Dear LBKA members,

In the light of the covid-19 pandemic and the behavioural responses required the Trustees have decided it has become unavoidable that we revise our events and activities programme for the foreseeable future and see if we can devise measures to help our beekeeping community continue to manage their bees, including collecting swarms.

In addition to LBKA interactions with external events and organisations which are being cancelled or shut down, we have to acknowledge and respect the fact that everything we do is carried out by members some of whom are categorised as “at risk”. As we understand it, the imminent requirement for those at risk is to self-isolate for up to 12 weeks. This is primarily for their own good but also for the good of the wider community so asking members if they are comfortable with taking a few calculated risks is not an option.

So, quite apart from whether planned events are cancelled or not, we have, with considerable regret, taken the decision to cancel everything now! That will of course hit our revenue hard but we will not face serious financial difficulty even if we went along with all our planned expenditure but received no revenue. We are looking into ways we can replace some of these events and activities in some form which is safe and so still deliver a programme for better beekeeping, better public understanding of bees and, better environment for bees and Londoners.

So far, gatherings in general have been cancelled: the immediate ones affecting us are Ascot, and Facebook but we expect others such as The Lambeth Country Show to follow. It will be particularly galling to cancel this year’s school programme, especially after all Martin’s incredible organisation and the unprecedented response from members volunteering on a scale this association has never achieved before. On the bright side, we feel this year’s expansion has brought about a very positive paradigm shift in membership engagement so we hope the effort will not have been entirely wasted.

The courses would very likely see dropout anyway but we are cancelling now because they would breach requirements of social distancing.

Other casualties include bee health day, summer social, monthly meetings though we perhaps do not have to act beyond 12 weeks at this point. Cancelling courses will of course mean there are no
new mentees. Elliot will be contacting all mentors to see if they are in a position to continue to mentor existing mentees should they so wish. This will of course depend on appropriate social distances and safe travel. All that may have to be reviewed if or when London is subjected to lockdown which may include a ban on all non-essential travel.

We are concerned that London’s 4,844 registered colonies do not get neglected, either through government measures restricting movement or through illness: the prospect of that many swarms going feral is not attractive.

We would like to encourage networking/bee-buddies or whatever to reduce the risk of hives being neglected at the critical time. We have contacted the GLA to see if this can count as permitted travel for beekeeping and swarm collections in any lockdown plans but, to be honest, it is unlikely that it will gain attention in the current context.

We will endeavour to keep you updated on all of the above.

Finally, the LBKA is a community: we can help each other, whether practically or socially. Please don’t be afraid to ask or slow to give support.

Stay well!

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