

Dear Members,

Well, Covid is still with us, worse in the north than further south, it's not good but at least we have been able to get to our bees, even if not to our loved ones. However, with Facetime and mobile phones at least we are able to keep in touch, it isn't the same as meeting up but at least it is something.

On 21st October we had a meeting for Education and Husbandry, again all by Zoom so no personal contact. We did manage to cover most things, mainly trying to move things forward, training programmes, YouTube videos on our website, can the Basic exams go ahead, (they are one to one at the apiary), can the associations manage this?

We also discussed the exams for 2021, the Exam Board are managing this and are working very hard to try to get an online system in place, this is being trailed with the board members who are taking mock exams and trying to 'cheat' to see if it is fool proof!

It is thought that there will be a system in place but perhaps not by March, it may be a little later.

For those who want to take the exams and would like some help, the correspondence training courses are really good. I used those successfully to get through my modules. The courses are designed to cover everything in the syllabus, I would certainly recommend them.

At the finance meeting it was confirmed that we will end the year with a small surplus again, as I have previously noted, it is thanks to the management team at BBKA Headquarters for ensuring that costs have been kept to a minimum. Also the furlough payments claimed and the increase in the value of investments together with the temporary closure of many research projects meant we spent less than expected.

The next financial year will be different, the budget shows a deficit for the year, after listening to the losses on the high street, we are probably not on our own, nevertheless, as a charity we cannot sit back and ignore that fact. To cover the deficit we must increase our capitation fee and that will be one of the propositions at the ADM in January.

Another item to mention is that Sharon Blake, the Editor of the BBKA News has sourced new paper for the magazine and a more organic envelope at a more competitive price. At the moment we are using up old stock but as soon as that has gone you will see a new BBKA News. I hope you all like it and approve of the eco-friendlier magazine.

A while ago we introduced an insurance for the equipment that we all have at home and at our branch apiaries, the cost of this was very good and quite a lot of people, including me and our branch took it up.

The rates were offered with an anticipated take up over three years, that is what kept the cost down, We are now at that point and are not quite where we should be in relation to 'take up' this could mean that the offer would have to be withdrawn which would be a shame..

So we are asking if you would agree to this item being added to your membership application form as a reminder. It will be an option to join for your members, if we can increase the numbers just slightly it will ensure that the cover will continue.

It's a unique facility, currently at about 10% the price of its nearest rival, starting at £12 for £5,000 cover. Options available on www.beekeepersinsurance.co.uk

I understand that the work on the apiary at Stoneleigh is going along fine and that the pond and paths have been laid. The pond is surrounded by fencing and a secure gate which can be opened for access onto a decked area.

Also the Building work on the offices has started. The footings have been laid and the hall is being insulated ready for the extension. At least the work can continue as it is mainly outdoors, I can't wait to be able to go down and see, not just the apiary and the building, but to the staff again and catch up with them on all the bits of news that filter in from the branches and associations.

Leigh Sidaway, our General Manager has kindly agreed to take some pictures to add to this letter, so thank you Leigh.



Extension to reception entrance underway.



Bee tunnel with climbers just planted.



Pond with just one lily showing at the moment



The long border planted with hardy perennials

Looking forward, the next event will be the Annual Delegates Meeting. This year it will be virtual, there will be practice sessions in November and December for the delegates and trustees to become familiar with the systems and for any wrinkles to be smoothed before the big day.

It will not be the same of course, as we will not be able to meet people from other associations who we see seldomly or to chat to new delegates over a sandwich at lunch time. You will not be able to see the new Special Issues or to purchase them but I do hope that you will visit the BBKA shop to do that, even if you cannot turn a page or two before deciding, (they really are all very good).

Hopefully, we have met all your expectations in the last year, I am sure that if we had not, you would have let us know. We can then look forward to looking at any constructive ideas you may have for the coming year, subject to us being able to move about and communicate with each other on personal levels again, fingers crossed.

Kind regards

Margaret Wilson

BBKA President