



The London Beekeepers' Association

LBKA News

March, 2021

We still have two winter lectures to go, but this month's Monthly Meeting turns its attention to the start of the new beekeeping season with a demonstration of the First Inspection. The Winter Lecture "The politics of pollination: how society has responded to the pollination crisis" will be on the Thursday of the following week.

Please check our announcements this month. If you want to offer paid services, do respond to our call to register these with us (p2). Spread the word about our Pollinator Fund (p4) and consider joining the committee. Also, we unfortunately received the sad news that member Leila Roy passed away last month.

Otherwise, thanks for the regular contributors for their regular contributions from Richard (p1), Howard (p6) and Mark (p7).

As ever, we're looking for more contributions from more members. Do email me if you can contribute anything including articles, photos and recipes.

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A big thank you to this month's contributors: **Richard Glassborow, David Hankins, Martin Hudson, Eugene McConville, Howard Nichols and Mark Patterson**. Would you like to join these esteemed contributors? If so, do contact me.

Happy beekeeping.

Aidan Slingsby, Editor, services@lbka.org.uk

From our Chair

Richard Glassborow
chair@lbka.org.uk

The title if this month's topic – if I used titles – would be, "No earlier than".

At this month's meeting, the committee agreed that it was time to start thinking about face to face activities again.

Any such meetings will, of course be compliant with the government's staged lifting of restrictions and there remains the overarching proviso that the covid pandemic continues to respond positively and control measures do not have to be extended or reintroduced. Caution remains but we thought we would make a virtue out of uncertainty, give ourselves something to look forward to but manage expectation and potential disappointment by accepting from the start that things might not work



A London Bee gathering pollen from cherry blossom in late February. "That tree was bee loud today", as William Butler Yeats would have said if he'd been in my back garden . Photo/caption: Eugene McConville.

out quite as planned. But if we don't start planning now, nothing will happen.

Nothing is fixed as yet and of course members have to make up their own minds about whether they feel comfortable with the opportunities. But here are a few things to consider:

From 29 March, people will be allowed to meet outdoors as long as they comply with the rule of 6. Although this relates to social meetings it looks like it could cover a broader category of meetings in apiaries (say mentoring) even though we have had groups legitimately "working" apiaries all along.

No earlier than 12 April "pubs are allowed to serve customers outside" but I am not sure of the status of a bee club pub social (group meeting). However, no earlier than 17th May groups of up to 30 can meet outdoors and no earlier than 21st June, all legal limits on social contact will be removed. So we need to start identifying pubs with outdoor space to accommodate a proper pub social.

We are hedging our bets and going for July to start organising face to face monthly meetings and a summer social in August. We are looking at dates with the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea to hold these at Holland Park.

In addition, RBKC have asked LBKA to be involved with the Borough's initiative to raise public awareness of pollinators and make environmental improvements which will become part of their Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP). Their initiative is called Bee Superhighway and it will be the first large scale collaboration with our own Bees and Flowers go Together initiative. Joint events will include planting in and around the Holland Park apiary, an apiary open-day and a honey taste and buy tent selling LBKA members' honey in July.

We have also just heard that our partners School Food Matters would like to organise school bee visits probably from May but obviously, with schools only returning this week there is inevitably still some uncertainty as to whether these can be face to face or virtual.

In the mean time we will of course stay at home as much as possible to starve the virus of opportunities. But at least we can dare to look forward.

Stay well.

Announcements

This is our official place for announcements. If you only read one section of the newsletter, it should be this one!

March's online Monthly Meeting and Pub Social

This month's Monthly Meeting will be on **Sunday 14th March** at 11:00 about the "first colony inspection of the year" (yes, it's coming to that time of year already!). We will be **specially-recording a first-inspection** to show at this meeting. We will give details of the conditions, equipment and procedure which you should consider when making your first inspection following the bees' winter dormancy. At the usual Zoom link (in the [Members' Area](#) and in your email).

The **Pub Social** will be on **Tuesday 23rd March** from 18:30 (Zoom link in the [Members' Area](#) and in your email).

April's Monthly Meeting will be on Sunday 11th April, on the all-important topic of swarm control.

Join the committee!

LBKA is a reasonably-sized organisation with (currently) over 200 members that is building a good reputation for its stance on beekeeping, the quality of its outreach activities and the quality of its advice. We need more committee members to enable us to do more. Don't worry if you don't know quite what role you might be able to have. You'll find your place! Please contact any member of the committee (see back page) for a chat.

Paid opportunities for members

Every now and then opportunities for paid work relating to beekeeping come to the committee's attention. It is policy to make these opportunities available to all members. However, from experience, the process of advertising the opportunities in the monthly Newsletter is not always timely for the work required. We are therefore proposing to use a "framework agreement" type process to identify members who are interested, able and have the relevant experience, skills/qualifications and resources (including insurances where relevant) to respond to different categories of services required on a hypothetical basis in advance of real opportunities arising. This will allow a more appropriate response time when specific requests for services come in but retain the openness and fairness to potential member suppliers.

In the first instance we are therefore inviting "expressions of interest" from members for the following categories of paid services should they be requested by potential client businesses, organisations (potentially including the LBKA), or individuals:



Leila Roy. Photo supplied by Florian Preschelt.

- Beekeeping, apiary management, consultancy and delivery, etc.
- Bee related ecological, environmental, land management, planting consultancy, design and delivery services
- Bee related educational consultancy and support, including content development and supply, etc

Any member wishing to respond to this invitation please contact Simon Saville in writing development@lbka.org.uk, clearly stating which category/categories you are interested in and a brief CV of relevant experience and or qualification and any insurances held (if relevant). You may then be invited to respond in further detail to specific hypothetical requirements.

Winter Lecture Schedule

The remaining two Winter Lectures this year are listed below. Joining details will be emailed to members a few days in advance of each lecture.

- **Thursday 18 March, 18:30:** "The politics of pollination: how society has responded to the pollination crisis" by Prof. Jeff Ollerton.
- **Wednesday 21 April, 6:30pm:** "The future of pollinator conservation in the UK: opportunities and challenges" by Prof. Jeff Ollerton

Prof. Jeff Ollerton is an ecological scientist and author and has already given a winter lecture to us. You can find them on our [website](#), available to members' only.

Those that we recorded can found on our [webpage](#) for members.

Leila Roy

LBKA member Leila Roy tragically and unexpectedly [passed away](#) at the end of February, following a

heart attack. Our thoughts are with her family and friends.

Allotment Agreements with Beekeepers

Following concerns last month over an apparent restriction in hives being held on allotments in Lewisham the LBKA contacted Lewisham Borough Council (LBC) to see if we could find out more.

It seems their Allotment Agreement dates from 2011, and is intended more as guidance. Also, the "2 hives + 1 Nuc rule" should have added "per plot". We have shared our own LBKA template agreement with LBC and they have said they will look at amending their own document in the light of ours. So there is some work to be done clarifying what is guidance and what is an Agreement but at least now it looks like we will be consulted.

We had a meeting on 10th March with Lewisham's Ecological Regeneration Manager, Eszter Wainright-Deri (under whose department this matter falls) and she is now aware of our concerns and seems keen to involve us if the agreements are revised.

We were also able to take the opportunity to share thoughts on our London Bee Situation report which seems to have been met with positive interest by LBC. We have been invited to give a presentation to a Wildlife conservation group in the borough.

So our proactive strategy for **responsible urban beekeeping in London** seems to be working.

Are you "good" with social media?

If you are good at communicating with social media, then you could help LBKA!

LBKA has a presence on all the main social media channels - Facebook, Twitter, Instagram - but we aren't currently using these channels as effectively as we could. We are looking for a Social Media Officer to take the lead in how these channels are used. Ideally, we would co-opt you onto the committee so that you're up-to-date with the latest discussions on key topics of interest.

Our social media channels already have an impressive reach, but we aren't using them very proactively to manage our communications. This is a good opportunity to help develop a profile of a local charity and its charitable objectives.

- Twitter: [@LondonBeeKeeper](https://twitter.com/LondonBeeKeeper)
"Serving bee keepers & conservation enthusiasts in London"
7,000+ followers
5,000+ tweets since 2012
- Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/>

[londonbeekeepersassociation/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/2512721609/)

Recently set up; little activity so far

- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2512721609/> (open site)

"Welcome to the open group London Beekeepers Association page. This page is not an official LBKA page but is managed by LBKA members as a means of public engagement, sharing of information and for discussion about beekeeping in London."

Public group, 2,800+ members

These channels have excellent potential to help us get our messages to key audiences, especially to non-members who have an interest in bees and beekeeping. Along with our excellent website, they are the public face of the Association – who we are, what we do, and what we stand for.

Please get in touch with Simon if you have an interest in getting involved: development@lbka.org.uk and 07572 612722.

LBKA Pollinator Fund

LBKA is now inviting members to apply for grants from the LBKA Pollinator Fund. This fund aims to support small community groups to improve their local environment for the benefit of bees and other pollinators.

From this fund, LBKA will offer grants of up to £1,000 to improve small areas. Grants can be offered for small stand-alone projects, or as match funding or seed funding towards larger projects. In the latter case the larger projects must aim to benefit pollinators.

Project proposals which promote the conservation of wild bees and other pollinators through provision of improved forage and of breeding habitats will be of particular interest to LBKA. For wild bees, breeding habitat provision can include the creation of nesting mounds for ground nesting bees, and bee hotels containing nesting tubes to provide homes for leafcutter and mason bees. For the benefit of other pollinators, projects could include the creation of loggeries for decaying timber nesting species, hoverfly lagoons as breeding habitat for other specific pollinators, and the planting of larval food plants for butterflies and moths. Projects that include the planting of early and late season forage for honey bees will be assumed to benefit other pollinators too.

Priority will be given to publicly accessible spaces. If your space is on a housing estate, allotment or other site with restricted public access, you might consider how receipt of a grant could enable you to increase public access to the site in future. For example, if it doesn't do so already, your site could hold open days or take part in London Open Garden events, giving the public the chance to visit the project and admire your work. If your site is within the grounds of a school, the educational benefits of your project will be weighted highly when your application is evaluated.



LBKA sees greater public access to improved pollinator habitats as an opportunity for public education and information-sharing. The installation of interpretation boards explaining the project and its aims, or providing more general information about London's pollinators, would be seen as a significant public benefit of any project.

For comprehensive guidance on the application process, and an application form, please contact treasurer@lbka.org.uk.

Bee Improvement and Bee Breeders Association (BIBBA) talks

Excellent [series of talks](#) from the Bee Improvement and Bee Breeders Association (BIBBA).

BBKA Spring Convention on 16-18 April

Put this date in your diaries. The BBKA Spring Convention will be entirely online and will offer a mix of practical and scientific lectures and presentations, on the topics most requested, directed at a range of beekeeping experience, presented by the very best of speakers.

The electronic Convention programme will be available on the BBKA website from later in March, with full details of speakers and their talks. Entry to the Virtual Tradeshow (aka "The Marketplace") will be free and this will be everyone's opportunity to browse the latest beekeeping kit from multiple suppliers, all under one 'virtual' roof and to take advantage of special Convention offers.

Christmas Quiz winner

Congratulations to **Mark Patterson** for winning the Christmas Quiz. Elliot arranged a very special prize – a bespoke glass bee by [#CrazedPurpleGlass](#).

Contribute to the Newsletter

You'll see a few gaps in our regular contributions. If you can help with any of these (not necessarily every month) please drop me line. We'd welcome contributions from



Congratulations to Mark Patterson for winning the Christmas Quiz. Elliot arranged a very special prize – a bespoke glass bee by #CrazedPurpleGlass.

more members and would love it if you could propose a new regular feature. We usually end up with 300 or so members and the newsletters are [available to all on our website](#). Do email me if you can contribute anything including articles, photos and recipes.

We're looking for members to summarise the issues discussed in a digestible way. Please contact services@lbka.org.uk if you may be able to help in some months.

Old announcements from February

Check our [previous newsletters](#) or contact services@lbka.org.uk for more details.

BBKA Bee Basic: If you're a beekeeper and haven't yet done the BBKA Bee Basic certification, please consider doing it. We will help you prepare for it. See Howard's piece on page 7 of [January's newsletter](#) which also outlines other aspects of LBKA's education programme.

Old announcements from January

"Bee Banter" WhatsApp group: The join link is in the [Members' Area](#) and in your welcome email and **you can turn off notifications, if the traffic becomes too much for you.**

Old announcements from December

New committee. Our new committee is the same as last year, but Annie McGeoch replaces Natalie as

Secretary **and** Martin as Events Coordinator. A big welcome to Annie and thanks to Natalie and Martin for the work they did whilst on the committee.

AGM. Our AGM was on 11th November. The previous AGM minutes, Annual Statement of Accounts, and the Trustees' Annual Report were presented and accepted by the meeting. A new committee was confirmed with all posts being unopposed. Finally, we presented the draft "LBKA Position on Sustainable Beekeeping in London" document that was previously circulated to members. The meeting formally expressed support for the draft document and instructed the Trustees to finalise the paper and disseminate it to all BKAs and any other interested bodies in Greater London.

Do you have any announcements?

If you've any announcements for the next issue of LBKA News, please send to Aidan at services@lbka.org.uk.

February's Committee meeting

Here, we keep you up to date with what the committee discuss at our monthly committee meetings (and what keeps us awake at night). Let us know if you can help or have any suggestions that might help.

Aidan Slingsby
services@lbka.org.uk

Richard and Simon reported that we are continuing to consult more widely on our "London Bee Situation" report by circulating to other Beekeeping Associations in London. As part of this, we are also helping inform local council policy. We are talking to Lewisham Borough Council about allotment beekeeping. We are also talking to the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea about their "Bee Superhighway" and input into their education programming, starting with a talk on "bees and flowers go together" by Richard and possibly a honey-tasting day in summer if the situation allows.

We discussed how we might start to plan some in-person events, which might include an Open Day at our Holland Park apiary, some Introductory courses in July or August, an in-person Summer social and resumption of monthly meetings at Holland Park.

Finally, we discussed the committee's capacity and agreed that we need a bigger committee. We will invite members to consider joining.

Last month's Monthly Meeting: Beyond the Basics

What happened at our meeting last month.

Guest Speaker Bob Smith from Medway Beekeepers talked to us about "Beyond the Basics".

We need volunteers willing to help write these sections. Please contact services@lbka.org.uk if you may be able to help in some months.

March in the Apiary

Where we should be with our colonies at this time of year.

Howard Nichols
education@lbka.org.uk

March is a time of increasing activity within the hive but it all depends upon the weather. Assuming the weather improves then the colony at the end of March should be substantially different from the one at the beginning. March days can include warmer, sunny days, which encourage plants to flower early, and bees to forage. The weather can just as easily revert back to cold. The former causes the bees to produce more brood and the latter to retreat back to a cluster. Unfortunately, it is a beekeeping fact, that more colonies die out in March than in any other month of the year.

The main job of the beekeeper is still to keep an eye on stores. Old "winter" bees are dying off and new bees are being born. Food reserves are decreasing but demand for food is substantially increasing. The bees will be using energy flying on warmer days but mainly bringing in pollen, not nectar. They also need to keep the brood at a higher temperature (about 35°C) which also uses more energy. Stores can quickly be depleted in March and early April. It is a statistical beekeeping fact that more colonies die of starvation in March than at any other month.

The first warm day from the start of March is an opportunity to have a quick look inside the hive. If so, then this will constitute the 1st inspection of the new season. The new colony card should be made up and inspection details recorded. Minimum temperature should be 10°C for a quick look but without taking out brood frames. If there is an exceptionally warm day with the temperature 14°C or more than a detailed colony

inspection may be made. Otherwise, leave this until April.

If an inspection is not possible, then observing the colony entrance can provide invaluable information. If the bees are bringing in pollen, purposefully entering and leaving (flying a beeline) then these are good signs. If the bees are aimless, listless or without purpose on a warm day then, prima facie, all may not be well.

This is a good time to monitor the mite drop. Leave the inserts in for a week and count the mite drop. If > 2 mites per day then some action will be needed in Spring. If > 7 mites per day then action is immediately required. It is to be hoped that all our members will have treated for varroa last autumn and / or winter and so will not find themselves with a large mite drop. The National Bee Unit produces an excellent booklet [Managing Varroa](#) which is available for free download. There is also comprehensive information about varroa on the NBU website, including an on-line varroa count calculator at <http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/>.

Other sundry matters

Siting your bees Those who have not yet acquired bees (but will do so) should prepare the hive and site. If acquiring bees by means of the purchase of a nucleus from a supplier then the order should have been placed by now. Demand often exceeds supply.

Formulate a beekeeping plan for the season This need not be elaborate and may be such as improving swarm control, attempting a new manipulation, maximising honey production (ensuring there is the maximum number of flying bees in the colony when the honey flow starts), etc. The opportunities are endless.

Brood disease Whatever plan you formulate may I ask that you specifically address the matter of brood diseases. E.F.B. is currently at an unprecedented level in London and it is good beekeeping practice to devote 2 colony inspections per season exclusively to brood disease inspections. The best times are early spring and mid-summer when the honey flow is in progress. This is because the bees are overstretched at these times and cannot always efficiently remove the dead larvae. It is even better to do this inspection jointly with another beekeeper as two pairs of eyes are better than one, although this may not be possible due to Covid social interaction restrictions at the present time.

Death. On a sad note, if you find your bees are dead then it is imperative to close the entrance to prevent robbing. Make a note of what you observe then remove and destroy dead bees and frames. Sterilise the hive parts. It is important to try to find out why the bees have died. Winter and early spring colony losses seem to average 20% to 30% so you are not alone. It does not always mean it's the beekeeper's fault but it is essential to analyse and learn. Examples of reasons include, but are not limited to, the varroa mite (the number 1 offender), lack of stores, damp / inadequate

hive ventilation, site situated in a frost pocket, failing queen or poorly mated queen, too small a colony going into winter. The list goes on.

Look to the future. On a more optimistic note, the beekeeping season arrives in March. We have several eventful months ahead. I sincerely hope that all of us have a productive season and achieve whatever aims and goals we aspire to with our bees!

Focus on Forage

Mark tells us what's in flower at this time of year. This article is reprinted from last year.

Mark Patterson
forage@lbka.org.uk

March is officially the first month of spring for us in the UK. Although we've had some warm days, it's been pretty wet and cold recently. The first of the spring flowers are already putting on a colourful show of yellows, purples and shades of white. **Snowdrops** are starting to pass their best, having flowered in large numbers since late January. The early flowering **crocus** species are currently looking at their best across most of London. The later flowering large flowered crocus varieties are just starting to join the display too. These and other spring bulbous plants include **Winter Aconite**, **Anemone blanda**, **Squill** and **Muscari**. These are valuable early sources of pollen for bees.

Garden plants important to bees this month include the **Hellebores** (the hybrid Hellebores in my garden are particularly popular with bees at the moment), **Pulmonaria** and **Wallflowers**. Both the biennial bedding wallflowers and short lived perennial varieties are attractive to bees, but it's the Everlasting Wallflower *Bowles Mauve* that is flowering best at present; the others will put on a fantastic show towards the end of March and into April.

Several Spring flowering trees are important to bees and these include **White Poplar**, **Willow**, and **Hazel**. The large Hazel tree in my apiary has been flowering since January but is at its peak now. The willow and **white beam** catkins are just starting to open. One of the best small willows for gardens is **Salix caprea Kilmarnock** which is a pussy willow type with large fluffy catkins which become covered in bright lemon yellow pollen. All manner of bees adore it. Last spring whilst cycling through Archbishops Park *en route* to the LBKA monthly meeting, I passed a trio of these dwarf weeping trees which were covered in **honey bees**, **Ashy Mining bees**, **Painted Mining bees** and several **bumblebees**. These trees all have pollen with a high protein and fatty acids content valuable to bees rearing brood and for queens fattening up ready to begin laying.



Primrose.



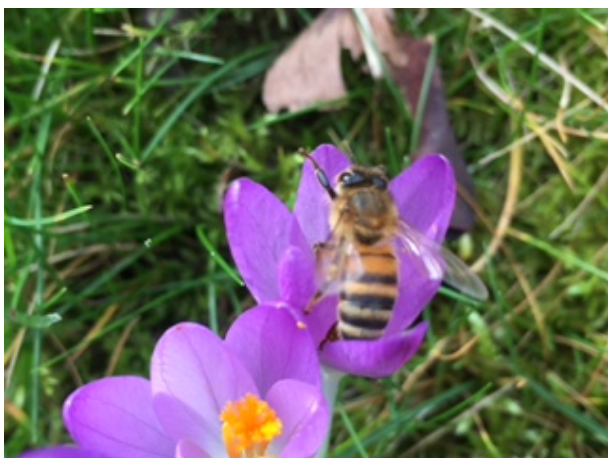
Winter aconite.



Wild damson.



Buff tailed queen on crocus.



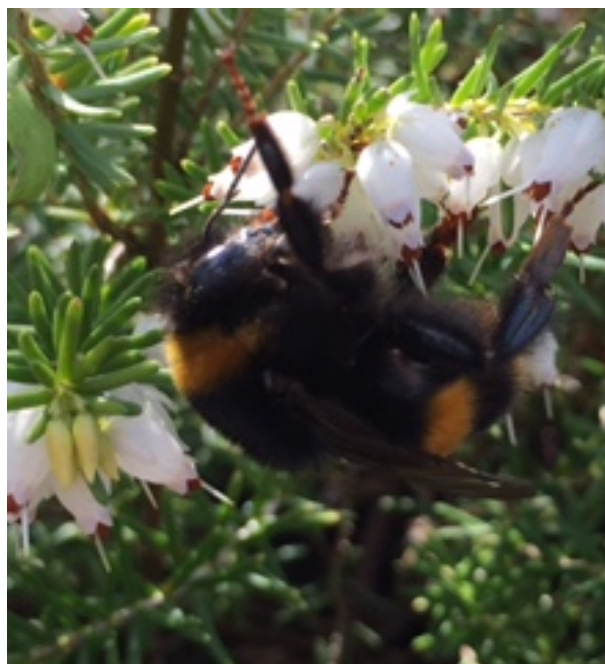
Honey bee on crocus.

Shrubs flowering this month attractive to bees include **flowering currant**, **Sarcococca**, **blackthorn**, **flowering quince** and **camelia**. At last month's RHS early Spring Flower Show I bought 2 new camelias for my garden, a light pink one and a dark pinkie red one called "Adeyaka". Both are open single flowered varieties which flower from Late February through to Early May and are "self cleaning" varieties which mean the blooms drop as soon as they are pollinated, or if the blooms become frosted resulting in a neat looking shrub without the tainted frost damaged petals which can look unsightly.

Other flowers making an appearance include **lesser celandine**, **sweet violet**, **cowslip**, **primrose**, **white deadnettle**, **bugle**, **ground ivy** and the first of the **Spanish bluebells** (*Hyacinthoides Hispanica*) whose blue-green pollen Honey bees will collect. white dead-nettle in particular is a valuable wild plant for bumble bees and some of the longer-tongued solitary bees. Its pollen is rich in protein and fats.

Jobs in the garden

This time of year presents us with the last opportunity to lift and divide herbaceous perennials before they start to put on significant growth. I've just lifted and split my



Buff tailed queen on winter heather.

Helleniums, **hardy geraniums**, **Japanese anemones** and **sedum spectabile**.

Plant out herbaceous perennials that were grown from seed or cuttings last year. Get them in the ground now so they have time to spread out their roots ahead of the coming growing season. Less hardy plants may still require protection with fleece. Have fleece available to protect the blooms of soft fruits. My **peach** and **nectarine** buds are starting to open – will I get any fruit this year?

Early March is the last opportunity to prune apples and pears. Stone fruits such as peach, plum and apricot should be pruned in late summer. When pruning apples and pear resist the urge to cut back too much growth which the trees respond to by putting on excess vigorous regrowth. Unlike plum and other stone fruits which flower on the previous year's wood, Pip fruits require 2 year old material to develop flower/fruit buds.

Members' marketplace

This section is for members offering beekeeping items or services to members or requesting items. Items could include nucs, wax and honey. Email services@lbka.org.uk to add something here.

Frank Ryan: I make beehive stands from strong premium-grade materials, painted an attractive holly colour using bee-friendly paint. Each stand is made to



Frank's hive stands.

measure a for comfortable working height and has the option to expand from a single stand to a double. The dimensions allow for ratchet-strapping. Contact Frank on 07877388933 or frankryan60@hotmail.com.

Upcoming events

Sunday 14th March: Monthly meeting: First inspection

11:00-13:00 at Same zoom link as usual (in the Members' Area of the website and sent to your email).

What to look for in your first inspection of the year.

Thursday 18th March: Winter Lecture: The politics of pollination

18:30 at ONLINE (members will be emailed the link beforehand)

The lecture "The politics of pollination: how society has responded to the pollination crisis" will be given by Prof. Jeff Ollerton.

Tuesday, 23rd March: Pub Social

18:30 onwards at via Zoom (see your email for a link)

Our ONLINE pub social in the historical surroundings of your own home. Bring your own beer. Using the usual Pub Social Zoom link in the Members' Area of the website and sent to your email.

Wednesday 21st April: Winter Lecture: the future of pollinator conservation in the UK

18:30 at ONLINE (members will be emailed the link beforehand)

The lecture "the future of pollinator conservation in the UK: opportunities and challenges" will be given by Prof. Jeff Ollerton.

Committee

Please do not hesitate to get in touch with a member of the committee if you have any questions, requests, suggestions. We are:

- **Chair:** Richard Glassborow, chair@lbka.org.uk
- **Treasurer:** David Hankins, treasurer@lbka.org.uk
- **Secretary/Events:** Annie McGeoch, admin@lbka.org.uk
- **Education:** Howard Nichols education@lbka.org.uk
- **Membership:** Aidan Slingsby, services@lbka.org.uk
- **Apiaries:** Tristram Sutton, apiaries@lbka.org.uk
- **Development:** Simon Saville, development@lbka.org.uk
- **Mentoring:** Elliot Hodges, mentor@lbka.org.uk
- **Resources:** Will Fry, resources@lbka.org.uk

Our website is <http://www.lbka.org.uk/> and the pictures are in the same order as the names above.

