



## Hampshire Beekeepers Association (HBA)

and the services it provides to the county's beekeepers

HBA has a long and distinguished history having been founded in 1882, only a few years after the foundation of the British Beekeepers Association (BBKA). With over 1300 fully registered members in fourteen local associations, it is the second largest association in the Country, the largest being Yorkshire.

HBA is a Registered Charity and adopted the Charity Commission model Constitution in 2020 and this is available to view on the HBA website. The objects of HBA are to further the craft of beekeeping in Hampshire and the education of the public therein. The HBA Executive Committee comprises three officers: Chair, Treasurer and Honorary Secretary plus up to nine ordinary members who are all elected at the HBA Annual General Meeting. The members of the Executive Committee are the Trustees of the Charity and are thus responsible for deciding how the objects are met.

One of the most important roles HBA carries out on behalf of its fourteen local associations is to represent Hampshire in relation to the BBKA. It is a condition for membership of BBKA that individual beekeepers in Hampshire are members of HBA which all *are* by virtue of registered membership of one of the local associations. Particular benefits of being a member of BBKA are third party public and product liability cover, relating to beekeeping activities and insurance cover through Bee Disease Insurance, against the loss of equipment through the two notifiable diseases, European Foulbrood and American Foulbrood.

In addition to the regular exchange of information with the BBKA, which is channelled via the Hon. Secretary, HBA represents Hampshire's beekeepers at the BBKA annual delegate meeting, a one-day conference. In the last three years HBA has proposed three propositions which were adopted by a large majority at the BBKA annual meetings, proving HBA has significant influence on national policy issues concerning bees and beekeeping. All local associations have the opportunity to suggest issues which HBA should raise with BBKA, and the HBA Executive invites comments on issues it proposes to raise with BBKA.

As the HBA objects emphasise, education in the craft of beekeeping is a key role of the Charity. This is promoted through an annual one-day convention, arranged, and subsidised by HBA at which members can hear from national experts on topics of interest and concern. Free evening winter talks are also arranged, and these have also been delivered via zoom during the pandemic.

HBA works with the local associations to promote the BBKA organised examinations systems starting with the Basic Assessment and leading through the module system up to Master Beekeeper of which there are currently five in the county. HBA refunds the examination fees of those who pass as an encouragement for those seeking to improve their knowledge and beekeeping skills.

A great asset held by HBA is an extensive library providing the county's beekeepers access to periodicals, articles, reference books and printed matter relating to beekeeping, one of the best specialist libraries in the Country. The collection has been built up over a very long period and contains some material of significant historical interest as well as up-to-date printed work which is of great value to those seeking to extend their knowledge of beekeeping not least through the BBKA module exam system. The collection is held at The Sustainability Centre, Droxford Road, East Meon, GU32 1HR and is accessible through the HBA Librarian.

For many years, HBA has held an annual county honey show. While a number, but not all, of the local associations hold their own honey shows, the HBA honey show offers the chance to enter at a more competitive level and supplies a 'bridge' to those aspiring to enter the National Honey Show. The HBA honey show, held at a central location, also provides an opportunity to engage with the public to promote greater understanding of bees and beekeeping. The pandemic prevented the honey show taking place in 2020 and 2021 but it is hoped it will be held again in the early autumn of 2022.

Another opportunity HBA provides to the county's beekeepers is to bring their bees onto the New Forest heather, through a long-standing agreement with Forestry England. HBA manages a scheme for up to 350 hives to be brought each summer to the heather. The arrangements are managed by a coordinator appointed by the HBA Executive and are subject to conditions laid down and agreed with Forestry England. Beekeepers interested in taking up this opportunity are invited to apply in early summer each year.

While the above describes the current remit of HBA, as an organisation bringing together all the associations and beekeepers in the county, there is considerable further opportunity to organise other activities which complement the key role of the local associations.

A number of matters will inevitably require cooperation across the whole county, and indeed beyond, such as tackling the Asian Hornet if or when this serious pest establishes a foothold in England.

The HBA Executive welcomes proposals for additional activities it could undertake, subject to volunteers being available to provide support. Local associations are invited to contact the HBA Hon. Secretary to discuss issues and ideas.