



# Essex Beekeepers' Association

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## Chair's Annual Report of 2023 for the 2024 AGM

2023 has perhaps not been the year we expected or indeed hoped for. Nevertheless there are positive achievements, not the least in our resilience in coping with the unexpected.

The 2023 AGM was enjoyed by most who attended, the speaker, Wally Shaw, was well informed and had clearly reflected on and learned from his experiences. The attendance was again disappointing despite a good central venue, the speaker being well known and the subject perhaps more practical than the previous year so a good contrast. Refreshments were much enjoyed, thank you to Southend division for managing this so well. Some attendees had concerns about the timekeeping but it is always difficult to allow enough time for the reasonable concerns of members with the need to plan the best use of time.

The Honey show was very well supported and attended. It was good to receive the appreciation of the Orsett show committee in the form of awarding the Association of Show and Agricultural Organisations' (ASAO) 100 Champions Commemorative Rosette, celebrating their centenary, to the champion beekeeping exhibit. Those who've been to the show know how strong the competition would be. Many thanks are due to all the helpers both on the day and in the preceding days setting up and enabling the display and judging. Refreshments as always were well received and help support flagging energy at the end of a long day.

Following the precedent from 2022, it was decided that the Officers' Day provided a really useful forum and therefore should be repeated and possible become a regular event. About 34 officers, representing all but one of the divisions met in October to review issues, including presentations on Governance and Terms of Reference for divisions. Small group discussions then covered a range of pertinent topics. Needless to say, there were many different views but useful discussions on the future of county events such as the conference and AGM are already informing our plans and other issues remain to be followed up. A very well received presentation from Dave Garrett, our bee health officer, set in motion our plans for countywide action in 2024.

Southend Division hosted our conference in November, and its success was a clear indication of how much can be achieved by a division committed to providing a great experience. While attendance did not return to pre-Covid levels, there were many more attendees than 2022 so we hope this will be a continuing trend. The speakers were excellent and provoked much discussion. We appreciated the location which had plenty of transport options and flexible accommodation. Catering could not be faulted, in all an excellent day thanks to Southend's focus on raising awareness and meeting the needs of

attendees. It is worth mentioning that the CEC has recognised that the financial risk of hosting the conference might discourage some divisions and has therefore raised the level of subsidy to match need, as the educational aspect of the day is within our remit as a charity.

These have all been positive experiences, I hope the progress is generally repeated at divisional level. Sadly, for Harlow division, despite best efforts by many of their members and by CEC members, particularly but not exclusively, the Governance Sub-Committee, by December they were in a position where they were unable to fill the key committee posts. Therefore they requested that the division be suspended. This process had no precedent and was not covered in our rules so guidance was sought from the BBKA to ensure that everything necessary was in place. The rules have now been amended and you will be asked to approve the changes at the AGM. The resources are now in the control of the CEC who will also over the coming year develop a process for the division to be reactivated when appropriate. This may well also require rule changes but it is something we can all hope for..

The Asian Hornet is also on the move. Southend division was worst affected this year with 2 nests located and destroyed. The most likely reason is that 70+ nests were found in Kent this year and there may well be more as some areas are hard to monitor. Following lesson earned this year, beekeepers have been encouraged to put kill traps in their apiaries between Feb 1st and May 1st. Most divisions have supported their members in this by providing or selling at cost trap bait and simple traps. Any sighting must be reported using the Asian Hornet app. Many beekeepers are also looking further forward to a time when defending hives becomes a necessity and are familiarising themselves with the options. Dave Garrett has been round most divisions explaining the process and making sure we are aware of our responsibilities. We are also warned not to lose sight of the importance of the health of our colonies to better enable them to resist attack.

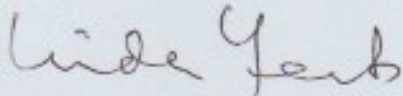
In other areas, there was a small but welcome increase in the number of beekeepers taking assessments. Our exams officer reports that it can be difficult to find examiners for the basic assessment. We have not made progress in finding anyone willing and able to revive the Essex Beekeeper in any format and we all agree it is definitely missed. Some divisions are still reporting lower attendances at in person meetings. There doesn't seem to be one guaranteed sure fire method for getting the right balance between different meeting formats. It is also hard to deny that on a cold dark winter evening the pleasure of seeing others doesn't easily outweigh the cost and time of travelling to a central venue. Perhaps the offer of a tree to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the BBKA will provide a focus for some well-attended events this year.

Over the year, there have been changes in the CEC. Graeme Crook resigned as webmaster and has been replaced by Jan Swanwick. Steve Broomhead resigned as Harlow trustee and was replaced by David Tyler. In March 2024, Mike Abel, (Chelmsford) and Bridget Mudd (Braintree) will stand down as trustees. , Bridget has actually completed 5 years while a replacement was found. David. Mills (M & D) Roger Honey (Romford) and and Keith Lomas (Southend) have all completed their first years as trustees. Diane Brooker has completed a successful first year as exams officer but unfortunately finds herself unable to continue so a replacement is currently needed Jane Ridler has very purposefully assumed the role of education officer. Pat Allen is reaching the end of her 4 year term as treasurer and she has found a potential replacement to be

proposed at the AGM. Thank you to all those I have mentioned and to those whose term will continue into next year.

I would like to thank all members of the CEC for their support, their willingness to advise and the good humour with which difficult decisions are discussed and reached. I have particularly relied on Vanessa Wilkinson for her calm, her willingness to help me find what I need and her reminders to me to do things in a timely manner. The good decisions reached owe everything to their collective wisdom. The mistakes are mine.

This report is for presentation to EBKA members for the AGM held in March 2024. It will form the basis of our report to the Charity Commission.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Linda Yeats".

Linda Yeats  
Chair EBKA