

Bishop Auckland Town Council

Beekeeping Information and Rules

Bees are a natural part of the countryside, every garden and allotment. Whether they are wild bees or from manmade hives, they aid with pollination and play a critical role in biodiversity.

Any tenant wishing to keep honey bees must obtain the permission of the Council and are subject to the conditions detailed below. It should be noted that not every plot or every site will be in a suitable location for bee-keeping.

There are many amateur beekeepers in the UK most of whom are members of local associations or organisations, as well as seeking permission from Bishop Auckland Town Council, any plot holder who considering keeping bees should first contact the local beekeeper association either directly or through the [British Beekeeper Association \(BBKA\)](http://www.bbka.org.uk) which is the national organisation for beekeepers. The BBKA also provides insurance for its members.

For more information, visit www.bbka.org.uk useful advice on keeping bees on allotments can also be found at www.allotments.net:8080/general/bees.htm.

Beekeeping has occasionally caused problems on allotment sites and is therefore subject to consent by the Town Council.

Siting Beehives and Handling Bees on Allotments

- Hives should be sited as far as possible from any public road or path or jointly used road or paths within the allotment site, and must be agreed in advance on site with the Council.
- In line with BBKA guidance, hives are not permitted if an allotment site is adjacent to a school or live stock holdings.
- In line with BBKA guidance, the hive(s) on individual plots should be so sited that only the beekeeper can approach it or them. Bees operate on instinct, individual and shared. Hives should only be approached by a trained beekeeper.
- The plot where the hives are to be situated must have simple screening, such as is used for windbreaks of fine mesh netting, dust screening, willow, hazel or maintained hedges of a minimum 2.0 metres height to encourage the bees to fly high over neighbouring plots.
- The number of hives on the site in total will be monitored and restricted to prevent over population of any one site.
- Initially tenants may apply for up to two hives. With experience tenants may keep a maximum of three hives. Prior consent from the Council must be obtained for any change in the number of hives kept on site.

- If the number of hives increases due to splitting in order to control swarming, this should be a temporary arrangement if it exceeds the permitted maximum, with the number of hives reduced to the permitted maximum by at the latest by the end of summer.
- The first stage prior to approval is essential to identify a suitable location which should ideally be with an open aspect and with the entrance facing South East and shelter from North Easterly wind.

Consultation

- The beekeeper should inform, both verbally and by a prominently displayed notice on the plot, notifying neighbouring allotment gardeners of the request to keep bees on the allotment, and prominently display such a notice for a minimum period of 28 days in the growing season (April – September) and 56 days outside of the growing season (November – March), indicating that a request to keep bees had been submitted to the Council.
- Where the allotment site is managed by an association, the consent of the association must be sought. The association will have a right to veto the application. Provided they agree in principle, then application to the Council, as described above, may proceed.
- Where an objection on allergy or medical grounds is made to the Council and substantiated, the Council may refuse permission to place bees on the site.

Consent

- Bees shall not be kept on any allotment until the Town Council has issued consent to the tenant in writing.
- The Council reserves the right to issue 14 days notice for the removal of hives. Beekeepers making such application are expected to be experienced, or to have close guidance from an experienced beekeeper.

Duty of Care

The Beekeeper owes a Duty of Care to:

- the public in the vicinity of the hives.
- other allotment gardeners working nearby.
- intruders even though it is clear that their intention was to disturb the colony.

The beekeeper must display a sign on their designated apiary area, stating honey bees are located there.

The Town Council should ensure that members of the public registering for or joining an allotment with hives are notified at the earliest opportunity.

Stand-By Arrangements

The beekeeper must provide the Council with details (name, address, telephone number) of adequate stand-by arrangements to deal with emergencies such as swarming during any absence or unavailability of the beekeeper.

These details must also always be prominently displayed by notice on or near the beekeeper's plot entrance or allotment gate.

On no account should any person other than an experienced beekeeper try to take a swarm, whether the swarmed bees are placid or not.

Inspection

- Hives will be inspected annually by a member of the Town Council as part of the annual plot inspections.

Complaints

- The Council will investigate any complaints and in particular those with health and nuisance elements and in consequence may subsequently withdraw the permission via issue of 14 days notice for the removal of all hives.

Insurance

- The beekeeper is required to hold a current insurance policy, which provides specifically for Beekeeping risks and includes for five million pounds (£5,000,000) Public Liability Insurance cover. The Beekeeper must annually provide the Town Council with copies of the renewed insurance certificate.
- The Town Council require beekeepers to be members of the British Beekeepers Association, (BBKA)
- The beekeeper must annually provide the Town Council with copies of the renewed insurance certificate and or copy of their BBKA proof of their current membership.

Diseases

- The beekeeper is encouraged to register all hives with the National Bee Unit 'Beebase', (part of DEFRA). If the beekeeper suspects the bees are diseased they must inform the National Bee Unit, who will arrange for an inspector to assess the bees.

<http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/>

- If a beekeeper suspects their honey bees have Notifiable Brood Diseases such as AFB/EFB they should report the issue immediately to the Town Council and the National Bee Unit (NBU) to arrange for an inspector to assess the honey bees by contacting the:

National Bee Unit
Sand Hutton, York
YO41 1LZ, UK
nbu@apha.gsi.gov.uk

0300 3030094

- If diseased bees are to be disposed, advice should be taken from the NBU on appropriate disposal methods or their local beekeeping association. NBU inspectors will supervise the destruction of bees and hives in the case of American Foulbrood (AFB) and if need be for European Foulbrood (EFB), and as needed in the case of imported pests.

Training

- You must have completed the Basic Bee Keeping Course and gained the Basic Certificate.
- You must become a member of the British Beekeepers Association (BBKA).

Sale of Honey

- The beekeeper will not display notices that honey is available for sale on the allotment site or plot. A modest amount of honey related products may take place at Allotment Associations fundraising/community engagement events/activities with the association's permission.

Withdrawal of Consent

The Town Council may withdraw the permission at any time by giving 30 days notice to remove hives if:

- The permit holder contravenes any of the above conditions.
- The permit holder contravenes any conditions within the Allotment Tenancy Agreement.
- Substantiated information is received that requires a review of the arrangements.
- A new allotment tenant takes a nearby plot then provides medical evidence that they are allergic to honey bee stings. However, we would expect any new tenant to be made aware of the hives before they accept the tenancy of a plot and if necessary, an alternative plot offered on an alternative site that does not have bee keeping.
- Any costs resulting from withdrawal of consent shall be borne by the tenant.
- If an allotment tenant no longer keeps tenancy of an allotment plot, then he or she will no longer be permitted to keep bees.

Important Contacts

- Details of County and Local Beekeeping Associations can be obtained from:

British Beekeepers Association (BBKA), National Beekeeping Centre, National Agricultural Centre, Stoneleigh Park, Stoneleigh, Kenilworth CV8 2LG. Website: www.bbka.org.uk
Tel: 024 7669 6679

National Bee Unit, The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA), York Biotech Campus, Sand Hutton, York, YO41 1LZ. Website: www.nationalbeeunit.com Email: nbu@apha.gov.uk
Tel: 0300 303 0094