



Scottish Beekeepers' Association

Guidelines on Keeping Bees on Business & other Organisational Premises.

Introduction

Many business (and other organisational) managers have expressed an interest in keeping bees at their premises. It is important that business managers know what the implications are of having bees on their premises in what is usually a public location.

This document published by the Scottish Beekeepers' Association (SBA), Scotland's leading honeybee charity, aims to provide some guidance for business managers and outlines various ways in which businesses and other organisations can become involved in "helping the bees".

Keeping bees anywhere is a serious responsibility and roofs on business premises provide a particularly challenging environment. Beekeepers must consider the bees and the general public. Important factors include careful positioning of hives, 24 hour accessibility and storage and the availability of sufficient forage (flowers) for the bees. A further requirement is that the bees are managed by a beekeeper with sufficient experience and time to be able to control swarming attempts and to ensure that the bees always have sufficient food.. It is essential that these matters are resolved satisfactorily before arrangements are accepted as being suitable.

How to support bees and beekeeping.

There are numerous ways in which business managers can help beekeeping at local & national level:

- Joining the SBA as an Institutional member & encouraging staff to join as a Friend.
- Helping local beekeeping associations by giving donations to fund training courses and to set up training apiaries. There are 45 such local associations, affiliated to the SBA in Scotland. They are often great sources of free advice on the suitability of sites and situations for honey bees. Contact details for these associations can be found by clicking on the map of Scotland on the SBA web-site.
- Inviting a local experienced beekeeper(s) to place a hive on the business premises and to look after the bees thereafter. Some funding may be required for travel and incidental costs. This can usually be accomplished quickly if a willing local beekeeper can be found and is likely to be possible without the restrictive contracts of commercial operations offering such services.
- Training up members of the organisation's staff in the art of beekeeping and then purchasing bees, hives and other equipment. This is likely to take a couple of years before the staff members are capable & suitably qualified to look after bees in a public place.

Helping beekeeping associations

The SBA and its Affiliated Beekeeping Associations (ABA's) undertake many tasks associated with looking after honeybees. Most of these tasks involve training (and examining & certifying) beekeepers, but we are also involved in making the public aware of the value to the environment of honeybees (& other pollinating insects). Financial support can be rewarded with photo opportunities, visits to local apiaries, donations of honey and the provision of speakers for staff presentations.

Inviting a local experienced/qualified beekeeper to place one or two hives on the business premises.

The SBA would advise that only beekeepers who are suitably experienced and meet certain criteria should be considered.

Beekeepers should be members of their local association and of the SBA, (the SBA provides insurance cover, including public liability insurance). They should have kept bees successfully for at least 3 years and have obtained the SBA Basic Beekeeping Certificate. They should also have an apiary of their own, to provide back-up and flexibility in the event of bees having to be moved.

They should provide contact details, including a telephone number through which they can always be reached. Similar details of a named alternative beekeeper meeting the same conditions should also be available.

Consideration should be given to drawing up an agreement between the business and the beekeeper which makes clear the responsibilities of both.

A risk assessment should be undertaken and kept up to date. This should be kept brief. A table based on the Health & Safety Executive's 5 point plan is best.

Training up members of the business's staff in beekeeping

This is likely to be a longer term project and an outline timetable might be as follows:

- Year 1 – Staff members (at least two to provide for back-up) attend a local ABA training course. These are courses, spanning several weeks of a few hrs per week, with additional apiary “live hive” visits to practice handling bees.
- Later on that year, obtain a Nucleus (a beginner colony) of bees, whilst being mentored by an experienced local beekeeper, perhaps at the experienced beekeepers apiary rather than on the business premises at this stage.
- Year 2 or 3, further study and preparation for taking the SBA Basic Beekeeping examination (a 1 hour exam, ½ hr manipulating a live hive and ½ hr of oral questioning). Assuming the candidate(s) successfully obtain the certificate, they would now have sufficient proficiency to keep bees on the businesses own premises, but should always have a second apiary to which the bees can be moved in case a colony becomes overly “grumpy”

Useful sources of information:

www.scottishbeekeepers.org.uk As well as lots of useful information, e.g. Downloads on obtaining bees, the structure of the SBA education system (at Learn - Bee Basics, see video clips of beekeeping), there is also a list of all the Scottish local affiliated beekeeping associations and a contact point for these local associations (the Secretary)

Bees should always be obtained from local sources to avoid importing pests and diseases into local areas.

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Scottish Beekeepers' Association – Supporting Scotland's Bees and Beekeepers