

Beekeepers and the Data Protection Act

The Data Protection Act has been in force for some years now, and its ramifications seem to affect so many different aspects of our lives, not always to our convenience.

It would appear that it now has a bearing on the way that branch secretaries act when recruiting new members. For the greater good of beekeeping it is normal for branch secretaries to pass on the names, addresses and telephone numbers of newly recruited members to the Regional Bee Inspector, so that he can visit to examine the new members' bees for the presence of disease, and offer very good advice to those who are usually inexperienced beekeepers. He would add the beekeepers' contact details to Beebase, the national data base of beekeepers maintained by the National Bee Unit on the Internet.

Being on Beebase means that, should there be an outbreak of disease, the beekeepers with stocks most likely to be affected can be quickly identified and prompt action taken to limit the spread of the disease.

This is all very well intentioned, and quite praiseworthy, and aimed at the well-being of beekeeping in the long-term. The snag is that some branch secretaries have not asked permission to pass on this information before doing so. It would appear that this is a breach of the Data Protection Act.

The Bee Inspector is acting legally and correctly by recording the contact details of beekeepers onto Beebase, once he has identified them, by any means available to him. This is his duty as part of his role as a bee inspector.

The problem arises because the contact details are collected by branch secretaries for reasons of branch membership activities, such as mailing out meeting programmes, agendas or newsletters. To use such information for any other purpose without permission is a breach of the law. In future, branch secretaries are advised to seek explicit, preferably written, permission to pass on the contact details to the Bee Inspectorate, at the time of recruitment.

This change will only affect new members. Existing members should have been asked for their permission to pass on the details to the NBU when the membership lists were first compiled, or when joining the branch more recently. They will already be recorded on Beebase. Some branches, for example Carlisle, have always asked for this permission; others, apparently, have not.

You might well ask: "What about those people already on Beebase, who might not want to be there?" The answer seems to be that once on the Beebase your details will not be removed. This is regrettable, but is aimed at controlling the spread of disease. The data is held confidentially, and will only be used for contact purposes by the NBU.

If you want more details of Beebase, please contact your branch secretary who should be able to help you.

As discussed by the Executive and kindly summarised for the CBT by J.Harris

Beehivemaker
Beehives made to order at our joinery
Ambrosia Syrup and Fondant £1/kg.
 Any weight supplied
British Bees: Nucs for sale.
 Discuss your requirements with
 Peter Harris
90 Ennerdale Avenue, Botcherby,
Carlisle, CA1 2TR
 Beehivemaker.co.uk
 Tel 078304 3201

Pennine Bee Supplies

Agents for Thorne.

Honey jars at competitive prices
 Reasonable price paid for surplus honey
 (in plastic buckets)
**Stoney Lane, Galgate,
 Lancaster, LA2 0OY**

Tel: 01524 751347
 daytime 01524 791328
 evening

Executive News

Annual General Meeting of Cumbria Beekeepers

March 6th 12.30 Southey Street
 Keswick

An important meeting for all members. Please come and support the Association with fresh ideas. The Executive is in need of more members from each of the Branches and would welcome your help!

Executive Meetings

All at Southey St Keswick at 2.00pm
 Sat 23rd Jan
 Sat 29th May
 Sat 25th Sept
 Sat 27th Nov

Autumn Conference

November 27th Thelkeld Village Hall

**Richard & Anne
 Kenyon**

**Burnsmead Farm
 Little Urswick,
 Ulverston**

Tel 01229 869363
 A hive for all your
 Apiary equipment
 Agents for Thorne

CO-OPERATIVE HELP FOR BEEKEEPING

Charities, youth and community organisations who improve community life, can source finance from a range of organisations. I was contacted by the North Cumbria Area Committee of the Co-operative society asking if Cumbria beekeepers would like financial help from the Co-op community fund to support local beekeeping.

There was a time restriction as there was cash in the 2009 budget and no guarantee of future funds in 2010. Asking around County Executive members the need for digital projection equipment was expressed and reinforced, and so came up a wish for a digital projector, laptop computer, screen and digital eyepiece for microscopes, which I thought would be handy, and a personal microphone which someone else did. A budget of around 1.5 to 2 thousand was suggested by North region. I needed to do some internet research to get an understanding of the type of equipment we would need, prices etc and came up with a shopping list which came in under budget at £1800.

The type of thing that helps an application is community involvement and we have a wide range of members who do talks for other organisations; W.I., Round Table etc, we make appearances at Agricultural shows, have open apiary days and beginners classes, environmental benefits of beekeeping are obvious. The fact that the equipment was for Cumbria and would be used by five branches would be of some advantage.

Talks at CSS my local computer supplier resulted in a list of items costed at £2000.. Sourcing a supplier for the eyepiece at a reasonable price was proving difficult. A visit to a local marine biologist who used a digital microscope proved educational, but she did not use a digital eyepiece that would suit our needs, so more internet searching and a conversation with Graham Royal helped clarify things.

Next the Coop wanted an invoice; I got an itemised one from CSS but the Coop wanted it from the beekeepers. As Christine, the Treasurer, was away I downloaded an invoice from the internet filled in the necessary parts and sent it off to the Coop accountants, but as Christmas was fast approaching and prices will go up by £50 in January with the VAT increase, I tried to hurry things along with the Coop, only later to find when the holidays were upon us that CCS has already invoiced us and this will cover us for the vat increase!

Thinking about it later I realised that a County computer could become a very useful recourse, which could hold the presentation material for many beekeeping talks and learning opportunities for us all to share. At time of writing we are still waiting for a cheque.

Happy New Year. Walter Mc Phee