

West Sussex Beekeepers' Association Divisions. An explanation for members.

The organisation of Beekeeping Associations in which beekeepers are members of the British Beekeepers' Association (BBKA) is based on a pyramid system. The BBKA is the national governing body that, apart from having some 'Individual Members', is an association of associations, where Area Association Members (AAMs) are usually County BKAs such as West Sussex Beekeepers' Association (WSBKA), which may or may not have Branches or Divisions.

WSBKA was formed in 1973 and currently comprises four Divisions that cover the county, effectively quartering it. They are: Central Sussex that covers the north east of the county, Chichester and Worthing cover the coastal plain and Wisborough Green covers the more rural north west and much of the centre of the county.

WSBKA has a committee of officers elected annually by WSBKA voting members, plus two representatives appointed by each Division. Other members can be co-opted by the committee as and when the need arises.

Divisions are responsible for managing their own affairs. They have their own members, administration, rules, finances, committees, meetings, websites, newsletters, teaching apiaries, assets, etc. West Sussex BKA gives permission for Divisions to be part of WSBKA but it has no mandate in the governance of the Divisions except that Divisions' rules must not conflict with WSBKA Rules. Divisions may use alternative names but these names do not constitute a separate organisation from the Division.

Divisions do not have ownership of WSBKA assets nor does WSBKA have ownership of Division assets.

WSBKA Divisions have no geographical boundaries; beekeepers are free to join whichever Division they prefer and are welcome to attend functions of other Divisions. New beekeepers and existing beekeepers who move into the area are advised to visit all BKAs within a reasonable travelling distance before deciding which one to join. They all have their own teaching apiaries but each one is different and the choice people make may not depend purely on location. It is usual that beekeepers stay loyal to their chosen Division, but it is possible to be a full member of one Division and an Associate member of another.

It is compulsory for all beekeeping members to be members of BBKA. Subscription to BBKA is included in the membership fees of the Divisions for those members. Divisions may choose to be members of Bee Disease Insurance (BDI), in which case all beekeeping members must pay at least the basic membership fee (which covers insurance for three hives). Subscriptions for these are collected at Divisional level, BBKA subscriptions are paid to WSBKA, who in turn pay BBKA.

Through their membership of a Division, individuals automatically become members of WSBKA. There is no provision for an individual to be directly a member of WSBKA. It is often thought that the Divisions are member associations of BBKA, but they are not, as it is WSBKA which is a member association. Through membership of WSBKA, most individuals are members of BBKA (see previous para).

It is at Divisional level where most of the beekeeping activity and teaching takes place. Each Division has a variety of meetings to suit all beekeepers. Summer meetings tend to concentrate on acquiring and honing the practical skills needed in handling bees, while winter meetings are usually theoretical but may also have practical demonstrations such as wax processing and hive assembly.

Where a Division has charitable status, charity rules take precedence over WSBKA rules.

There are some events that are too large for Divisions to handle or are of benefit to all beekeepers county-wide. Therefore, these are organised by WSBKA and may include presentations on important topics and annual events such as:

WSBKA Bee Market and Auction, where there is an annual sale of equipment as well as various other bee-related attractions.

WSBKA Convention, which is an all-day event held early in the year with lectures and workshops featuring some well-known presenters.

Ad-hoc events usually involving visiting speakers or relating to matters of wider interest.

Although WSBKA events, they are organised and manned by beekeepers from the whole county.

Follow the links on the website for full details of these annual events.

For Divisional rules please refer to the appropriate Division.

Approved by WSBKA committee on 21st May 2019