

THE HEXHAM & DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

7:30 pm Tuesday 6 January 2026

Via Zoom

Minutes

Present: Martyn Farrer, Jonathan Storey, Jane Hughes, Judith Stewart, Sue Robinson, David Wilson, Mike Higgins, Wendy Gregory, Gillian Tiplady, Thomas Carrott, Ian Robinson, Dorian Pritchard, Neill Wylie, Paul Edwards, Hazel Edwards, Sam Burnish, Sue Smith, Barbara Storey, Andrew Rigg, Andy Bennett, Karen Bennett, Ian Williamson, Tom Whitehead, Neil Dawson, Pam Peart, Peter Stoker, Andrew Gill.

Apologies: Mike Lewis, Jane Lewis, Sarah Ziolkowski, Terry Hanson, Ros Evans, Michelle Pow, Peter Dodman, John Dickinson, Claire Dickinson, Matt Ford, Majbritt Mann, Frank Mann, Bill Hunter, Ginny Swaile, Wayne Westwood, Darrell Jackson, Julie Beanlands, Iain Evans, Eva Diran, Michael Atkinson, Niki Black, Tom Jamieson, Cathy Smith

1. Welcome and Introductions

1.1. Martyn Farrer welcomed twenty-six other members to the 2026 AGM.

2. Apologies for absence

2.1. Jonathan Storey advised that twenty-three apologies had been received as noted above.

3. Minutes of AGM held 14 January 2025

3.1. No material matters were raised regarding the draft Minutes of the 2025 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 effects of the warm weather experienced in 2025 and how it had impacted differently in different localities – some recording a bumper honey harvest and others having to feed their bees – such as Pam Peart in Otterburn. The heather season had been a complete 'write-off'.

4.3. The Association is thriving and continues to attract new members – now exceeding 190 in total.

4.4. Hexham Beekeepers had been represented at all the customary county/village/agricultural shows in 2025 as well as delivering a full programme of meetings and events. Entries to the

various honey shows improved this year and Hexham members had achieved some notable successes.

- 4.5. There has been increased interest in teaching and learning with more BBKA exams and assessments being attempted. 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.
- 4.6. After a year's break, the Rachel Lowther Memorial Lecture was reinstated with an excellent presentation from Paul Honigmann, author of 'The Observant Beekeeper', speaking on the theme of 'Low Intervention Beekeeping'.
- 4.7. 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 2024/25 which had resulted in a healthy surplus of £2,019 for the year.
- 5.2. Jane highlighted the important contribution of £933 from Gift Aid funding which bolstering the Association's reserves to meet future commitments. She also acknowledged the contribution of £557 from the sale of honey harvested from the teaching apiary at the various shows.
- 5.3. The Association ended the year with total resources of £11,631 and the Accounts were approved unanimously.
- 5.4. Although not included in the 24/25 accounts, Jane reported on a recent award of £600 from the Skipton Building Society which will be used to support activities in 2026. Andrew Gill pointed out that the Association would still be eligible to apply for further funding from Skipton and that it would be worth approaching Tesco and Waitrose who also run schemes to support local charities.

6. Subscriptions 2027

- 6.1. Jane explained that the BBKA was proposing to increase capitation fees by £1.00 from 2027 to be determined at the forthcoming Annual Delegates Meeting. She sought members' agreement to increase the local HBKA subscriptions accordingly.
- 6.2. The proposed subscriptions for 2027 reflected the anticipated increase in BBKA Capitation fees and these were agreed unanimously.

7. Membership Report

- 7.1. David Wilson presented his membership report noting the increase in members to 195 by the end of 2025.
- 7.2. Renewal notices are about to be sent out to all members for 2026 in line with the process set out in his report
- 7.3. David requested members 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 commented on the improved weather that had been experienced during 2025 in contrast to the preceding two years. As a result, the number of colonies had increased from 12 to 19 by the end of the season. Queen matings went well and two colonies with chronic bee paralysis were managed successfully, having re-queened themselves during the summer.

- 8.2. Sue reported on our attendance at various shows – our stands at the County Show and at Bellingham Show winning awards for the best in the marquee and complementing us on our interaction with the public – a tribute to all those who had volunteered to help.
- 8.3. Sue also applauded to the efforts of Mike Higgins and Wendy Gregory to coordinate the Beginners sessions and to Judith Stewart in arranging Skills Workshops for the more experienced members.
- 8.4. Judith Stewart described the Skills Workshops which had been held in 2025 and she invited members to suggest additional topics for 2026 where they would be useful.
- 8.5. 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. A sale of surplus equipment is planned as part of the February meeting on Preparing for the Season.

9. Education and Training Report

- 9.1. David Wilson reported on Education and Training for 2025.
- 9.2. Helen Hill and MaryJo l'Anson succeeded in passing the Basic Assessment and Jonathan Storey passed the Bee Health Assessment.
- 9.3. Once again, Wendy Gregory and Mike Higgins will be coordinating the 2026 Beginners Sessions working in close collaboration with Sue Robinson as Apiary Manager.
- 9.4. Three members had passed Module 3 of the BBKA written exam syllabus – Judith Stewart, Jola Weaver and Jonathan Storey. David will be arranging to forward on the relevant certificates to the successful candidates.
- 9.5. Anyone wishing to sit any of the BBKA practical or written examinations in 2026 should contact David Wilson.

10. Election of officers

- 10.1. Martyn Farrer explained the proposed Committee Members for 2026. Martyn is required to step down as Chair and Judith Stewart has agreed to resume the role for a further term. Martyn intends to remain on the Committee with a special interest in research matters.
- 10.2. The list of proposed Officers was amended to include Gillian Tiplady (omitted in error) who has been a co-opted member during 2025. The augmented list was then agreed unanimously.

11. Appointment of Auditor

- 11.1. Brian English was re-appointed as Auditor for 2026.

12. BBKA Annual Delegates Meeting 2026

- 12.1. Jonathan Storey explained that he intended to represent Hexham BKA at the BBKA Annual Delegates' Meeting to be held on 10 January 2026.
- 12.2. Jonathan explained that there were relatively few propositions this year (all of a relatively non-contentious nature) and so he hoped that the meeting would conclude promptly for once.

13. Any other business

14. Conclusion

- 14.1. Martyn Farrer thanked everyone for their attendance and the meeting closed at 8:30 pm.