

THE HEXHAM & DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

7:30 pm Tuesday 14 January 2025

Village Hall, Wall, Northumberland NE46 4DX

Minutes

Present: Martyn Farrer, Jonathan Storey, Jane Hughes, Judith Stewart, Sue Robinson, Mike Higgins, Ian Robinson, Dorian Pritchard, Helen Hill, Majbritt Mann, Bill Hunter, Jola Weaver, Sheilagh Matheson, Neill Wylie, Paul Edwards, Hazel Edwards, David Graham, Sam Burnish, Gillian Tiplady, MaryJo l'Anson.

Apologies: Graham Gill, Sue Smith, Mike Lewis, Jane Lewis, Sarah Ziolkowski, Wendy Gregory, Terry Hanson, Elizabeth Hanson, Andrew Shepherd, Gundi Shepherd, Ollie Morton, Ros Evans, Micky Macgregor, Michelle Pow, Peter Dodman, David Wilson, John Dickinson, Julie McGrane, Cora Cloughley, Roger Massey, Barry Bailes, Claire Dickinson, Andy Bennett, Karen Bennett, Darrell Jackson, Dot Coe, Victoria Nicholson, Barbara Storey, Matt Ford, Karen Cumberledge.

1. Welcome and Introductions

1.1. Martyn Farrer welcomed twenty members to the 2025 AGM.

2. Apologies for absence

2.1. Thirty apologies had been received as noted above.

3. Minutes of AGM held 9 January 2024

3.1. No material matters were raised regarding the draft Minutes of the 2024 AGM and they were agreed as an accurate record.

4. Chairman's Report

4.1. Martyn Farrer summarised the key messages from his written report.

4.2. He noted the adverse weather experienced in 2024 and the detrimental impact on bee colonies in general and on his own in particular.

4.3. Hexham Beekeepers had been represented at all the customary county/village/agricultural shows in 2024 as well as delivering a full programme of meetings and events – albeit without the Rachel Lowther Lecture or the Christmas Meal this year. Martyn urged more members to participate in the various Honey Shows to save him the embarrassment of winning prizes unopposed. He also reminded everyone to continue to be vigilant for the 'Yellow legged Asian Hornet'

- 4.4. The teaching apiary continued to be well used. In addition to the usual Beginners Sessions, arranged by Mike Higgins and Wendy Gregory, Martyn delivered a Queen Rearing course (supported by Thorsten Rettig) and Judith Stewart arranged a variety of Skills Workshops for the more experienced beekeepers.
- 4.5. Martyn concluded by thanking the rest of the Committee for their support during the year.

5. Treasurer's Report

- 5.1. Jane Hughes presented the Association Accounts for 2023/24 which had resulted in a healthy surplus of £1,269 for the year.
- 5.2. Jane highlighted a record contribution from Gift Aid funding of £1,019 which is restoring the Association's reserves to meet future commitments. She also acknowledged donations totalling £569 arising principally from members' honey sales at the various shows. Jane Hill suggested that the price of bee-feed could be increased in future to provide additional income.
- 5.3. The Association ended the year with total resources of £9,612 and the Accounts were approved unanimously.

6. Subscriptions 2026

- 6.1. Jane Hughes reminded members that a modest increase of £1.50 in full member subs had been approved at the 2024 AGM which is currently taking effect in 2025.
- 6.2. Jane explained that the latest Annual Delegates Meeting had just agreed to increase the BBKA Capitation fees by £2.00 with effect from 2026. This would take the HBKA Full Membership to £30.50 from next January. The other membership categories were also being increased with the exception of Junior Members where the BBKA is reducing the capitation charge to £5.00.
- 6.3. The proposed subscriptions for 2026 reflected the increase in BBKA Capitation fees and these were agreed unanimously.

7. Membership Report

- 7.1. David Wilson was unable to attend due to work commitments so Jonathan Storey presented his report.
- 7.2. At the turn of the year the Association membership stood at 187 reflecting 30 leavers and 29 new recruits joining during 2024. Renewal notices have been sent out to all members and so far about half had paid in advance of the deadline of 31 January 2025.
- 7.3. Jonathan thanked those members who had already renewed their subscription and he urged others to review any standing orders they might have set up in order to avoid duplicate or inaccurate payments.

8. Apiary Report

- 8.1. Sue Robinson reiterated the Chair's comments regarding the prolonged wet weather which had been experienced in 2024. This had resulted in the need to feed some colonies followed by poor queen matings which resulted in widespread queen failures and immediate supersedures.
- 8.2. Nonetheless, we took 13 colonies into the winter – each set up with a full super of honey. All the hives have been treated with Apibioxal.
- 8.3. Judith Stewart described the Skills Workshops which had been held in 2024 and she invited members to suggest additional topics for 2025 where they would be useful.

- 8.4. Judith also reminded everyone of the Bee Mart which she coordinates on behalf of the association to encourage members to rely upon locally reared bees.

9. Education and Training Report

- 9.1. Jonathan Storey presented David Wilson's report on Education and Training for 2024.
- 9.2. No-one had attempted the Basic Assessment last year although three members had passed the Bee Health Assessment – Martyn Farrer, Judith Stewart and Jola Weaver. Jonathan presented them with their BBKA certificates.
- 9.3. Four members had sat and passed various modules of the BBKA written exam syllabus in March 2024. Certificates were presented to Martyn Farrer, Jola Weaver, Neill Wylie and Jonathan Storey.
- 9.4. Once again, Wendy Gregory and Mike Higgins will be coordinating the 2025 Beginners Sessions working in close collaboration with Sue Robinson as Apiary Manager.
- 9.5. Anyone wishing to sit any of the BBKA practical or written examinations in 2025 should contact David Wilson.

10. Election of officers

- 10.1. Jonathan Storey explained the proposed Committee Members for 2024 and confirmed that no other nominations had been received.
- 10.2. The HBKA Constitution requires the Chair's term to be limited to three years. In the absence of a new candidate coming forward, Martyn Farrer has agreed to serve one further year until a replacement can be found. The meeting was asked to agree this exceptional variation to the Association's Rules.
- 10.3. The list of Officers as set out was agreed unanimously.

11. Appointment of Auditor

- 11.1. Brian English was unanimously re-appointed as Auditor for 2025.

12. BBKA Annual Delegates Meeting 2025

- 12.1. Jonathan Storey represented Hexham BKA at the BBKA Annual Delegates' Meeting which was held on 11 January 2025.
- 12.2. Jonathan reported that 66 Associations had been represented at the meeting – mostly attending via Zoom. The BBKA finances are sound with net assets of £1.35m including £555k of investments and £494k in cash. Notwithstanding accumulated resources the BBKA is projecting a deficit budget of (£47k) for 2025 – hence the proposed increase to the capitation fees which is expected to generate about £50k additional income.
- 12.3. Unusually, all the resolutions were agreed unanimously by the Delegates. Most notably these included:
- The Increase in Capitation charges in 2026
 - Further investigation in 2025 into the implications of seeking exam accreditation
 - Further work in 2025 to develop a campaign against honey adulteration with a budget of £25k

13. Any other business

14. Conclusion

- 14.1. Martyn Farrer thanked everyone for their attendance and the meeting closed at 8:45 pm.