

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 in whatever form has been decided locally.

WSBKA was formed in 1973 and currently has 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.

The organisation of WSBKA is a fairly loose arrangement that may seem rather confusing. The term 'Division' can be misleading as it implies that it is a part of WSBKA which has some measure of control over it, but this is not the case. Each Division is an independent beekeeping association in its own right and is responsible for managing its own affairs. They have their own members, administration, rules, finances, committees, meetings, websites, newsletters, teaching apiaries, assets, etc. West Sussex BKA has no mandate in the governance of the Divisions and can only intervene should there ever arise a conflict with WSBKA rules.

The membership of WSBKA is not made up of the four Divisions but instead is an umbrella organisation for the Divisions' members who pay a capitation or 'membership' fee to WSBKA. The members' interests at County level are served by two representatives who are elected by the Divisions. There is no provision for an individual to be a member of WSBKA, other than in the case of someone who has an honorary position of Life Vice-President but is no longer a member of a Division.

It has always been recognised that WSBKA is made up of the Divisions, with the rules allowing for the organisation and administration to be run at county level by a central committee comprising a President, Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer elected from the WSBKA membership at an AGM. In addition, there are the two representatives from each Division. Other members can be co-opted by the committee as and when the need arises.

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 obviously expected 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 of the Divisions to be members of WSBKA, BBKA and to pay for Bee Diseases Insurance (BDI). Subscriptions for these are collected at Divisional level.

Through their membership of a Division, individuals automatically become members of WSBKA and BBKA. It is often thought that the Divisions are affiliated to BBKA, but they are not, as it is WSBKA which is affiliated.

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.

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.

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

Follow the links above for full details of these annual events.

For Divisional rules please refer to the appropriate Division.

Roger Patterson. 25th January 2019.