

**Report on the British Beekeepers Association
Annual Delegates Meeting.
Chesford Grange Hotel January 12 2013**

Report from David Roberts attending as the Isle of Man representative.

After more than sixty years of beekeeping it was a new experience to attend the BBKA Annual delegates meeting as the Islands representative. The formal minutes of the meeting will be available in due course; it might be of interest to record some of the highlights and aspects which will not necessarily appear in the minutes.

Much formal business including approval of accounts election to various offices and committees appointment of tellers adoption of standing orders and annual reports occupied most of the morning session. The real interest commenced with the consideration of the propositions put forward, two from the executive and six from different area associations. These generated much lively debate and where not all approved some requiring significant amendment

The President introduced the meeting saying that the environment is currently low priority with the focus being all on the economy. Responsibility for bee health has been passed back to DEFRA once again. A major and significant report by EFSA European Food Safety Association should be available within two weeks and will be published on the BBKA website. This report will determine what future action may be necessary regarding systemic pesticide

1 Executive proposition – amendment to the constitution

This proposition intention was to when junior membership ceases at the age of 18 the individual should be automatically transferred to full membership.

This proposal was passed unanimously

2. Executive proposition – amendment to the constitution to allow the trustees to suspend a member deemed to have engaged in disreputable conduct or conduct opposed to the general interests of the BBKA or is in breach of the Trustees Code of Conduct.

No reason why it was felt necessary to introduce this measure emerged. There was considerable debate an amendment to change the number of trustees voting in favour of suspension from two thirds to three quarters was proposed and approved following which the amended proposal was passed 55 in favour and 5 against.

3. Cumbria proposition – that the two capitation dates primary and secondary be united to a single date on September 1st.

This generated heated debate with one association demanding a refund of six months capitation fee they felt was lost to them when the two dates were introduced. The work load on area secretaries and the variations in Area association's financial years were points that were made.

The proposition failed with a massive 51 voting against and only 7 in favour.

4. Devon proposition that the BBKA admit Jersey to full membership.

There was no debate on this proposition and the visitors present from Jersey were unanimously welcomed as delegates.

5. Hampshire proposition – that BBKA negotiate with DEFRA to establish a reporting system that mandates farmers to record and report on the sowing of seeds treated systemic pesticides to a central collection point.

The Chairman pointed out that the BBKA is already heavily involved in making representation and examining available reports on the use of neonicotinoids. The lengthy debate recognised the desirability of such a system but the conclusion reached that it was disproportionate and unworkable.

The proposition was rejected 42 against and 13 for

6 Hertfordshire proposition that the BBKA launch the web based swarm collection service and give it wider publicity to local authorities and those area associations encourage members to register and become swarm collectors

Much debate followed about the experience required to collect swarms and that novice and new beekeepers should not be admitted to the register. It was pointed out that registration was only through area secretaries who could be relied on not to submit names of persons not having adequate experience

The proposition was passed unanimously

7 Stratford on Avon proposition – that the BBKA should do more to educate associations on the locally sourced queens and to encourage collaboration between associations so that they may consider the effect their drones may have on local queen rearing programmes

There was little debate on this proposition and all were agreed on the benefits the proposition passed unanimously

8. Gloucester Proposition – that BBKA cannot ignore the major threat posed by neonicotinoids and should be taking a more proactive approach making this the number one priority.

This generated a vigorous and impassioned response from the president who argued that the BBKA are already very active in this area much not seen by members and will achieve more by a lobbying the important decision makers and making a calculated response based on scientific reports rather than generating ill will and antagonism by generating ill informed publicity. It is vital to await the latest EFSA scientific report which is due out within weeks before making further comment. The preservation of the BBKA's credibility is very important and it could easily be discredited by actions and publicity not based on facts.

After much heated debate the majority supported the president and the proposition was rejected 33 against 23 for.

9. Capitation increase proposition (£15 to £17)

This item generated much energetic debate with many arguments against the increase. In the current economic climate grants that were previously available have dried up hence the need for an increase. A presentation comparing BBKA capitation with many other similar organisations including the Pony Club £55, Angling Trust £75 Royal Yacht Club £45 W.I £40 the Scottish and Welsh Beekeepers both £30. An analysis of the member benefits in terms of insurance, magazine qualifications etc clearly demonstrated that the BBKA is, relative to others, excellent value for money. At £17 it was the cheapest organisation of its kind.

The motion was approved

Conclusion

A major benefit of such gatherings is the interaction between members. I had lengthy discussions with the new delegates from Jersey who were very keen to learn from our practice and experience on the Isle of Man. They have no appointed bee inspector and very little government interest with no regulation or registration. Their colonies have been devastated by AFB it is estimated a third of all colonies are affected, many unknown non association beekeepers fail to recognise the condition or are unwilling to carry the necessary complete destruction hence the very rapid spread. The island is divided into zones, red where no bee movement is permitted at all, orange where movement is only permitted with permission and green the unaffected area they fear the whole island will have to be put in the red zone if there is to be any chance of reduction.

I have directed them to our Department of the Environment and Agriculture website so they can see the 2008 control order and registration system and have volunteered to endeavour to seek advice and answer any specific questions.