



## Buzzworks AH AGM

**Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2021 11 – 12 noon by Zoom**

**Present:** Robin Dartington (President); Paul Calvert, Andy Cooper, Mike D'Souza, Giorgio Martinelli, Rachel Scanlan, Mari Stevenson, Anne Taylor (Trustees); Chris Baugh, Paul Johnson, Allison Hamilton, Joanna Rafferty, Nathalie Titterton (members).

**Apologies:** Janet Southwood, Nikki Tomlin.

### 1. Welcome and Introductions (Paul – Chair, and all)

### 2. Minutes of 2020 AGM (Paul)

Matters arising:

The updated Complaints Procedure is now on the website as agreed.

There are now working teams for all operational areas, allowing the trustee meetings to focus on strategic matters.

Minutes unanimously approved.

### 3. Annual Report 2021 (Paul)

It has been a challenging year due to the pandemic, but plenty has been achieved despite this.

**The stall** has supplemented lost income from cancelled stalls, by offering deliveries. This is a venture which will be maintained for the foreseeable future.

**Maintenance** work has achieved a good standard on both sites, with just some painting still to be finished in Spring. **Gardening** has also continued in small groups. Both sites are looking good. We hope they can be enjoyed by more people as the year goes on and lockdown eases.

Only one **Taster Day** could go ahead but it went very well and was an opportunity to review how the programme can continue to be improved.

**Beekeeping** – Andy looks after the Buzzworks apiary (4 hives) and Paul and Robin look after the Honeyworks apiary (16 hives). This has been able to continue despite Covid-19, as an approved activity. There is a move towards a less intrusive approach. The honey harvest has slightly increased, with the weather being unusually hot and dry. All 2020 summer honey has now been extracted and jarred and the aim is to

maintain this each year. A lot of left-over ivy honey has now been melted out. This is a laborious process but adding electric heating to the solar melter has enabled work to continue indoors. It should all be completed by the start of this summer.

#### **4. Finance (Paul)**

Inevitably as a result of the pandemic, revenue is down at just under £4,800. There have been no education activities, limited training and a restricted number of stalls. A grant was gratefully received from Hitchin Tilehouse Rotary, which enabled us to buy children's bee-suits. Thank you to Mike De Souza for his role in this. Expenditure has been lower than usual but higher than revenue for the first time, because we have spent a significant amount on overdue maintenance. 2021 starts with a balance of around £8,700. Honey stocks are 400 jars plus a significant number still to processed. This should mean we do not need to buy in extra honey this year. 2021 budgets for each area have been set and will be continuously monitored and reviewed by the trustees.

We encourage all who haven't already, to support us by taking out a £10 pa membership. Membership runs from January 1<sup>st</sup> but new volunteers joining late in the year can have their membership carried forward.

#### **5. Election of Trustees (Paul)**

As per the constitution, two trustees must stand down each year but may be re-elected. These are usually the longest-standing trustees. This year, Rachel stood down as she is moving out of the area. We would like to thank Rachel for her contribution. Giorgio stood down but was willing to be re-elected. Nathalie Titterton stood to be elected as a new trustee. She gave a brief resume of what she could offer, which includes her teaching background and knowledge of health and safety issues. Giorgio and Nathalie were both elected unanimously as trustees.

#### **6. Area Reports (Trustee Leads)**

##### **Education (Mari)**

Unfortunately Mari is isolating so has been unable to come up to Buzzworks. She thanked all the volunteers who have contributed to the renovation of the site.

The High Sheriff and Chair of North Herts District Council will be visiting the site (Covid restrictions permitting) on 16<sup>th</sup> March.

A top-bar hive with a side window for viewing, will be installed on the Buzzworks Education Site. The reduced number of hives will also be more conducive to looking at bee activity in the apiary. A projector is to be installed in the Discovery Centre when the weather is warmer and all repairs done. Mike has kindly offered a touchscreen computer.

It is planned that the 'outside world' will be brought into Buzzworks more, demonstrating awareness of the context of our work, and of new research and trends.

Ability to re-start educational visits is an unknown due to the pandemic, but there is the possibility of hosting small groups, maybe single households. Nikki and Joanna were thanked for all the time they have spent refreshing and reorganising the resources in the Discovery Centre to make this easier. The resources are to be reviewed to make sure they are up-to-date.

### **Gardening and Maintenance (Mike)**

2020 has been a good year with business able to carry on as usual.

The **HoneyWorks** site has a new flower bed, Howard has added a pergola to the Herb Garden, the bench has been restored, the Garden Shed has been repainted, a small fountain installed in the pond and we now have access to a large greenhouse on the adjoining allotment of our partner Aletheia, whose charity members use our facilities from time to time. This means we can plant out our own plants rather than buying in. The plans include re-felting the Garden Shed, replenishing the pond, installing brick paving in front of the Training Centre. The team is Mike, Janette and Colin with help also from Howard.

Robin added that the Memorial Garden has been improved with a border and seat in remembrance of three members lost and 300 crocuses have been planted. Paul Johnson has refurbished the hive exhibition area with edging and chippings.

The **Buzzworks** site has three new volunteers, Allison, Rachel Lodge and Nathalie. The site has been transformed with new edging, substantial weeding and clearing and repainting outbuildings as well as Janet's on-going planting work. We are grateful to the new volunteers for their help including clearing out the pond.

### **Stall (Giorgio)**

Revenue is down, inevitably, but the stall remained the main source of income for 2020. There was a reduced number of stalls but deliveries supplemented income. The physical move to a location in the main market has been a benefit. As well as honey, we have sold other items including food wraps, masks and apple. The suppliers retain a share of this income.

Giorgio thanked the many volunteers who make it possible to run the stall successfully.

The plan is to re-focus the stall on the educational objectives of Buzzworks AH, to make this a much more visible aspect. Robin suggested considering whether an electronic display of bee activities could be added. The observation hive previously used is disruptive to the bees and laborious to bring to the stall. Mari suggested including more practical educational activities and we are still hoping to get a 3D bee which could be displayed.

### **Training (Paul)**

It is hoped that Taster Days can be reinstated, though these can only be held up to mid-September as they need to include inspecting hives. Anne and Paul will contact all those on the waiting list to assure them that we will be in touch as soon as Taster Days can be resumed.

One-to-one mentoring is also planned as two people are permitted to meet in the open air, possibly using Zoom sessions as well.

Paul J, Nathalie, Helen and Joanna have expressed an interest, and advertising could attract members of the public .

Robin explained how hives have been allocated to training, mentoring and research to fulfil the objective of promoting beekeeping.

Three alternative approaches to beekeeping are being explored, including less intrusion and more 'support' for the ways bees live naturally. Six bait hives have been installed across Hitchin as an alternative to collecting loose swarms. Paul noted that the bees have been less aggressive/defensive in 2020 and this may be due to a less 'managed' style.

## **7. AOB**

**Mari will obtain notes from the 'Bees without Borders' conference for circulation.**

They contain a lot of technical detail but could be of interest when considering approaches to beekeeping.

Mike suggested Zoom sessions on beekeeping themes.

Nathalie offered a Zoom session for children/families, on how to draw bees

Mari asked Andy if bee-related videos could be transferred and downloaded between devices (maybe)

Joanna reminded us all that we've agreed to refer to the 'Discovery Centre' rather than 'Classroom', reflecting the original aim of the building.

Anne asked the trustees to consider an annual subscription to Zoom as there were plans to use it more and it would also enable people unable to leave their homes (eg Mari) to stay involved more easily.

**Meeting closed at 12.07 pm**