

Letter from Margaret Wilson, BBKA President. 9th February 2021

You will probably be aware of the publicity surrounding the derogation for the use of neonicotinoids on the sugar beet crop for the next two years.

I have sent a letter to the Rt Hon George Eustice who was appointed Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Regarding this matter, I received the standard reply that my letter had been received but still no action.

Anne Rowberry, our Chair, also sent a letter to Boris Johnson and as I write this, again there has been no more than an acknowledgement of the letter.

We were approached by one of our members, Chris who is also a Barrister. He has offered to take this matter to the courts and ask for a Judicial Review, as it is thought that there was limited consultation on the use of neonicotinoids, whereas there should have been a wider consultation with all interested parties.

Chris asked for us to also provide a solicitor to help him to take this forward. He has been lucky to have the services of John who will also act for us in this matter. However, on investigation by him, it appears that the Wildlife Trust has already instructed solicitors to go for a Judicial Review on this matter.

We are investigating obtaining a Pre-Action Protocol Letter so that there will be no costs incurred. Failing that, we will try the Aarhus Convention therefore an environmental issue with limited costs.

The Aarhus Convention establishes a number of rights of the public (individuals and their associations) with regard to the environment. The Parties to the Convention are required to make the necessary provisions so that public authorities (at national, regional or local level) will contribute to these rights to become effective.

After a meeting of the Executive, we are now pursuing the matter with some urgency.

We have also received emails regarding the importation of bees into the UK, requesting what can be done about this. We know that this has been going on for some time. The main reason is, that we in this country, do not produce enough queens to cover the needs of the UK. We are also aware that some breeders are breeding queens for sale in this country that are from imported stock.

What we should and are doing, is to get our members involved into raising more queens. Over the past few years, we have been offering queen rearing courses across the country in an attempt to increase the numbers raised. My own branch does this every year and is able to supply queens and bees to all new members and to existing members where there is a need. I have to congratulate the team who, year after year, succeed in doing this.

Please can you follow their lead? Take advantage of the courses that will be on offer later this year if, hopefully, we get on top of the Covid situation. Queen rearing is not difficult, it requires good timing but every competent beekeeper should be able to do it. Keep an eye out for the queen rearing courses that will be on offer again, later this year.

I hope that you agree with our actions regarding the neonicotinoids? I will update you as soon as I get more news.

Kind regards

Margaret Wilson, President