



North Somerset Beekeepers

(a Branch of Avon Beekeepers Association Reg Charity No 271717)

Minutes of Committee Meeting 1 September 2025 The George at Backwell at 19.30 hrs

1. Members attending

Eric Sortwell, Rob Francis, Tom Francis, Jen Stallwood, Michael Batchelor, Jodi Moger, Claire Daly, Michelle Blackborrow, Annette Healy, Heather Pitch, and Tony Slater. Adam Evans (part). The Committee outlined their current roles by way of introduction to Annette.

2. Apologies

Paddy Brading

3. Approval of minutes of 23 June 2025

The Committee approved the minutes as a true record and will be put on line by Adam.

4. Matters arising (not covered below)

Eric said that at the last meeting it was agreed that flowers would be sent to Paddy following her operation. A card had been sent, and Heather would now ensure flowers were sent as well.

5. Treasurer's report

- Cash held was up by about £3,000 more than the last year. However, the Autumn capitation of £284.70 is due, as is an invoice for £900 for Apiguard.
- Sumup: Michael said that the new Sumup account had been used successfully by several members helping at shows. Once the member had registered with the NSBK account, they could use their own phone with the Sumup app installed with the NSBK logon to accept payments which would then be credited direct to the club bank account.
- At the Clevedon show, for example, about 60% of transactions had been cashless.
- The NSBK bank account was now being charged 60 pence per cheque, which meant we should even more actively discourage cheque payments.

6. Membership Secretary's Report

- Heather had shown Annette the ER2 system in July and she now had access. She would start the role on November 15th and she and Heather would work in tandem on the renewal of membership starting on 1 November.
- Currently 228 members on roll.
- Membership fees were increasing from November 1st.

- Registered members (up to 3 colonies): £45 (up £2).
- Partners: increased by £1.50.
- Country: increased by £1.
- Junior: decreased by £3.50.
- Associate: £15 (no change).

7. Secretary's report

Nothing to report.

8. Education Co-ordinator's report

Introductory course would be in Nailsea from January 15 to March 19.

- 12 people on the list, so far, plus two more just received.
- Nailsea Methodist Church Hall had been booked and there be a small uplift on the £42 hire cost (yet to be confirmed).
- Michael and Tony volunteered to be on the subcommittee, along with Heather and Rob, to review the structure and content of the Introductory course.
- New leaflets advertising the Introductory course have been printed and were handed out in the recent shows.

Improvers'/Refreshers' course would be held at St Andrew's Church House starting on 13 January.

- 6-7 people signed up, although not promoted much yet. Rob would approach Bristol for potential attendees if necessary. Rob would have a meeting at the end of September to discuss adjustments to the format.
- There was general awareness that some parts of the course were out of date and that serious revisions were necessary. Rob said that he thought the general format would remain the same, but the content could be reviewed and update anything that obviously needed it. He wanted to make it as interactive as possible.

9. Apiary Manager's report

- Eric said he was sad that he was relinquishing the role of apiary manager, but it was also pleasing that he felt he and Jodi had come to the end of a seven-year stretch as apiary manger and deputy apiary manager on a high. This year's intake had been very good, but the number of members' hives in the apiary had been a challenge (20 compared to 12 last year). The problem was partly the number and competence of the trainers. Some of the trainers were themselves inexperienced and it was considered there ought to be a program of training the trainers.
- There had been almost no swarms in the apiary this year, steps having been taken to prevent them. Only one colony had had a significant varroa infestation.
- There was a question of whether to continue with WhatsApp groups or move towards mentors. The WhatsApp groups have been successful in helping members learn from each other and identify skill levels. It was agreed that Mentors and the WhatsApp groups can work

well together. Eric and Jodi thought that allowing the new beekeepers to pick which mentor they wanted was still the best method of allocation.

- The club car boot sale the previous Sunday had been quite well attended and had provided a useful service to members and ex members.
- Chronic Bee Paralysis Virus (CBPV) had been found in two of the hives, which were not thriving and would probably die. Eric wondered whether the apiary had too many bees from the same supplier and whether more diverse bee strains should be introduced, but it was concluded that this was probably not the cause of the infection, given the hygiene measures carried out by Tom – the main supplier - prior to supply, and never having found CBPV in his hives.
- The deployment of a boot disinfection mat at the apiary entrance was discussed but not proceeded with. It was always necessary to constantly remind attendees at the apiary to wash their hive tools and gloves between hives.
- There were currently 9 club hives.

10. Programme Manager/ Webmaster's report

- Adam had uploaded requested content to the website.
- Website traffic had increased by 82%.
- Heather wondered if letters of thanks should be sent to those organising the shows, but it was suggested the best thanks would be to have more volunteers to help and more entries to be made in the honey show competitions, the lack of which was a perennial problem.
- Avon Open Spring Day school was confirmed for March 28th at Shipham Village Hall.
- Lynne Ingram and Geoff Blay were being contacted for January and March talks.
- Eric still had the refreshments bag.
- There are two club-owned hot water flasks in the shed at the apiary.
- A person who has put their name down for the Introductory course had asked if they could go to events even though they were not a member and had been told they would be welcome to do so.

11. ABKA Rep's report

Nothing to report as the next meeting was the following week. Heather said that next year she would arrange Committee Meetings that fell after the Avon meetings.

12. Members without portfolio

Jen: This week was BBKA Yellow Legged Asian Hornet Week to raise awareness. There would be information on Facebook, daily and in the newsletter. There are more sightings this year, including one in Cornwall. An email had been sent to Asian Hornet coordinators to be vigilant, and Jen was encouraging awareness rather than active monitoring due to past issues with BBKA's geography knowledge. Jen's advice for NSBK is still to encourage people to know what to look out for by downloading the Yellow Legged Asian Hornet app and to remain vigilant.

Michelle: Instagram had 938 views in the last 30 days. People had been messaging about beekeeping, and Michelle sent them a link to the webpage. Michelle had 141 followers on the

NSBK Instagram pages. NSBK public Facebook had 44 followers and 145 views in the last 28 days. Michelle needed content to post and asks members to send pictures of bees, hives, hornets, etc.

- **Claire:** Claire asked whether there was any kind of health and safety policy around candle rolling given that the children would go away and no doubt want to light their candles. It was thought that as all the children were accompanied by an adult while preparing the candles, no special arrangements need to be put in place.

Tom:

- Tom suggested the apiary acquires a EcoFlow Portable Power Station (ie, large capacity battery with multiple three pin socket outlets). These are used typically for camping, caravanning emergency backup, and home use, and could have many uses in the apiary, opening up opportunities not previously available. Tom said he would take charge of recharging it as necessary. It was agreed this was a good idea and should be pursued. (The EcoFlow DELTA 3 Portable Power Station can be bought for under £700 but there are more expensive versions if required.)
Amongst other uses, it would be possible to power equipment for monitoring hives. Chris Morton had been doing this for several years, and maybe he should do a talk.
- There was further discussion about a long hive in the apiary. It was generally agreed that having a variety of hives – including a long hive and possibly a skep and Warre hive – would be informative and interesting to new and experienced beekeepers alike and maybe attract more experienced members to the apiary. It was also important of course to continue to teach new beekeepers the fundamentals of husbandry, and it was sometimes quite challenging to recruit sufficient experienced members to do this, let alone take on the unusual hives. It was considered that perhaps there would have to be a dedicated team who would be responsible for looking after the more unusual hives.

13. Chair's Report

Nothing to report.

14. Any other business

Michael's Review of Honey Shows in 2025

- Michael attended all the shows this year. Less than 10% of members got involved. Shows had generated new members and are a publicity route for Asian Hornets. The shows cost a net loss of £136, which was sustainable.
- Display boards needed replacing or upgrading. It was agreed that there should be a board with names of the Committee and their roles and more explanation about what NSBK does.
- Although most of the shows are in the northern part of the area, it was decided to leave the number of shows supported as they were at present.

Schools

- There were more schools wishing to have visits from beekeepers (Michelle had a list) than capacity to give talks. A small number of members do talks to various groups, but this was ad hoc and outside the organisation of NSBK.
- It was decided it would be a good idea to have a WhatsApp group of people involved in outreach.

Publicity

- Tony had an arrangement with the Weston Mercury to write a piece last year about the course. If applications to join the Intro Course remain low (as at present) he would resurrect this opportunity.
- The blurb that's on the website about the course can be reproduced and sent out in an email to the membership, and members could slot that into their own social media platform. Michelle said that pictures were vital for social media engagement.
- Michelle's husband, a radio broadcaster, can invite someone on to the programme to give publicity to the club and the course.

AGM – it was decided that the talk from David Evans – the Apiarist - would be “Bigger queens, better queens.” He will deliver the lecture by Zoom, and someone need to be appointed to be responsible for this. A practice run needs to be done before the day of the AGM, since no-one had made arrangements for a Zoom speaker on a projector screen.

Other Business

- The Christmas party is organized for December 6th.
- Heather said she wanted to give formal thanks on behalf of the committee to Eric and Jodi for the last seven years they had acted as Apiary Manager and Deputy Apiary Manager building up the apiary from nothing, at Langford. Eric said that it had been a pleasure working with Jodi.

15. Next meeting would be on 27th of October 2025, 19:30 hrs via Zoom for AGM planning.