

APIARY NEWSLETTER

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Founded in 1913



The Healthy Bees Plan 2030 is a 10-year joint framework launched by Defra and the Welsh Government in November 2020 to protect and improve honey bee health in England and Wales. It succeeds the original 2009–2019 plan and focuses on sustaining honey bee populations against threats like pests (e.g., Asian hornet), diseases, and climate change.

The plan is built around four central goals to be achieved by 2030:

Effective Biosecurity & Husbandry: Minimising pest and disease risks through high standards of care and strict biosecurity measures.

Enhanced Skills & Capacity: Improving the technical expertise and production capabilities of both amateur beekeepers and professional bee

farmers.

Sound Science & Evidence: Ensuring that bee health policies and actions are grounded in robust scientific research.

Knowledge Exchange & Partnership: Increasing collaboration between government, beekeeping associations, and researchers to share best practices and address wider pollinator needs.

Key Implementation Tools

BeeBase: The National Bee Unit ([NBU](#)) encourages all beekeepers to register on BeeBase, a free database used to map disease outbreaks and provide risk alerts.

Hive-Side Training (HST): A government-funded initiative that provides hands-on, practical training directly at the hive to help beekeepers identify and manage pests like Varroa mites and the Asian hornet

3-Year Reviews: The plan uses a refreshed implementation strategy every three years to assess completed actions and add new ones as environmental or biological threats evolve.



Major Stakeholders

The plan was developed through the Bee Health Advisory Forum ([BHAFF](#)), which includes The British Beekeepers Association ([BBKA](#)), the Bee Farmers' Association ([BFA](#)), the Welsh Beekeepers' Association, and the National Farmers' Union.

Protecting Our "Unsung Heroes"

Honey bees are the cornerstone of our ecosystem and economy, contributing approximately £600 million annually to UK crop production through pollination. However, these vital pollinators face escalating threats from invasive species like the Asian hornet, persistent diseases such as Varroa, and the unpredictable impacts of climate change.

The Four Pillars of Bee Health

The plan is built around four key "outcomes" designed to create a resilient beekeeping sector:

Effective Biosecurity and Husbandry: Minimising the risk of pests and diseases through high standards of care and strict biosecurity.

Enhanced Skills and Capacity: Improving the expertise of the UK's 40,000+ beekeepers and professional bee farmers through training and mentoring.

Sound Science and Evidence: Ensuring all policy decisions and field actions are backed by robust research and "horizon scanning" for emerging threats.

Partnership and Knowledge Exchange: Fostering collaboration between government bodies, research institutes, and beekeeping associations like the British Beekeepers Association (BBKA).

A Collaborative Approach to Implementation

Unlike rigid top-down mandates, the Healthy Bees Plan 2030 is a living document. It is managed by the Bee Health Advisory Forum (BHAf), which brings together stakeholders to refresh the implementation plan every three years.

A central tool in this effort is [BeeBase](#), the National Bee Unit's (NBU) voluntary registration system.

Registration is free and provides beekeepers with:

Early Warning Alerts: Notifications of disease outbreaks (like Foulbrood) in their local area.

Professional Support: Free visits and diagnostic checks from local bee inspectors.

Data Mapping: Helping the NBU track and control the spread of pests like the Varroa

Training the Next Generation

Education is a top priority, with the plan supporting diverse learning formats—from digital courses to hands-on "hive-side" training. Programs like the Disease Assurance Scheme for Honeybees ([DASH](#)) allow experienced farmers to self-regulate, while new entrants are supported by mentoring schemes provided by local associations.

By integrating honey bee health with wider environmental goals—such as the Environmental Land Management ([ELM](#)) scheme—the Healthy Bees Plan 2030 aims to ensure that these "unsung heroes" of the natural world can thrive for generations to come.

Environmental Land Management Scheme and Bees

The Environmental Land Management (ELM) scheme in England pays farmers to adopt nature-friendly practices that support bees and pollinators, including creating flower-rich habitats, planting nectar mixes, and reducing pesticide use. These measures are aimed at boosting biodiversity and pollinator populations while supporting sustainable farming.

Pollen and Nectar Mixes: Funding to sow tailored mixes that provide essential food sources for bumblebees, solitary bees, and other pollinators.

Flower-Rich Margins: Creating grassy field margins or in-field strips rich in wildflowers to provide habitats and forage.



No Insecticide Use: Payments to avoid insecticides on arable and permanent crops (e.g., IPM4 option), protecting bees from chemical exposure.

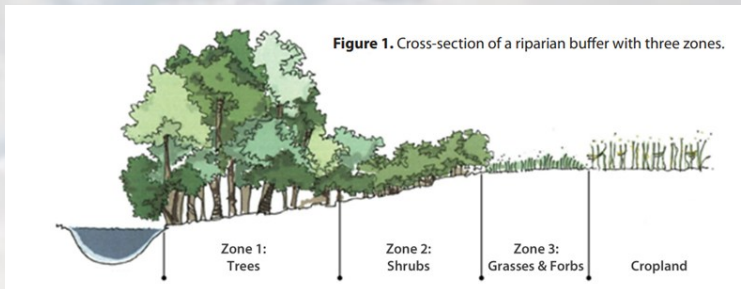
Hedgerow Management: Managing hedgerows provides crucial shelter and resources for pollinators.

Buffer Strips: 4–6 meter buffers on cultivated land to form, which act as habitat corridors.

Participation in Countryside Stewardship has grown in recent years.

Countryside Stewardship Options:

Management of Hedgerows. In which hedges are managed to increase the availability of blossom for invertebrates and food is provided for overwintering



birds. This option also helps maintain hedgerows as distinctive and historic landscape features. There are currently 52,800km of hedgerow in this option, representing one side of the hedge.

Option AB9:

Winter bird food. This provides important food resources for farmland birds, especially in autumn and winter. This option also benefits insects including bumblebees, solitary bees, butterflies and hoverflies. There are currently 44,000ha in this option.

Option SW1:

4-6 meter buffer strips on cultivated land. This provides habitat for wildlife and can form links or corridors between other habitats. Next to a watercourse, this option also prevents pollutants, such as sediment and nutrients, from being transported in surface water runoff. There are currently 16,000ha in this option.



Option AB8:

Flower-rich margins and plots. This option provides important habitat and foraging sites for invertebrates, including wild pollinators such as bumblebees, solitary bees, butterflies and hoverflies, and farmland birds including the yellowhammer. There are currently 32,000ha in this option.

Spiced Date Cake with Cream Cheese & Honey Frosting

A delicious spiced date cake with cream cheese & honey frosting recipe that will be guaranteed to impress everyone.



Ingredients

Cake:

- 400 grams pitted dates
- 40 grams Honey
- 1 ½ tsp bicarbonate of soda baking soda
- 300 ml boiling water
- 200 grams Muscovado sugar
- 200 grams salted butter room temperature
- ½ tsp cinnamon
- ½ tsp mixed spice
- 2 tsp vanilla extract
- 4 large free-range eggs
- 375 grams self-raising flour
- Salted honey caramel for the dripping layer optional
- Honeycomb Rock for the top decoration optional

Cream cheese and honey buttercream frosting:

- 150 grams butter
- 100 grams Muscovado sugar
- 60 ml Honey
- 125 gm icing sugar
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 250 grams Cream cheese

Instructions

To make the cake preheat your oven to 160C / 325F and line 3 x 18cm or 2 x 20cm cake tins with baking paper.
Soak the pitted dates for about 20 minutes in a bowl with the honey, the bicarbonate of soda, and the boiling water.
Blend this in a food processor until fairly smooth, then add the sugar, butter, spices, vanilla extract, and eggs and process until well incorporated.

Instructions...cont.

Add the self-raising flour and mix briefly until just combined. Scrape down the bowl and the blades. If you are wanting to be accurate with dividing the batter between 3 cake tins, decant the batter into a bowl and weigh this. Divide this weight into 3 and then evenly portion off the cake batter per tin. Alternatively, simply divide the batter into two 20 – 23cm tins.

Bake for 40 – 45 minutes until the cakes have risen and are springy to the touch and when a knife is inserted into the middle it comes out clean.

Allow the cakes to cool in the tins for about 10 minutes and then remove and place them on a cooling rack.

To make the icing, use an electric mixer and cream the butter, Muscovado sugar, and honey together. Whip for about 3-4 minutes until pale and becoming fluffy. The sugar should be mostly dissolved. Then add the icing sugar and vanilla extract and whisk for a further 5 minutes or so. By now the sugar should have dissolved. Add the cream cheese and whip for a further minute or two until well combined and very fluffy.

Ice the cake with a generous layer of frosting between the 3 layers and on the top and sides. If your freezer is big enough, put the cake in the freezer for a bit so that the icing firms up. Heat the salted honey caramel in the microwave for about 20 seconds until it is soft enough to drip. Gently drizzle this over the top of the cake allowing some to spill over the edge. Allow time as this will drip on its own. Add a little extra to the drip 'channels' should you need to.

Decorate with honeycomb rocks just before you serve.





THE JUNE GAP

June is a month of the year which brings uncertainty for many a beekeeper, for those in rural areas in particular. June is the beginning of the summer season when the spring flowering plants and trees shed their blooms having been pollinated and now begin to form seeds but the main flow of summer flowering blooms has yet to begin. Beekeepers refer to this period of change as the June Gap. At this time of year Honey bee colonies are approaching their peak in worker population in readiness for the summer flow, Queens are laying at a prolific rate and colonies have many larva to feed. A reduction in incoming nectar and pollen as the spring flowers cease but the summer flowers are yet to peak can leave large colonies struggling to feed themselves



The June Gap is often felt the most in rural areas dominated by intensive agriculture. The plentiful hawthorn blooms of hedgerows, hedgerow trees and gluts of autumn sown Oil Seed Rape are largely over throughout most of the British Isle's by June but the summer wild flowers are not yet at their peak. In urban areas the June Gap is not so keenly felt because our towns and cities contain an

abundance of garden plants which bloom throughout June filling the gap in forage. Urban areas contain many exotic trees which flower after our native species have ceased flowering. These include Sweet Chestnut, Pseudo Acacia, Laburnum and Tree of Heaven alongside native Limes. The same is true of Bramble which in towns and cities grows in abundance along railways and on brownfield sites. As June progresses Lavender, Echinops, Escalonia



and Teucrium will come into flower, also popular with bees. Bees will also take advantage of the sticky secretions produced by Aphids as they suck the sap of broadleaf trees. These alternative sources of forage can make life a little easier for our honey bees during the June gap. We can all do our bit to help the bees and other pollinators during the brief June dearth by ensuring our parks and gardens are well stocked with appropriate plants.



Hilton Green Wheelchair Access



Congratulations and Well Done to all who had a hand in this remarkable achievement, making the Hilton Apiary accessible to all....

Thanks to Paul Twibill for the photographs.

Golden Honey Braid

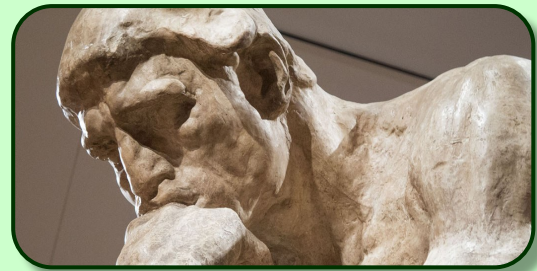
By Diane Shepstone, Bradford BKA

This delicious four strand braided loaf was made by two of our junior members...Elizabeth and Nancy Bennett...and the results were mouth-wateringly tasty and a highly recommended bake.



The full recipe can be found on page 34 of the May 2026 edition of the BBKA News

RANDOM THOUGHTS FROM THE APLIARY



If a deaf person has to go to court
Is it still called a hearing....??

My wife says I only have two faults....
I don't listen...and something
else....Mmmm ?

One for the opera lovers amongst
us ..!



your tiny Andes frozen

One of the biggest mistakes I've ever
made.....??

Back in 1988
these two
came
knocking on
my door
about a
sponsored
walk....and I
ended up sponsoring them for £2 a mile....



"The thing about quotes on the internet is
you can't confirm their validity"- *Samuel
Johnson (1649-1703)*

What do Politicians and babies nappies
have in common ?.....They should both be
changed regularly, and for the same reason

If anyone has a 'Random Thought' or a Honey recipe they would like to add to the Newsletter...then
please send it to: ssbka-mail@southstaffsbeekeepers.com

CAN YOU FIND THE QUEEN

Have a good look around this edition of the Newsletter and see if you can spot where she is ?



In the April edition she was sampling the delicious Ricotta Torte
with Nectarines on Page 5

Click on any word in the Newsletter
highlighted in **blue** for more detailsor Ctrl
+ Click the logos either side of here to go to
the association website

