



# The British Beekeepers' Association

National Beekeeping Centre, Stoneleigh-park, Stoneleigh, Warwickshire CV8 2LG

Tel: 02476 696679; Fax: 02476 690682; email: [bbka@britishbeekeepers.com](mailto:bbka@britishbeekeepers.com)

**NEWS RELEASE**

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## **BRITISH BEEKEEPERS COMMIT TO PARTNERSHIP WITH GOVERNMENT AND INDUSTRY**

Tim Lovett, Chairman of the British Beekeepers Association (BBKA) speaking at a specially convened conference at the National Beekeeping Centre opened by Baroness Miller, Liberal Democrat spokesman in the Lords on Environment Food and Rural Affairs, called for a three way partnership to save Britain's bees,

The BBKA is concerned that government funding for bee research is declining, at a time when threats to bee health are increasing, risking the sustainability of the nation's home grown food, three fifths of which is depended on pollination by bees.

Mr Lovett highlighted the disparity between the £120 million benefit to the UK economy of the pollination and the £1.5 million allocated by government to its bee health programme saying that the spending on research, a paltry £250,000 per year, is not sufficient to stop significant job losses amongst Britain's highly qualified bee scientists.

The BBKA acknowledged too that additional government funds could not be expected unless beekeepers also dug into their own pockets, as well as seeking supporting from the fruit growers and food retailers.

20 years ago beekeepers contributed the value of a jar of honey to build a research fund which if repeated today, and supplemented by aggregating research funds within the BBKA, could raise £100,000 within three years. This challenge fund would need to be match-funded several times over to secure the future of the nation's honey bees.

DEFRA's Plant Health Division is currently drafting a Bee Health Strategy to be put to consultation. The BBKA on behalf of its 60 affiliated associations will be producing a wish list of the most pressing research issues and will participate in the drawing up of the strategy.

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**Further press information contact: Christine Gray, Press Officer, British Beekeepers Association. 01462 450707/07891 000207 or email: [christine.m.gray@btinternet.com](mailto:christine.m.gray@btinternet.com)**

### **NOTES TO EDITORS**

The BBKA is a charity set up in 1874 by the gentry and the clergy to help poor cottagers. Today it supports and promotes bees and beekeeping and educates the public of the importance of bees in the environment. Membership through its 70 affiliated associations has increased by 10 per cent over the last 12 months to nearly 12,000 members. Members benefit from public, product and bee disease insurance, a telephone helpline, local support and mentoring legal advice and an examination and assessment programme. Representation and lobbying of government, European and statutory bodies is a key role for the BBKA. Members report any concerns about bee diseases to regional bee inspectors working for the National Bee Unit, a DEFRA funded organisation.