

Croydon Division Chair's report 2024-25

Overall it has been a good year, but with challenges ahead.



**CROYDON
BEEKEEPERS**

Training & Education

Our training programme has continued to expand thanks to the efforts of our training coordinator Debbie Burney. Debbie is stepping down from this post after three years. She has made such difference, particularly in our offering for beekeepers above the Basic level.

Our winter course attracted 18 participants. The team has developed a great formula for this whereby we invite different members to be the main presenter each week. The course is fundamental to keeping the division alive by feeding in new members.

The first One Year Supported Beekeeping scheme at Hartley Down drew to a successful close, we've not started a new cohort this year due to resource limitations.

Four CBKA members took the Basic Assessment, three members took the Honeybee Health assessment. In addition, four young candidates from Mrs Burney's Bee Club took the Basic. All candidates were successful.

Our Winter meetings were well attended with a fascinating selection of speakers. Our programme combined home-grown talent with internationally recognised experts.

Our module study group, organised jointly with Reigate BKA, has continued to achieve great results. This year members have studied modules 1 and 6, modules 2 and 7 are planned for the coming winter.

Events

We've had a well-organised events team that has involved a few more members and covered several local fairs including Woodcote Junior Christmas Market, Sanderstead Horticultural Show, Croydon Green Spaces, Beaumont School, Wickstock Festival

Honey shows

Having moved into a bigger hall in 2024, the honey show committee made our 2025 event even better. Whilst keeping the tradition of competitive classes for our members, the team was able to increase the appeal to the general public, with children's activities, honey tasting, various stalls, information, and honey for sale.

Our members did well also at the Surrey Show, South of England Honey Show, and National Honey Show.

Communication

Maintaining newsletter momentum is not easy, but this has been sustained with 12 issues full of information for our members.

We've made a great start on building our Social media presence, targetted mostly at the general public to increase awareness of the environment and the work that we do. After a year we have 150 follows on Instagram.

Honey yields

It's been a mixed year for our members. Many have reported a record year for honey yields, whilst others have not been able to take a honey crop at all. The honey this year does seem to have a particularly characterful taste, so overall 2025 in a good vintage.

Apiary

It's been a challenging but enjoyable year for our Hartley Down apiary team. Good weather has meant that all the planned meetings went ahead, however a number of the team have lost loved ones during this period, which has limited what could be done.

The first "Soup, Scrape & Scorch" event was held in December and proved to be a good formula for getting members to help with cleaning tasks. Another was held during the summer.

A focus on H&S, lead by the annual audit in December has seen a lot of improvements made.

The queen rearing programme is going well, with new equipment aquired, and 5 nucs containing our own queens going into winter.

Outreach

One of the great successes of the year has been our new bursary scheme. This was set up to increase awareness of the importance of pollinators, and demonstrate that there are opportunities to make a difference (even) in Croydon. Small grants have been given to two local organisations to enable them to set up pollinator-friendly planting schemes: Friends of Hayling Park Grove, and The Hive Community Garden in Coulsdon.

Future strategy

After a period of expanding our reach and looking for new opportunities, it is now time to consolidate the strength that we have. Some of our committee are "retiring":

Debbie Burney, who has done so much to push forward our agenda to increase the scope of our training, especially for those who already have the Basic qualification.

Anna Slade, who took on the role of Secretary when we needed it, and was also apiary liaison person, as well as leading our JLAH activity for a while.

Con Fernandez, who has helped give us a better approach to managing Health & Safety at Hartley Down.

In addition, there are tasks that were previously taken on by committee members for whom we need to find new owners: SBKA Representative, Honey Show Sub-committee Chair.

It is disappointing that we have not been able to persuade any new members to join the committee, and that will limit what we are able to achieve over the next year. As with other voluntary organisation, more load is falling on fewer shoulders.

Concluding remarks

I would like to thank again our committee, and all those members who have made an active contribution to CBKA this year.

We are looking forward to hosting our Surrey BKA colleagues at the AGM in December.

Bob Barnes. Chair, Croydon Beekeepers Association
November 2025