

LBKA position on sustainable beekeeping in London

Following deliberation among members of the findings of an internal [report](#) on the “London Bee Situation”, the LBKA formally confirms its position to promote responsible and sustainable beekeeping in London. We use “sustainable” as both (1) supporting the continued practice of beekeeping in London, and (2) sustainable interactions within London’s urban biodiversity.

1. The LBKA recognises there are many benefits from urban beekeeping, including the well-being of Londoners through engagement, understanding, wonder, and respect for the natural world.
2. The LBKA recognises that colony densities in some parts of London are probably out of balance with forage availability and that these high densities may contribute to increased susceptibility to pests and pathogens.
3. Research shows that honey bees compete with wild bees for resources. More research is needed, but the LBKA recognises that beekeepers have a responsibility to manage honey bees in a sustainable relationship with biodiverse ecosystems.
4. In these respects there are in London four factors to balance:
 - a. The numbers and distribution of honey bee colonies,
 - b. The quality, availability and distribution of habitat and forage,
 - c. Wild bees and other pollinating insects sharing the environment, and
 - d. Different types of beekeeping, e.g. small-scale beekeeping; beekeepers with multiple apiaries; work, school or community group beekeeping; and commercial operations.
5. These factors vary by location, and imbalances occur, mainly through lack of awareness.
6. The prevailing “save the bees” narrative is often based on poor, misleading or absent information about bees and their needs. It can imply that keeping honey bees will “help bees”, which is not necessarily the case. This is probably one of the main drivers behind the continuous increase of honey bees in London.

These imbalances, though often unintended, can lead to issues in terms of bee welfare, wildlife conservation and social interaction (e.g. swarms in areas of high population).

The LBKA is committed to promoting better understanding and appropriate and effective solutions for helping bees (all bees and pollinators).

The LBKA is just one of many beekeeping interests in London. We recognise that there are no quick fixes, but we hope that sharing information and our concerns will be a first step towards achieving more responsible and sustainable beekeeping in London. The immediate aim is to stop the situation getting worse.

Our next steps are to:

- Actively seek allies and influence,
- Promote evidence-based understanding of the situation, and
- Further develop and promote the LBKA Guidelines for Responsible and Sustainable Urban Beekeeping in London.

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