Chairs November ’26 Newsletter

Hi all, welcome to my November Newsletter, which is a change of format this month as the Chairs annual report and Secretary’s annual report cover most of my usual topics. Due to the bad weather, the AGM had to be postponed and it took place on Sunday November the 1st. The committee lost Gary P and Heather who stood down this year and I thank them for all their work for the association and wish them well for the future. We welcome Gary B and Nicola to the committee and look forward to working with them in the coming year.

The 2026 Honey Show

A reminder that the closing date for entries for the Honey Show is midnight, Sunday 15th November 2026.There is a lot for me to do after that date and therefore it is hard and fast. I will not be able to accept any entries after that date has expired.

3. Complete your entry form and take a photo of it and send me the photo and I will print it.

The number of entries to date are looking good, but like everything in life there’s room for improvement.

The timetable for the Honey Show will be sent out on Monday 16th and again the deadlines and times will be strictly adhered to.

There is a class for everyone in this show, so please let’s make it the best show ever for our Judge Paul Boyle, who is not only an internationally acclaimed Judge, but is coming to us from the Irish Republic.

Things to do in November

In November, your active beekeeping season is officially over. Your primary focus right now must shift to external monitoring, hive security, and food checks, as internal inspections should completely stop to allow your bees to maintain their warm winter cluster.

Because Wigtownshire has a maritime climate prone to high humidity, strong coastal winds, and damp winters, your tasks this month are specifically geared toward protecting the colony from moisture and physical winter damage.

1. External Monitoring Only

- **Leave the boxes closed:** As temperatures drop, bees huddle together in a tight, basketball-shaped "winter cluster" to keep the queen and themselves warm. Opening the hive breaks this seal, lets crucial heat escape, and can easily chill and kill the colony
- **Clear the entrances:** Check the hive entrances periodically. Use a small stick or wire to gently clear away any dead bees that have accumulated behind the mouse guard, ensuring the remaining bees still have ventilation and a clear path for brief cleansing flights on warmer days.

2. "Heft" the Hives for Food Stores

- **Check the weight:** Periodically lift (heft) the back of the hive with one hand to gauge its weight.
- **Emergency feeding:** If a hive feels light, **do not feed liquid sugar syrup**, as bees cannot process it in cold weather and it adds dangerous moisture to the hive. Instead, place a block of fondant or baker's candy directly over the hole in the crown-board so they can access it safely. Of course, supplies for the fondant etc., are readily available from Richard at any of our hall meetings.

3. Fortify Against Wigtownshire Weather

- **Secure the roofs:** Coastal winds in Wigtownshire can easily catch and displace hive roofs. Ensure your roofs are heavily weighted down with straps or heavy blocks.
- **Manage dampness:** Damp is a far greater winter killer for bees in the UK than cold. Ensure your hives are tilted very slightly forward so that driving rain drains away from the entrance rather than pooling inside. If you use open mesh floors, ensure the debris tray is out or configured to allow air circulation while preventing draughts.

- **Verify pest protection:** Make sure your mouse guards are securely pinned in place. Mice look for warm nesting sites in November and can completely destroy a clustered colony if they manage to squeeze inside.

4. Pause Varroa Treatments

- It is currently too cold for thymol-based treatments (like Apiguard), as they require ambient temperatures above 15°C to vaporise effectively.
- Leave the colony alone for now. Your next intervention will be a targeted oxalic acid trickle or sublimation treatment during the brood-less period around the winter solstice (late December or January).