RBKA AGM 2026

Annual report for SBKA AGM

Executive summary

RBKA reports a strong year of membership, honey production, education and community engagement, underpinned by extensive volunteer commitment. Membership remains circa 190, the combined honey harvest reached 2,700 lb, and the Chair's report records honey sales exceeding £23,000 so far this year. Competition success and formal recognition of community service further strengthened the Association's profile.

The priorities for the year ahead are to continue a full and varied offer for our RBKA membership, maintain apiary facilities and equipment improvements, continue with our excellent education offer and member engagement, maintain our bees health and yellow legged Asian hornet awareness, refresh safeguarding arrangements and engage and educate the general public and local services and councillors on all things bees.

Financial performance and honey sales

Honey remains RBKA's largest income source. The separate honey-sales report records retail income above £12.5k, shows, fêtes and local sales circa £9k,

Retail distribution expanded through new outlets including Routine Coffee, which takes Mickleham honey, and the Friends of East Surrey Hospital shop. Shows delivered strong sales alongside public education. Continued volunteer cover is essential to sustaining the events and jarring programme.

Membership, apiaries and bee health

Henfold summer sessions regularly attracted more than 50 members and visitors, supporting practical learning, mentoring and engagement with local representatives.

The apiaries maintained complementary roles: Henfold provided training; Vigo focused on queen rearing and nuc production; Buckland and Brockham supported honey production; Bletchingley focus on varroa-resistant bee behaviours; and Mickleham focused on honey production. New poly hives at Bletchingley, cedar hives and shed refurbishment at Mickleham, and the continuing relationship with RGS Surrey Hills school supported this work.

Our co-ordinated out-apiary reporting and worked with our Quartermaster and treasury team on financial management. A small discretionary budget allowed Apiary Managers to make essential purchases promptly. Spring and summer Nosema clinics, supported colony-health assessment; members are encouraged to submit samples next spring ahead of the 2027 season.

An additional spring extraction and a major summer extraction delivered the combined harvest despite temperatures above 34°C. A subsequent review identified improvements, and arrangements are under way to purchase a recommended 20-frame electric extractor using the Lord Hanson Trust donation.

Yellow-legged Asian hornet co-ordinators-maintained member guidance. BuzzCopper demonstrations and access to early production models supported awareness of detection technology, while our YLAH lead shared first-hand learning from Jersey.

Education and member engagement

All 10 Basic assessment candidates passed, achieving four distinctions and six credits. Assessors praised the depth of knowledge. and club-owned Zoom and Google Drive facilities now hold recordings and course documents rather than relying on members' private accounts.

We are delighted our course lead and support are willing to continue. Five people have expressed interest in the 2027 Basic assessment, a WhatsApp administration group has been established, and a mentor from the successful 2026 cohort is planned. Teaching is scheduled to begin on 5 April 2027 for 13 weeks, with a mock Basic at Henfold on 5 June and the assessment on 3 July.

The June Taster Day attracted 23 delegates and excellent feedback. The 2027 Winter Course will move in-house led by RBKA speakers; the course is near full. Candle-making and mead-making workshops continued to build confidence and participation in show classes, including among social members. Lars Chittka's October talk and book signing were well attended, with invitations extended to other Surrey divisions.

The Bees Knees Tea Party recognised volunteers and their partners across the Association's activities. The successful inaugural Christmas Quiz in December 2025 will be followed by a second event at Henfold on 2 December 2026, with partners welcome. A May gathering at Henfold supported the National Honey Show's King's Award for Voluntary Service celebration with attendees from across the UK.

Community profile and recognition

RBKA retained the Vincent Cup at the Surrey Honey Show at Denbies in September 2026, with strong participation and member successes, including junior member.

RBKAs own show was well supported with external judge Claire O'Brien. At the National Honey Show, RBKAs entered the decorative display class with a King's Award-themed decorative display and won first place and the Ross Rose Bowl. The display's glass stands are available for future use.

RBKA had a busy local and county show programme. We also developed social-media content, grew Facebook followers to 1,705 and began building Instagram. Visits from Rebecca Paul MP and the Mayor of Reigate & Banstead showcased the training apiary and opened potential community-funding opportunities.

The Swarm Collection Team received formal recognition from Reigate & Banstead Borough Council for its longstanding service to residents and businesses. These activities reinforce RBKA's public-education and community-service role.

Facilities, investment and safeguarding

The cracked waste-water tank requires replacement. Quotations were obtained and a contract awarded, with work expected to commence in November 2026; SBKA has been kept informed. An external noticeboard has been installed for emergency information and member news. Accessibility improvements are being explored, including possible support from a councillors' community fund.

A review of Container 1 and pavilion storage identified equipment for retention, disposal or for sale in the 2027 RBKA spring auction. Wider rationalisation will continue alongside preparations for the next season.

The safeguarding report identifies governance work required. Some training has taken place; committee training has not yet been rolled out. The updated Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct await finalisation by the Surrey Safeguarding Lead and approval by the SBKA Committee before incorporation into RBKA documentation.

The safeguarding lead also reports that regular junior attendance at apiary meetings will require Enhanced DBS checks for some members working with under-18s, while distinguishing this from one-off talks to children's groups. The detailed requirements and their application are currently being reviewed for implementation in 2027.

Acknowledgements and remembrance

RBKA recognised Karen Ford's nine years of leadership at Henfold training apiary as she handed over to Laura Wilbraham. Mike Hill received honorary membership following his retirement as President, and Bob Maurer assumed the presidency at the 2025 AGM.

The Association remembers Richard Woodhouse for his longstanding service, particularly the Reigate market stall and swarm collection, and John Stevens, a

founding member with membership number 107 who died in July. Both are remembered with gratitude and affection.

On behalf of the committee, the Chair thanks every member and volunteer for the collective effort behind the year's achievements. Continued commitment will support the apiaries, welcome new beekeepers and sustain RBKA's role as a place to learn, contribute and belong.

Sue Scates
Chair