



Stowmarket & District Beekeepers Association

Chairman's Report for AGM February 2018

2017 was a memorable season for Stowmarket & District Beekeepers, with a busy social programme including our highlight for the season, our 70th anniversary celebration of our inauguration 1947. We celebrated with an excellent social gathering and Hog Roast at Little College Farm in July which was greatly enjoyed by members and their families.

The association was busy in 2017 with the traditional beginners course, which has now become a regular item in our Spring programme. We also had a comprehensive programme of evening meetings for members with a wide range of speakers catering for a broad range of interests.

Our programme of members meetings for 2018 is undergoing some changes following a review by the membership in January to define, amongst other things, what they would like to see and how often they would like to meet. The Committee concluded, from the survey returns, that it would be preferred to continue with evening meetings throughout the winter months from October to April but to focus on practical events at the club apiary during the summer. We have constructed a Draft programme to reflect this, which will be ratified at our next committee meeting, and subsequently published to the membership. The draft programme of events will be available at the AGM for attendees to comment upon.

A lot of effort has been expended in developing our association website as the primary tool for communication with members, and offering a forum for discussion through our 'Facebook' link on the website. This is progressing well now with an increasing number of members utilising our annual registration page on the website to complete their membership forms, and making payment electronically to the association. This process has significant benefits to the association allowing much more efficient handling and processing of information and lower banking costs. We would thank all members who have taken this on board, and encourage others to investigate the facilities and move with us toward increased effectiveness and communication

Within the association we are now also looking at setting up small mutual interest groups. We currently have a group setting up a Top Bar hive with intent to maintain this as a going concern throughout the 2018 season as an experiment and useful exercise in pollination, and a good learning opportunity to feedback to fellow club members.

We are always happy to accommodate mutual interest groups, and would encourage any members who would like to start such a group to get in touch with our secretary through the website so that we

can assist in getting the group in touch with each other and supporting them in establishing themselves.

Part of our winter survey provided members with the opportunity to express interest in an educational programme we are trying to develop within the association. A good response from the membership has encouraged us to look into setting up series of practical meetings to develop member's beekeeping skills, and knowledge, along the lines of British Beekeeping Association educational syllabus. This would provide those involved with the opportunity to increase their knowledge by undertaking structured courses of learning that could, in turn, lead to recognised Beekeeping qualifications.

I would also encourage our members to take a look at the Suffolk Beekeepers website to see the programme of events being run by other associations in the area. There are a lot of attractive events going on across Suffolk and remember that, as a member of Stowmarket Beekeepers, you have free access to all regular meetings of other associations in the county.

Suffolk Beekeepers are running their own Spring event in 2018 for all affiliated association members. This year's event is being held at Stowmarket Community Centre on 24th March with Celia Davies coming along as Keynote speaker. I would encourage all members to check out the programme for the day as the £15 entry price is exceptionally good value.

Members may be aware that, when renewing their membership, they are offered the opportunity to donate to research into Bee disease. These donations, along with a contribution from Stowmarket Beekeepers central funds, support a range of research projects that have been undertaken, primarily at leading seats of learning, on bee diseases, and their treatment. The committee would like to thank all members who have made such donations to the long term benefit and sustainability of Bees and Beekeeping.

In conclusion I would like to encourage any members with comment, or suggestion, on any element of the running of the association, or calendar of events to get in touch. The association is here for the benefit of yourselves, and we are always happy to take on board your comments and try, wherever possible, to cater for your needs.

Alan Seager
Chairman Stowmarket & District Beekeepers
25th February 2018