

STATEMENT

12 August 2013

Bees in the City

The renaissance in beekeeping in recent years has come as a result of much increased public awareness of the role and importance of bees in the environment and in pollination, to provide secure food production. Many people have taken up the craft, wishing to help repair the losses experienced over the years. The [BBKA](#)'s membership has swelled from 11,000 in 2008 to more than 23,000 today. Many of these new beekeepers are town based and so there has been a substantial increase in the number of hives in the urban environment. The urban environment was no doubt under-rated in terms of suitability and capacity to sustain honeybee colonies in the recent past. The relative abundance of trees, gardens and green open spaces in our towns and cities offers good mixed sources of pollen and nectar for foraging bees.

However, the urban scene is not necessarily a paradise for bees. A very high percentage of the urban area is barren bricks and mortar, concrete and tarmac and many grassy open spaces offer little of interest to bees, so forage is limited and consequently the number of hives that can be sustained limited too. To date, no one has determined these limits but there are signs that honey crops can be poor, which is an index of both bad weather conditions for bees and limited nectar availability.

Another key factor when keeping bees in towns and cities is the siting of hives and their management to ensure that there is minimal nuisance to neighbours and the general public. Proper training in beekeeping skills is vital to be able to assess suitability of apiary sites and to be able to manage colonies to minimise swarming and the likelihood for stinging events involving the public.

One thing that everyone in the urban environment can strive to do is to improve that environment for bees by planting bee-friendly flowers be it in pots and window boxes through to garden or park-scale planting. For those who wish to get more directly involved then joining a local beekeeper's association and learning the necessary skills is the way forward.

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About the BBKA:

With more than 23,000 members, the British Beekeepers Association (BBKA) is the leading organisation supporting honey bees and beekeepers within the UK. It aims to promote and further the craft of beekeeping and to advance the education of the public in the importance of bees in the environment. For more information see www.bbka.org.uk