Duddle as Treasurer, Katie Rennie as Membership Secretary, Sue Remenyi as Newsletter Editor.
7. **Training report**
The last winter workshop went well with good feedback and requests for more workshops next year. Sue reported on the Berkshire and Oxfordshire Training Co-ordinators meeting, and a copy is appended to these Minutes. There is a Bee Health Advisers training day on 8th June for the four advisers, and Nigel Semmence will be holding a Bee Health Day in Bracknell, on 4th July, open to all members. Information on speakers - how well they were received, and their costs - was exchanged.

Sue thanked Margaret for providing an excellent programme of speakers for our winter meetings.

8. **Apiary report**

Woodpecker protection has been removed, floors cleaned and the bees fed. As only 4 people came to the work party, another has been scheduled for 11th April.

9. **Swarm report**

Filipe would like to formalise the current *modus operandi* for swarms, which requires checking their health before passing them on, and suggested finding a quarantine site for this purpose. He has made 3 nucs and 2 brood boxes for use in housing swarms, and felt an equipment inventory would be useful. He expressed concern over offering swarms to our new beekeeper members, which accords with Reg's opinion, and stressed the importance of good record-keeping. He has posted a number of examples of hive record sheet templates, and provided links to them in the SCBKA Members' Forum. He has contacted the other Federation swarm co-ordinators to improve communication and disposal of swarms. Any spare swarms could be used to reinforce colonies of our members and our apiary. Sadly, 23 swarms were destroyed last year in cavities and chimneys. Margaret commented that as a swarm collector she observed that people often contact us too late to perform our role of collection, leaving it until swarms have taken up residence in cavities. Filipe is working on informing the public to call us earlier by improving publicity:

Round&About want to do a follow-up article; BBC South would like to do a feature. Max V. noted that last year there were more swarms than we could cope with. Reg feels that if we teach our members to look after their bees better, we wouldn't get so many.

10. **Committee procedure and decisions**

Reg felt that we should not engage in pre-committee meeting email discussions which could engender disgruntlement; it is better to discuss matters at the meeting. Margaret asked Max V. to define what he felt the Chairman's role to be, and he described it as chairing the meetings, generating ideas and offering leadership, while being an equal committee member with all the others.

Margaret felt that the Chairman is too autocratic, that apparently arbitrary decision-making without the committee's having the opportunity to discuss the matter creates ill-feeling and the perception of a hidden agenda, and cited several examples.

She said Max had tried to overturn an apiary decision by querying whether we needed an apiary after Kate had been asked to source a shed for it. Max apologised, saying his intention had been to alert people that they should value the resource, or they would lose it. Reg too felt that a decision taken by the committee should not later be contradicted.

Margaret referred to the Swarm Co-ordinator role's being taken away from Ron Crocker, and the philosophy of swarm distribution's being changed, without committee discussion. As the membership was unaware that Kate was stepping down, thereby leaving a vacancy, when Filipe was proposed as Swarm Co-ordinator others had no opportunity to apply.

The position of Training Co-ordinator was voted on without a full role description, hence without its being made clear that this would result in Sue's taking over the BOTC responsibility from Kate. Linda and Margaret both felt that the consequences of appointing Sue had been misunderstood, as they did not realise this included the BOTC and could result in Kate's exclusion. Their assumption was that the role was to support John with the BBKA Basic Assessments (Max felt that we should be able to facilitate BBKA exam-taking if members want to, though Tim noted that this can be done alone by members, and John reminded us that it could be done by attending another association). Had they appreciated the significance, they would have voted differently. Max noted that Kate had already resigned from the committee, and Sue reported that the intention was for Kate, Reg and her to all go to the BOTC meeting; this was disallowed by the BOTC Chairman, as only two from each association were entitled to attend. Sue did attend and had prepared a report. Reg felt that a report was unnecessary; the BOTC meetings were not productive as associations all did their own thing anyway. Max commented that the BOTC has existed for 3 years and that Sue had been voted in as Training Co-ordinator unanimously by the committee; it is a central admin co-ordination role to connect trainers together. John commented that it was inappropriate to blame Max as the Chairman, as the committee have collective responsibility for decisions, and if anything is unclear each member has the responsibility to seek clarification. Max noted that past committee voting has been mostly unanimous, we agree on most things.

Margaret said that a mentorship system was not discussed in committee before implementation, and John described the mentoring process as a reactive one; if anyone asked for a mentor, it consisted of seeking out someone suitable who was local to them, and also Reg voluntarily visits all beekeepers needing help, for which we are very grateful. Max told us that the Fleet association uses people who have just finished a two-year training programme to mentor beginners.

Margaret said that more discussion is needed in committee before decisions are made; she feels that a friendly and open association has changed character into a "closed shop", and she intends to stand down as programme manager.

Tim felt that the committee agenda was getting unnecessarily complex, and Max agreed that we will in future require more discussion in committee, that he will take care to ensure concerns over lack of clarity on an issue are addressed before voting, and that we should aim for a shorter agenda.

Linda requested that people phone Reg directly instead of emailing her to pass messages on to him.

11. Proposal to allow members to attend committee meetings as a silent observer

Max V. told us that Martin Moore had expressed an interest in observing the committee process; he is a full member of SCBKA, no longer belongs to Reading BKA, and he has done much work for the Federation. Max said that the democratic ethos is that elected members can be observed by the electors. Reg opposed Martin Moore's coming to committee meetings or joining the committee. Tim cited the example of the British Legion, where if there are observers present at open meetings, they are asked to leave at committee stage. Sue felt that observing was not a good idea in general, unless requested by an individual who wanted to see the

committee in action with a view to joining.

Vote: not carried by majority.

12. Proposal to put Minutes on the website

Sue said that if the Agenda were on our website, members could ask to come for a specific agendum. Reg felt Minutes should not be available to members on the website.

Vote: carried by majority.

Action: MT, DM

13. Proposal to dispose of library videotapes

This has been discussed previously (see Minutes of 11th June 2014 meeting). Caroline is willing to lend equipment to transfer from VHS to DVD if someone is willing to check the tapes. Tim now said that the videotapes are still relevant, though Reg felt that some were out-of-date. Sue volunteered to assess them.

Action: SR

14. Approval of proposed brochures

Sue passed around the latest versions of the Summer Programme and association introductory leaflet. Tim requested that postcodes be included on the summer programme leaflet for ease of finding locations, but this was considered a security issue, as sensitive address information should be restricted to members only. The Summer Experience price has been reduced to £15. Margaret amended the description of action needed in winter to include feeding. Brochures were approved. Sue has also completed the business cards.

15. Proposal to appoint Ron Crocker as life member

Committee members agreed this had been previously agreed by vote, but not reported in the Minutes.

Note: Minutes are sent out twice to each committee member who has an email address, but no-one had noticed this omission.

Vote: carried unanimously

16. Proposal to have a SCBKA donation box

Max V. showed us a BBKA donation box made in the shape of a beehive, and proposed we have a similar one made for our own research fund, as this would encourage people to make donations rather than picking up a leaflet. Steve Radford is willing to make one for us, and it would be labelled "Donations for Research and Development".

Action: MV to liaise with SR

Vote: carried unanimously

17. Proposal to appoint a Show Co-ordinator

Max V. proposed Linda as Show Co-ordinator. Sue reported that there are smaller venues where stands or presentations could be available to us, such as local village or school fetes, and we could expand our activities to include these by using other members apart from Reg and Linda, and by taking guidance from Linda on what materials are available to use on a specified date. An Observation Hive would be useful for such events, and although Reg commented that they are a lot of work, he may be willing to show others how to set one up; John and Max V. both offered help

in looking after it. The purchase of an Observation Hive was previously agreed by the committee (see Minutes of 5th February 2014 meeting). John offered to investigate prices, checking with Reg on the issue of quality. Action: JW

Vote on Show Co-ordinator: carried unanimously

18. Winter survival survey

John presented statistical and graphical results from the association winter survival survey, which was intended to identify whether there is a problem with winter survival in our area. There were 42 respondents out of 91 full members, a good response rate for a questionnaire. One third of members have lost hives, which Reg considered not too bad, but the survey doesn't show what proportion of losses was suffered by new beekeepers. The survival rate appeared to be lower for swarm receivers, but as this is not a full data set, it's not possible to assess statistical significance. Max V. was concerned that it might indicate that swarms are not being adequately valued and looked after, but at least this survey forms a base line, and swarm recipients can be required to keep records so that if it is repeated next year, swarm survival can be expressly included. Max thanked John for his work on the survey and compiling the results.

19. BBKA Basic Assessment

John reported that Val Francis of the BBKA would prefer a representative from the Federation rather than individual associations. Windsor association funds the Basic Assessment fee of £15 for its members, prompting discussion on whether we should do the same. There is no intention to fund any of the other BBKA exams, and as we have a healthy membership we don't need to offer this as an incentive to join. Margaret suggested we could consider offering to reimburse the BA fee if a member passed this exam.

20. Any other business:

- Linda reported on a letter from Pat Jessop thanking us for the Newsletter write-up about Harry Jessop; the £700 donated in his memory was divided between the Bluebells Day Centre in Henley and the Air Ambulance.
- Max V. asks a member to contribute a written report on each winter meeting, and would welcome help with the task of asking a member on the night. He also suggested we could ask a member to propose the vote of thanks to the speaker, if anyone was willing to do so, and the committee agreed to this.
- Margaret is away for the apiary meeting on 18th April, so Sue will send out the reminder and detail the focus of the meeting.

21. Date of next meeting:

Note the date given in the Agenda is wrong; the next meeting is on Wednesday 10th June, 7.30pm, Rising Sun, Witheridge Hill. Action: CB