



THE WELSH BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

CYMDEITHAS GWENYNWYR CYMRU

Established/Sefydlwyd 1943 Registered Charity – No 509929

Annual Report

1st January 2023 to 31st December 2023

Trustees:

Chair	Caroline Mullinex (elected AGM 2022)
Vice Chair	Karen Pratt (elected AGM 2022)
Treasurer	Graham Wheeler (re-elected AGM 2021) – Trustee since AGM March 2014
General Secretary	Jenny Shaw (re-elected AGM 2023)
	Christopher Clarke (re-elected AGM 2021)
	David John Bowles (re-elected Trustee AGM 2023)
	Keith Davies (re-elected AGM 2023)
	David Grace (elected AGM 2022)
	Jill Wheeler (retired AGM 2023)
	Paul Pearce (co-opted 17 th May 2023)
	Alan Burford (co-opted 21 st June 2023)

Officers:

President	David John Bowles (elected AGM 2021)
Vice-presidents	Fred Eckton
Membership Secretary	Trish Calderbank
Minutes Secretary	Jill Hill (resigned AGM 2023) post vacant
Events Secretary	Jill Wheeler
Exam Secretary	Liz Childerley
Website Manager	Alison Mason
Editor	Basil Wolf
Subeditor	Elin Meek
Proofreader	Chris Clarke
Technical Officer	Wally Shaw
Insurance Officer	John Bowles
Health & Safety Officer	John Pilgrim
WBKA Archive	Karen Pratt
WBKA COLOSS officer	Karen Pratt (post discontinued November 2023)
IMYB Officer	Richard Pett
Schools Officer	Emma Davies (resigned October 2023) post vacant

Specialist Members:

National Botanic Gardens of Wales
BIBBA (Bee Improvement & Bee Breeders' Association)

Patrons:

Professor Robert Pickard

All trustees and WBKA officers give their time voluntarily and receive no remuneration or other benefits. The WBKA is indebted to these volunteers for their continued goodwill and efforts on behalf of the Association.

The Trustees have had regard to the guidance issued by the Charity Commission on public benefit.

Our Aims & Objectives:

The encouragement, improvement and advancement of beekeeping throughout Wales by:

- developing co-operation amongst all beekeepers throughout Wales and interchanging ideas and experiences,
- improving the standard of beekeeping by:
 - i. publication of literature,
 - ii. providing and supporting the provision of apicultural educational aids and materials,
 - iii. encouraging the training and qualification of beekeepers,
- arranging for national examinations at various levels,
- encouraging community participation in observing and learning about bees in safety and developing an appreciation of the value of bees in the environment.

Administration

The Trustees listed above meet as the WBKA Management Team. A list of meetings during the year can be found at the end of this section of the report.

The Trustees met with the WBKA Council three times (March, June, and November) to report on the actions of the Management Team and to seek guidance from the membership. All but the March meeting were held virtually. At each of these meetings a minimum of 63% (12) of the WBKA Member Associations were represented and overall, 90% (17) Associations attended at least one meeting. Minutes of all Council meetings have been circulated via Association Secretaries. Council meetings are scheduled for March 2nd, June 29th and November 2nd in 2024. To reduce the length of Council meetings going forward, Officers reports will be written and circulated before the meeting. These will be referenced as required by sub-committee leads during their summary reports. Council Representatives will still have the opportunity to question and comment on the reports.

The Management Team met ten times in 2023 and to reduce travelling all the meetings were virtual. The Management Team will meet at least four times in 2024 and the first meeting is scheduled for January 10th. The method and date for Management Team meetings reflects the availability and home addresses of the Trustees to ensure that there is maximum attendance and that minimum travelling expenses are incurred. Between scheduled meetings of the Management Team procedures have been agreed to obtain agreement from trustees for any urgent matters. A standard agenda format has been agreed and adopted. Full minutes of all Management Team meetings have been circulated via the Member Association secretaries. Both the webinar and virtual meeting licences were renewed in October 2023 and most Management Team meetings will continue to be held virtually to reduce the requirement to travel. The virtual meeting licences are available for Member Associations of the WBKA to use for their meetings.

Where appropriate to their roles non-Trustee officers of the WBKA have been invited to attend Management Team meetings during 2023 to assist the work of the trustees.

The policies of the WBKA have been updated and amended where necessary. New WBKA Safeguarding and Sponsorship policies have been written and these can be found on the WBKA website www.wbka.com. An additional Safeguarding and DBS guidance document has been produced to guide member associations and this links to the current legislation and guidance applicable in Wales. This is to help associations to ensure that they are compliant, particularly around activities which require DBS certification. Guidance for WBKA Officers giving presentations or reports about the WBKA to external bodies has also been agreed.

The WBKA have worked with Anaphylaxis UK to help raise awareness of severe allergic reactions to

bee stings. The Management Team have also considered how landowners can be encouraged to inform beekeepers about any planned use of pesticides on their land. Poisoning of honey bees by pesticides does not appear to be a significant problem in Wales. A guidance document will be put on the WBKA website in 2024.

A working group was set up to support a selected team of five (three young beekeepers and two accompanying adults) to represent Wales at the International Meeting of Young Beekeepers (IMYB) in Slovenia in July. The Welsh Government very kindly sponsored the team by paying the entry fees, which covered meals, accommodation and transport whilst they were in Slovenia. See separate report for more details. To date there has been no notification of a meeting of the IMYB in 2024.

In 2023 the review of the structure of the WBKA was completed and implemented. The terms of reference for all WBKA sub-committees have been reviewed as part of this undertaking. Much of the day-to-day business of the WBKA is now undertaken by four sub-committees each chaired by a WBKA Trustee and reporting to the Management Team. These sub-committees and their members are listed below: -

Administration and Support: Chair - John Bowles (Trustee and Insurance Officer), Graham Wheeler (Trustee and Treasurer), Jenny Shaw (Trustee and General Secretary), David Grace (Trustee & Safeguarding Officer), Paul Pearce (Trustee), Trish Calderbank (Membership Secretary and minute taker for sub-committee), John Pilgrim (H&S Officer)

Learning & Development: Chair – Caroline Mullinex (Trustee), Karen Pratt (Trustee and Sub-Committee Secretary), Jenny Shaw (Trustee), Liz Childerley (Exams Secretary), Emma Davies (Schools' Officer – resigned October 2023 - position currently vacant), Wally Shaw (Technical Officer), Alison Mason (Webmaster), Richard Pett (until October 2023 when IMYB Officer position was assigned to a specific working group to manage the WBKA attendance at IMYB), Lynfa Davies, Trisha Marlow.

Events: Chair – Karen Pratt until September 2023 (Trustee) currently Alan Burford (Trustee), Graham Wheeler (Trustee and Treasurer), Keith Davies (Trustee), Jill Wheeler (Events Secretary), Vicky Davies, Martin Anderson, Steve Bromwich

Editorial: Chair – Jenny Shaw (Trustee), Caroline Mullinex (Trustee and Learning and Development lead), Chris Clarke (Trustee and proof-reader), Basil Wolf (Editor), Emma Davies (School' Officer resigned October 2023), Elin Meek (Welsh editor), Wally Shaw (Technical Officer), Jill Hill (secretary to sub-committee), Jill Wheeler

More information about the work of each sub-committee can be found later in this report and their terms of reference are on the WBKA website.

Insurance: The WBKA Insurance cover is based on several conditions including the need for capitation to be paid on time and for those covered by the policy to be individually entered on the eR2 membership system. Payment of capitation is due from Associations on the 1st of January each year, but an allowance is made providing that all monies due are received by the 31st of March in that year. Member Associations are reminded of the need to make payment punctually. More details can be found in the combined Insurance and Health & Safety Report later in this document.

Following a request from the WBKA Council the membership categories of the WBKA were reviewed and revised in 2022 to ensure that all Indirect Members of the WBKA are covered by our insurance policy. We are pleased to report that our insurance now covers beekeepers under the age of 18 years.

Finance Reserves: The Reserve policy states that the Charity (WBKA) shall maintain a reserve of £10,000-£13,000. This reserve is required by Charity Law to cover operational and contractual expenses should the need arise. This policy is monitored and updated annually.

Monies held on the HSBC current account are used to not only cover the running costs of the Association but to fund various projects such as the running of courses and the dissemination of information by various means such as the website, booklets and other publications. A detailed financial report accompanies this document.

Governance: The 2023 AGM saw the retirement of Jill Wheeler as a trustee. The Management Team co-opted two new trustees Paul Pearce (May 2023) and Alan Burford (June 2023). These appointments will be presented to the membership for ratification at the 2024 AGM on March 2nd. Currently there is the full complement of ten WBKA trustees.

In September 2023 Karen Pratt passed the chair of the Events sub-committee to Alan Burford.

At the AGM in March 2023 Jill Hill retired as the Council Minute secretary and in October Emma Davies resigned as WBKA Schools Officer. We thank all of them for their work on behalf of beekeeping in Wales. Currently the Schools Officer post remains vacant and has recently been advertised through publication of the job description. Work has begun to ensure that all WBKA Officers have clear and up to date job descriptions and the Management Team are also looking at contingency planning to cover key positions if an officer resigns or is incapacitated for a length of time. It is acknowledged that finding volunteers to take on voluntary roles is not an easy task.

Work has begun on defining the strategies that are needed to achieve the objectives of the WBKA so that performance can be measured.

The Constitution of the WBKA has been reviewed and several minor changes to aid clarification were accepted by the membership at the 2023 Annual Meeting of the WBKA.

Membership: The WBKA has nineteen Member Associations who represent 2103 Registered, 520 Partner and 14 Country Members and two Specialist Member groups. As part of the annual capitation fee levied on each Member Association the Indirect members benefit by receiving four editions of the 'Welsh Beekeeper' and third-party Public and Product Liability Insurance. There are currently thirty-five Individual and seven Honorary Members of the Welsh Beekeepers' Association. Very sadly we lost one of our Honorary Life Members, C. Wynne Jones, who will be greatly missed. A detailed breakdown of membership accompanies this report.

We continue to work with the Welsh Government. Both Kathleen Carroll (Welsh Government) and Maggie Gill (Wales Bee Inspection Service) have attended WBKA Council Meetings in 2023 in advisory roles.

Following queries from Member Associations, the WBKA Council reviewed the membership categories of the WBKA to ensure that they met their requirements. It is now a requirement that only one name is used for each entry in eR2 and only that named person will be eligible for appropriate WBKA insurance cover. Partners residing at the same address as a registered member and managing the same bees are insured if they are entered individually in the eR2 system. Junior members under the age of 18 should also be listed separately in eR2. Only named juniors will be considered to represent the WBKA at the International Meeting of Young Beekeepers. From January 2024 partner members of the WBKA will be required to pay an annual capitation of £6 and the fee for registered members will rise to £12 per year. This increase is the first in over 10 years and reflects the current economic situation.

Country membership is used for people without bees who wish to be Indirect Members of the WBKA and again they should appear as individual entries in eR2. The final membership category is for Local members who should again appear in eR2 as individual entries. Local members have no bees and are members of the Member Association who are not Indirect members of the WBKA and are not entitled to any of the benefits that accrue from WBKA membership. The majority of WBKA Member Association are now using the eR2 membership service and training for users has continued to be made available by Trish Calderbank, WBKA Membership Secretary. We would like to thank Trish for her continued hard work in assisting Associations. At the end of 2023 Kerry Cox was recruited to support Trish Calderbank in her role of assisting WBKA associations to use eR2. The WBKA continues to work with BDI to ensure that the eR2 system accommodates the requirement of Associations in Wales.

Website: The website, launched in 2022 is being regularly updated and recent analytics show an increase in the number of visitors to the site. The website reflects the language policy of the WBKA. We thank Alison Mason for her work in developing and maintaining our website.

Welsh Beekeeper Magazine: All four quarterly editions have been completed during the year. We would like to thank our Editor, Basil Wolf for his dedication to producing the magazine. We are also thankful to the many members of the WBKA who have provided articles and photographs for the magazine. The last four copies of the magazine can be downloaded from the WBKA website and previous electronic editions are available from the archivist, Karen Pratt as electronic files karen.pratt@wbka.com.

Publications: Printed copies of all the booklets and disease cards, published by the WBKA, can be collected by Association Representatives at the March Council Meeting or can be pre-ordered for collection at the annual WBKA Convention in late March. Supplies will be sent to associations as long as they agree to pay the costs incurred.

The Trustees have worked with several external agencies during 2023 to ensure that Welsh beekeepers are kept fully informed and supported at a Wales, UK and European level. A list of the external meeting attended by the WBKA is given below.

Bee Health Advisory Forum (UK): The Bee Health Advisory Forum (BHAF) is a UK Government arranged meeting where all National Beekeeping Associations in Wales and England are represented as well as the NBU, APHA, Welsh Government, the Veterinary Medicines Directorate, etc. It offers an opportunity to discuss and influence current and forthcoming issues which may threaten the welfare of our bees. The items covered in the last year are included in more detail in a separate report.

Wales Pollinators Taskforce: This is a Welsh Government sponsored forum which brings together a variety of groups who represent organizations that have an interest in protecting the wild environment and improving land management for the benefit of pollinators of all types varying from butterflies, hoverflies to bumble bees and honeybees. We believe that whatever can influence and improve the physical landscape and the management of land for any pollinator will also benefit honeybees.

CONBA (Council of National Beekeeping Associations): The Beekeeping Associations of Wales, England, Scotland, and Ulster as well as the Bee Farmers Association jointly form CONBA (Council of National Beekeeping Associations) which supports the interests of all beekeepers and beekeeping in the UK. The Federation of Irish Beekeepers, who represent beekeepers in Eire also attend CONBA

meetings. It gives the opportunity to develop joint strategies to deal with a variety of issues including government plans.

RWAS (Royal Welsh Agricultural Show): First established in 1904 and established as the Royal Welsh Agricultural Show at Llanelwedd in 1963 including the Honey Show to which WBKA makes available assistance and support.

National (UK) Honey Show: In 2022 the WBKA became a member of the National Honey Show being the body that organizes and runs an annual Honey Show that is open to all beekeepers to enter. The NHS holds an Annual General Meeting of members in conjunction with the Honey Show.

NDB (National Diploma in Beekeeping): The WBKA was represented at the Annual General Meeting of the organization that controls and awards the 'degree level' qualification in beekeeping as well as running several short courses to educate beekeepers.

Meetings Attended in 2023

Internal WBKA Meetings 2023:

10 th January	Editorial Team: virtual
18 th January	Management Team (Trustees): virtual
24 th January	Learning & Development Committee: virtual
31 st January	Editorial Team: virtual
15 th February	Management Team (Trustees): virtual
21 st February	Editorial Team: virtual
4 th March	AGM and Council Meeting, Plas Dolerw: joint face to face and virtual
14 th March	Management Team (Trustees): virtual
16 th March	IMYB Working group: virtual
24 th March	Events Committee: face to face
25 th March	IMYB Team: face to face
19 th April	Management Team (Trustees): virtual
25 th April	Learning & Development Committee: virtual
10 th May	IMYB Working group
17 th May	Management Team (Trustees): virtual
22 nd May	IMYB Working group: virtual
13 th June	IMYB Working group: virtual
19 th June	IMYB Working group: virtual
21 st June	Management Team (Trustees): virtual

24 th June	Council meeting: virtual
28 th June	IMYB Working group: virtual
8 th July	Management Team (Trustees): virtual
14 th July	Editorial Team: virtual
18 th July	Learning & Development Committee: virtual
19 th July	Management Team (Trustees): virtual
22 nd July	Events Committee: face to face
5 th September	Editorial Team: virtual
12 th September	Administration & Support Committee: virtual
20 th September	Management Team (Trustees): virtual
11 th October	Learning & Development Committee: virtual
4 th November	Council meetings: virtual
15 th November	Management Team (Trustees): virtual
12 th December	Editorial Team: virtual

WBKA representation at External Meetings 2023:

Caroline Mullinex (C.M.), Jenny Shaw (J.S.), John Bowles (J.B.), Wally Shaw (W.S.), Keith Davies (K.D.), Alan Burford (A.B.)

16 th March	Bee Health Advisory Forum: virtual (W.S. and J.B.)
17 th March	Regional Bee Inspector and Welsh Government: virtual (W.S., J.B. and J.S.)
21 st April	CONBA: face to face (J.S.)
27 th April	Wales Pollinator Task Force: face to face (K.D.)
20 th May	Bees Abroad World Bee Day lunch (J.B.)
22 nd June	Bee Health Advisory Forum: virtual (W.S. and J.B.)
10 th October	RWAS Honey Show Committee: face to face (A.B.)
25 th October	Bee Health Advisory Forum: Virtual (W.S.)
27 th October	CONBA: face to face (C.M. and J.S.)
26 th October	NHS AGM: face to face (J.S.)
27 th October	NDB AGM: face to face (C.M.)
3 rd November	Wales Pollinator Task Force: Virtual (K.D.)
7 th December	Bee Health Advisory Forum: Virtual (W.S. & J.B.)

REPORTS

WBKA Treasurer's Report Financial Year 2023

Year End vs Budget 2023

The final year end position was a loss of £5k against an originally budgeted loss of £9k, this being down to slightly higher income from individual members and the convention from improved attendance. We have also had sponsorship for the IMYB (International Meeting of Young Beekeepers) from the Welsh Government and from the Local Associations who had members taking part in the IMYB; this has allowed us to stay on budget overall for the IMYB event at £1700.

On the expenditure front:

- We have not spent the budgeted £1500 on booklets this year.
- We changed to a new broker Howden. This represents a £1200 saving against staying with Jensten.
- Overall software costs are in line with budget including the ongoing GoTo licences.
- Training and examination costs were well within overall budget.
- Convention costs came in a little over budget, but this was offset by the higher income from entry sales.

Budget 2024

Income:

- Indirect capitation remains at £9 (2023 rate) based on a membership for 2023 of 2103 members.
- Individual member fees are proposed to remain unchanged.
- Advertising income has been increased by 10% in line with the proposals from the Editorial Team.
- Convention income has been increased by 10% in line with the proposal from the Events Team
- Workshop income assumes a programme including a course plus 3 workshops based on 2023.

Expenditure:

- Special Projects:
 - Currently it is unclear whether the IMYB will progress this year, a possible venue in the United Arab Emirates being the only venue mooted so far. Examination of the cost to fully support attendance at this venue has led to an estimate of £5500, the forecast deficit for the year this would have caused has led the Trustees to the conclusion that only a partial funding would be possible if the event progressed this year even if sponsorship could be found again.
 - A budget for a booklet reprint has been included.

Projected Outcome

The draft budget as set out projects a loss of circa £5,000 against a forecast £9k loss made at the beginning of 2023 as part of the Capitation analyses at that time.

Budget Projection 2025 & Capitation Proposal

To inform the discussion on Capitation for 2025, I have prepared a projection for 2025. Capitation income is based on the new 2024 rates and 2023 membership. Advertising prices are assumed to increase by 10% all other income streams unchanged. Expenditure on all main items is increased by 5%. The resulting outcome is a projected deficit of circa £1k.

Based on this projection and the improved forecast losses for 2023 it was recommended to the Nov Council that indirect member capitation levels be maintained for 2025 at the 2024 level. The November Council approved the recommendation for approval at the AGM.

Learning & Development (L&D) - incorporating Exam Secretary Report

Meetings

The L&D sub-committee continued to hold regular quarterly virtual meetings throughout 2023.

Emma Davies tendered her resignation in October so the Schools Officer post became vacant. The IMYB Officer now reports directly to a small working group set up specifically to manage the WBKA's involvement in IMYB going forward.

L&D have continued to work with both Editorial and Events to provide magazine content and input to the Spring Convention Programme.

Exams & Assessments

30 members passed the WBKA Basic Assessment in 2023, many with credit and a few with distinction.

Two new Basic Assessors were recruited and we hope to be able to recruit more going forward to support succession planning in this area.

12 WBKA members were successful in achieving the BBKA Bee Health Certificate (BHC) in 2023 and the significantly increased uptake is due, in part at least, to encouragement provided at the BHC preparation workshop which we ran in late 2022.

On the module side, WBKA members again achieved some fantastic results in 2023. There were 18 module successes, including 3 with Distinction and 10 with Credit. 2 candidates were awarded the Intermediate Theory certificate both with credit. One of these candidates also gained the Qualified Beekeeper certificate (awarded on gaining the Intermediate Theory certificate having previously passed the General Husbandry assessment).

We provided 2 exam venues in both March and November for candidates not wishing to take the module exams online and have continued to support WBKA members taking BBKA exams and assessments by paying the exam membership fees on their behalf.

We offer congratulations all the successful candidates and thank everyone who has helped to facilitate these exams and assessments for our members.

Webinars

9 more live webinars went ahead in 2023 on a range of topics bringing the total number of WBKA webinars now delivered to 43. Since we began the webinar series in 2020, almost 10,000 have registered for them. We are usually able to provide anyone who has registered with a link enabling

them to watch on “catch up” for a limited period so that no-one has to miss out due to a diary clash or because of poor connectivity.

We continue to be immensely grateful to everyone who has presented at our webinars, and to all who have supported them, from within the WBKA and beyond.

Schools

During 2023, a suggestion was made for the WBKA to consider providing a Schools Membership. Scoping this, and work on developing WBKA resources for use by schools in Wales, will be taken forward when the Schools Officer position is filled.

Wax Chandler Grant Funding

2023 was year 2 of the grant funding period and, with the direct support of this funding, we were able to deliver/support the following events for WBKA members: -

A Convention workshop on Varroa Control

2 x Pollen Microscopy Workshops - held in locations in Mid & West Wales

1 x Anatomy & Dissection Workshop – held in North Wales

A 3-day General Husbandry Preparation course – held in Mid Wales

A 2-day Teaching Beekeeping workshop – held just over the border in Shropshire (in which 10 WBKA members participated).

The second annual feedback report is being sent to the Worshipful Company of Wax Chandlers and this will be published in the Spring 2024 edition of The Welsh Beekeeper.

Again, we thank everyone who has helped deliver and facilitate these events and reiterate our thanks to the Wax Chandlers whose generous funding has made this programme possible.

Booklet

We began to scope publication of a new WBKA booklet during 2023 and a decision on whether or not to proceed with this, and if so in what format, is expected to be made in 2024.

Events Committee

This year saw the Spring Convention on March 25th. The number of attendees were up, 449. There were 11 Trade stands and 7 general interest stands. There were also 2 workshops that were planned to run during the day, one run by Lynfa Davies on ‘Varroa control’, the second ‘BBKA Module Exams’ was cancelled due to illness. An informal workshop aimed at young beekeepers also took place. 28 stewards supported the running of the show on the day as well as the members who helped with the set up on the Friday. This year Sum Up was again used for both pre-payments and on the door, this allowed members to use a credit or debit card for payments. Due to unforeseen circumstances two of the speakers had to drop out at the last minute however Lynfa Davies and Wally Shaw took over their lecture slots and we thank them both for stepping in at such short notice.

The Spring Festival, May 19th/21st, was supported by 12 members stewarding the stand. The events team, Martin Anderson, Vicky Davies, Jill and Graham Wheeler, helped set up and strike the stand. The stand proved to be popular to both members of the public and beekeepers, and £70 was raised for Bees Abroad with candle rolling. Unfortunately, we were unable to source an observation hive from local beekeeper members.

The RWAS 24th to 27th July saw us back in the South Glamorgan Hall. 23 members helped to steward the stand over the four days, the stand was positioned so that it would remain accessible throughout the Honey Show judging. Thanks must go to the events team who helped with the successful setting up and running of the stand, we even had David Grace interviewed for S4C. Martin Anderson, Vicky Davies and Graham Wheeler helped to set up and strike the stand.

We provided an information stand for the BIBBA Conference- 2nd/3rd September, at the University of Wales, Carmarthen. This was set up and struck by Vicky Davies with Alison Fraser keeping her eye on the stand during the event.

Planning of the 2024 Spring Convention is underway with traders and four speakers booked: Jo Widdicombe- BIBBA, opening address, Pam Hunter – ‘Pheromones – or Bees do it by smell!’, Kirsty Stainton– ‘Varroa’, Andy Pedley – ‘Food Safety for the Beekeeper, Clare Densley & Martin Hann - ‘What the books don’t tell you and why bees change their minds’.

During the year two new members joined the events committee. Steve Bromwich who has supported the convention for many years with his IT skills, and who now also supports the AGM with his IT kit and Alan Burford as the new Events Lead Trustee.

IMYB (International Meeting of Young Beekeepers)

The WBKA selected three young beekeepers to represent Wales at the IMYB held in Slovenia in July. Those selected were Thomas Barclay (Conwy) 16 years old, Emanuel Coles (Cardiff) 14 years old and Rhodri Terrell (Cardiff) 14 years old. To accompany the young beekeepers Richard Pett (IMYB Officer) and Emma Davies (Schools Officer) were selected. We are grateful to Welsh Government for providing sponsorship that covered all the teams’ expenses whilst they were in Slovenia. The event brings young beekeepers aged 12 to 17 from all over the world together to compare their knowledge and skills, establish new friendships and discover other countries and cultures during a 4-day event.

The Wales team travelled with the teams from Scotland and England and took a full part in the event. This was the first time that the WBKA had selected a full team to represent Wales at the event and the team came a credible 22nd out of the 32 teams that attended. The team members were a credit to Wales, and we hope to build on the experience gained for attendance at the meeting in future years. We thank all those involved in making the arrangements for and accompanying the young beekeepers attending the IMYB.

The WBKA feels that this event gives young beekeepers a valuable experience and hope that we will be in a position to send a team in future years. Details of IMYB 2024 have not yet been announced. If there is an IMYB meeting in 2024 we hope to be able to select a team from the junior members of the WBKA. As travel and other costs increase, we will need to seek sponsorship to assist funding of a Wales team attending the event.

Webmaster

Google Analytics in its present form has only been available on this site since September 2023. So the results outlined below are for the last quarter only.

In that period, we have had 876 new users with the majority coming from within the UK. We do also have a following in the USA, China, Australia, Ireland, Canada and Germany, (listed most to least in order of user numbers).

Once on the site, our most popular pages are WBKA publications, Member Associations, WBKA webinars, WBKA magazine, Swarms, Beginner Training Courses, Association and Individual Membership and Who We Are, again listed in terms of most used, to least used.

Average engagement time for each page is fairly uniform per user save for 'Association and Individual membership' where users are spending 60% longer than on any of the other listed pages.

Engagement time on the site as a whole shows that users from Austria, Ireland, UK and Canada spend the longest using the site.

Site audience statistics show a rise around webinar dates and are climbing again in the first week in December at the time of writing.

Finally, 52% of our users access our site using a desktop/laptop computer, 44% by using a mobile and just 3% use a tablet.

Editor

The Editorial Committee has overseen the publication of four print editions of the Welsh Beekeeper magazine, and these have been made available online on the WBKA website. The magazine has acted as a vehicle for WBKA and Association news and has provided a range of articles of technical and general interest to beekeepers, contributed by over forty different authors. The activities of L&D have been reported regularly and our association with the Worshipful Company of Wax Chandlers has been given prominence. The editor has also worked with Wally Shaw on a reprint of the booklet 'There are queen cells in my hive – what should I do?'

Technical Officer

Bee Inspection Service –The WBKA continues to work closely with both the Welsh Government and the Bee Inspection Service in Wales. The Regional Bee Inspector for Wales, Maggie Gill, took up a research position with FERA at the beginning of 2024. We look forward to working with Daniel Baxter who replaces her as RBI Wales for 2024. In past years the annual report from the Inspection Service in Wales has formed a significant part of the winter edition of our magazine. We understand that the increased workload that the reports of Asian Hornets created in the autumn could have delayed the publication of this report but hope that it will be available to be included in the spring 2024 edition.

Queen Rear-along - This was a booklet, produced by the National Bee Unit (NBU), which was presented to WBKA with a request to send it out with the Spring 2023 Edition of Welsh Beekeeper. The WBKA requested that any such booklet distributed by the WBKA should be bi-lingual. Due to changes in personnel at the NBU this project was shelved, and we have heard no more.

Developments During 2023 – I am not aware of any notable developments in Wales during the year but the incursions by the Asian Hornet has taken a quantum leap with 72 nests having been located and subsequently destroyed. Most of these have been in south-east England but there have been outliers as far up the east coast as Yorkshire. I am happy to report that so far there have been no hornet nests found in Wales, but it may only be a matter of time.

All this has created a great deal of work for APHA and there are concerns that this has been to the detriment of the routine inspection for AFB and EFB but there is no evidence that this is the case. All hornet nests are recovered and taken to NBU to undergo post-mortem examination. This includes their state of development, i.e. do they contain any sexually mature individuals (drones and queens). This is by no means as easy as it is with honey bees as queen hornets cannot be identified by external appearance. They are distinguished from workers largely by weight and this can only be confirmed by dissection. They also undergo DNA profiling to check if they are related to nests found in previous years which would imply an established population that had escaped detection. The sheer number of nests has created a huge backlog, and the results will not be available until sometime in February 2024. The present strategy with Asian Hornet is one of exclusion but if a population becomes established this will change to one of limitation. Since the invasive front is known to advance at about 60km per year this will be a fairly thankless task. At the present time it is not known if the Asian Hornet will have any climatic limitations in the UK.

Bee Health Advisory Forum (BHAF) Meetings - There have been four meetings of the forum (42nd- 46th - all virtual) during the current year. The last of these was scheduled to be face-to-face at the National Honey Show but pressure produced by the Asian Hornet put paid to that. Representing WBKA at these meetings were John Bowles and Wally Shaw. An ongoing item on the agenda at these meetings was the Implementation Plan for the second Healthy Bee Plan which extends up to 2030. Most of the initiative in this programme fall under the heading of beekeeper education (and the Learning and Development report documents the 2023 WBKA led events in this space). The 45th and 46th meetings have been dominated by the Asian Hornet and regular updates on the situation have been sent to the stakeholders throughout the late summer and autumn – the source of the above information. At the October meeting, Nigel Semmence (NBU Contingency Planning and Scientific Officer) gave a detailed account on the methodology used in the location and destruction of hornet nests. This presentation was repeated at the National Honey Show. Maggie Gill gave a presentation about Asian Hornets in the UK to the November WBKA Council meeting and this is available on the WBKA website.

Implementation of the Healthy Bee Plan 2030- One of the main subjects discussed during 2023 was progress made on the Implementation Plan for the Healthy Bees Plan 2030 which was mainly concerned with beekeeper education.

The WBKA has carried forward the objectives under the plan through:

- The provision of new educational booklets as well as the distribution of existing booklets to new members
- The webinar series
- Encouragement of beekeepers to take the Basic Certificate including the recruitment of two new Assessors
- Increasing the numbers holding the Bee Health Certificate
- Evaluating the NDB Teaching Beekeeping Course from those who have undertaken it.

The Science Forum has met once during the year and is due to meet again early in 2024. A list of current scientific projects that are underway in the UK, their progress to date and their source of

funding has been prepared and discussed. Further meetings will be held in 2024. An important development is that Kirsty Stainton has now re-joined the National Bee Unit as Technical Manager.

The Annual Hive Count - was repeated in 2023 but no results have become available at the time of writing.

Varroa Levels 2023 – No detailed information available. Maggie Gill reminded the WBKA BHA representatives and WBKA Secretary that varroa is still a major cause of colony loss in Wales. Her advice is that beekeepers wishing to reduce varroa treatment should monitor the level of mites in their colonies. Integrated Pest Management techniques should be used when varroa levels become high enough to impact on the health of a colony. Maggie had intended to write an article about IPM for the summer edition of the Welsh Beekeeper. Unfortunately, this was not received but more information can be found on the BeeBase website.

WBKA Technical Publications – Stocks of the WBKA booklet '*There are queen cells in my, what should I do?*' have run out and it is currently being re-printed.

Insurance

The changes to definitions of what constituted membership made over the last two years has enabled us to have more confidence that the information we provided when we sought insurance quotes was accurate. It also enables us to concentrate on other issues such as insurance of young beekeepers (under18) who kept bees independently.

This year we sought quotes from two brokers, Jensten, and Aston Lark (now changed to Howden), the company which is the broker for the BBKA. The process was successful in reducing the overall premium for the WBKA and its Associations by some £1200 for similar cover (see note 1 below) as well as providing cover for independent beekeepers under 18 years of age.

Note 1: The main difference between the two policies is in relation to definitions under Product Liability.

The Jensten policy wording uses the phrase "Sale of bee related products including honey, creams/balms and salves made from products of the hive".

Aston Lark (Howden) uses the description "Manufacture and supply of primary hive products" They have indicated that cover will not apply to the sale of products which contain non hive generated products. Anyone who manufactures such products for sale is advised to consider separate insurance.

Health & Safety

During the last year we have reviewed our Health and Safety Policy and recommended that our member Associations:

- a. Produce a similar document.

b. Nominate a committee member to be responsible for ensuring that appropriate risk assessments are undertaken and any necessary actions taken according to the suggestions made in “Risk Assessments – A simple guide” which is on our website.

To date not all Associations have produced evidence of compliance with this well intended guidance.

Associations are reminded that they need to take steps to identify risks and ensure that those who need to, know what is expected of them to evidence the required duty of care. If these steps, which need not be onerous, are not taken, the safety and health of the public and especially new members, who may not be aware of potential risks, could be compromised. This could lead to the association being found to be at fault in any investigation.

Safeguarding

As mentioned previously in this report, a new WBKA Safeguarding Policy has been published this year and this is supplemented by Safeguarding and DBS Guidance. This links to current legislation and guidance relevant in Wales. It is intended to support member associations to ensure they have appropriate policies and certification, relevant to their particular activities, in place.

Spray Liaison

A non-malicious and thankfully benign spraying event in the south of the Meirionnydd Region in June last year prompted a review of National spraying communications and advice. The review identified a well written UK HM Gov guidance document, the Code of Practice for Using Plant Protection Products, that was not easy to find and most worrying had out-of-date contact information for the WBKA.

All of the WBKA Associations were approached to see if they had spray management processes (to see if anyone had a really good system) and a volunteer with subject matter knowledge (SMK) was sought as the WBKA's representative. Communications with the NBU for the latest spray advice (and to perhaps help amend the Code of Practice for Using Plant Protection Products) was initiated and the much lauded Bee Connect team were approached for help/guidance.

At the time of reporting we are awaiting responses from both the NBU and Bee Connect. We have not found a SMK volunteer. We are keen not to reinvent the wheel although we have had offers to produce a spray map not unlike the current swarm collection map. Bee Connect appears to do all we would need as beekeepers provided all beekeepers and anyone spraying uses it. So the focus is currently on correcting the Code of Practice for Using Plant Protection Products to point at the WBKA website and/or Bee Connect; provided Bee Connect will permit this.

The project is a slow-burn project. And we can understand with all the Asian Hornet activity why the NBU in particular have not yet responded. Aviation based spraying seems to be well reported to Associations and whilst spraying is a significant threat to pollinators, we have not been made aware of any recent worrying events.

Communication is key to this problem. The Code of Practice for Using Plant Protection Products needs to be easier to find and it needs correcting. We need to help anyone spraying to find the Code of Practice and hopefully Bee Connect will be the conduit between sprayers and beekeepers.

If anyone reading this would like to help us please contact paul.pearce@wbka.com

Wales Pollinators' Taskforce

WBKA were represented at two meetings in 2023

Key themes discussed in 2023 were primarily associated with Asian hornets, grasslands, their diversity, connectivity and management:

- a) With relevance to Beekeepers, the Regional Bee Inspector for Wales, Maggie Gill, gave a short presentation on the Asian hornet *Vespa velutina*. This covered its introduction to GB in a clay pot and the latest distribution including a nest found as far as N.Yorkshire and one in Norfolk. The majority of nests, approx. 70, were found along the S coast in Kent. Not all nests were believed to have been found.
- b) The improvement of wildlife corridors in S Wales mainly for Marsh Fritillary butterflies by planting the plugs of the food plant, Devils bit Scabious, and rearing caterpillars at the Welsh National Botanic Garden to return to the wild.
- c) The value of a single cut and collect management for roadside verges to enhance floristic diversity presented by Gwent Green Grid and Denbighshire County Council. Most Councils in Wales now carry single cut with collection for specific verges and open space areas.
- d) The importance of wildflower meadows and how to create them using plug plants for small meadows and green hay for larger meadows, plus cut and collect management and scarification to allow bare ground for seeds to germinate. Related to this a Seed harvesting feasibility study was led by Brecon Beacons National Park and the National Botanic Garden Carmarthen with the aim to develop a network for the sharing of locally sourced, native wildflower seed which can be used to create, restore or enhance grassland habitats.
- e) The effects that overhanging trees and shrubs have on meadows from falling leaves causing enrichment of the sward to the detriment of wild flowers.
- f) There was also discussion on Green Infrastructure in urban areas e.g. green roofs for flat roofs and also bus shelters.

COLOSS

At the November Council Meeting, representatives from the WBKA Associations voted to discontinue the distribution and completion of the COLOSS surveys due to the very poor response from Associations to the 2023 Survey.

NDB (National Diploma in Beekeeping)

We attended the 2023 AGM held during the National Honey Show at Sandown Park.. Margaret Thomas stepped down as President and Clive De Bruyn is now acting President. The 2024 Advanced course will be 5-10 July at Pershore. There will be an NDB exam in 2024. The meeting discussed ways of raising the profile of NDB. Short courses delivered have been demand led.

CONBA (Council of National Beekeeping Associations)

WBKA were represented at both meetings in 2023. Under discussion has been the International Meeting of Young Beekeepers and the feasibility of holding a UK event to prepare junior beekeepers for the International one. The response to Asian Hornets and honey adulteration have also been discussed. Concern has been raised about the diminishing number of Honey Judges and the lengthy process to replace them. These topics are all ongoing. For 2023 the Federation of Irish Beekeepers (FIBKA) started attending meetings again. This was a welcome addition to the Council.

Archive.

The archives remain at the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth and are added to when required.

APPENDED REPORTS

Appendix 1: Membership 2023

Appendix 2: Accounts Financial Year 2023

Appendix 3: 2023 Year End and 2023 Budget

Declaration: The Trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees.

Signature:

Full name: Caroline Mullinex

Position: Chairperson

Date: