

Relaunching the Devon Education Initiative

For most beekeepers, the main focus of their activities is on their own colonies and the enjoyment they get from interacting with them. This enjoyment is strongly linked, however, to the level of success they can reach compared with what they are trying to achieve. It is also linked to the social interaction gained by sharing experiences with other people.

This is why the DBKA's charitable objectives are:

- To further and promote the craft of beekeeping
- To advance the education of the public in the importance of bees in the environment.

With these objectives in mind, it was decided in 2018 to put the spotlight on education and training, and thus the Devon Education Initiative was born. The structure for delivering this was the Devon Education Sub-Committee (DESC).

Tony Lindsell chaired the first meeting and then Viv Thorn led it through the next few years. She acted as the link with the EC in reporting the recommendations that grew out of discussions between branch education representatives, and in formulating a strategy with a manageable implementation plan.

As with life in general, progress was suddenly interrupted by Covid restrictions in 2020. A Pan-Devon Beginners' Course offered a theory programme but, the risks and constraints of mixing socially caused difficulties in carrying out practical tuition at a local level. There has been a very mixed picture of what branches have been able to provide in supporting newcomers through the last couple of years.

So, now is a good time to revive the DESC. By pooling ideas, expertise, resources and facilities across the county we can help newer beekeepers to catch up with their predecessors. And help 'Improvers' to plug those gaps and improve faster.

The vision that the previous members of DESC held is expressed in the strategy document published on the DBKA website. As Devon Education Officer, the aspect that I wish to concentrate on first is that, "Every beekeeper is able to access the education resources they require to fulfil their beekeeping potential".

There are many ways of achieving 'beekeeping potential'. On Tuesday 17th January 2023, Branch Education Representatives will be able to have an input into the way forward. The Devon Education Sub-Committee will be meeting by Zoom 7.30-9.00pm. By the time you read this, details will have been sent out to the Chair, Secretary and nominated education co-ordinator of each branch.

Do you know who your branch representative is? If you have any views or ambitions that would usefully be put forward at this meeting, do let your representative know.

The Honey Bee Health Course (mentioned in the recent issue of Beekeeping magazine) is part of the DESC relaunch. The theory will be broadly covered with participants January-April 2023 but this needs practical follow up. Support will be offered through DESC to branch educators on BBKA best-practice guidelines so it is hoped that branches will play a key role in passing these skills on to their members at a local level.

There are still places on the course (see Nov/Dec Beekeeping for details). The dates of the 6 fortnightly Zoom sessions will be Tuesdays 31st January, 14th & 28th February, 14th & 28th March and 11th April. I look forward to seeing some of you there.

Kathy Lovegrove
Devon Education Officer
anemone1975@talktalk.net