

Cumbria Asian Hornet Team Volunteers - Newsletter

January 2026

Hope you're all well and looking forward to the year ahead. Firstly, There have been quite a few developments in the process of the prosecution of the YLH in the UK, and beyond.



National Update

Situation Summary

According to the [NBU](#)* website, there were 544 confirmed sightings and 162 nests removed in 2025. The government is still continuing with an eradication policy and how to do this has been the focus of the [APHA](#)/[BBKA](#)/YLH coordinators and others over the last year. NBU inspectors are currently expected to continue the role of primary tracking and tracing, however, there has been a statement in November, from the APHA, that there is no intention of conducting spring trapping program. This has led to a feeling among volunteer groups that they are starting the process of stepping down from the [DEFRA](#) led eradication program. However, there is no evidence to suggest this is the case, and as long as it is an achievable objective it seems that the nest removal and DNA processing will still continue. With the main load being on the NBU and its inspectors though, it is understandable that some time is returned to their primary function of monitoring honeybee health. The [FERA](#) laboratory, in York, has increased its processing capacity last year, so that is certainly not a restriction.

New Developments

There has also been a call from the BBKA for a closer and more coordinated approach, with the NBU, to manage the volunteer groups to more efficiently with better support. To that aim, and spurred by K&SWBKA/CBKA resolutions, the BBKA executive has conducted two BBKA volunteer area/county coordinator meetings. They were in November and December two such meetings, via Zoom. They were well attended by county and area coordinators and there were talks by guests at each. Firstly, there was an excellent presentation by Jackie Aucott (Dover & District BKA) who gave a very good account of the frontline experiences of volunteers in that environment. I was particularly taken with her very upbeat tone specifically in determining that this was still a very containable situation, in no small part helped by the public engagement, which was excellent. The December meeting was dominated by another inspiring talk from Jonathan Semple, the creator of a device called [Buzzcopper](#). This is a game-changing monitoring device, that will monitor a location, use a well-honed AI camera module, and send photos of suspected YLH sightings straight to the monitor's mobile phone. The best part of this device is that it is designed, built and distributed (currently) by non-for-profit volunteers making it widely affordable to volunteer groups. This in coordination with the Dutch '[Robor Nature](#)' radio trackers now used by the NBU, will make the whole detect, track and trace process far quicker than before.

Organisation

As a result of people meeting at these two meetings, the very thing they were designed to achieve started happening immediately. A small group of key-players, and me, decided to have a separate meeting in December, to discuss the very issue we (CAHT) addressed last year, concerning the structure of the volunteer organisation, funding and accountability. The attendees were Michelle Elliot (creator of [AHA Catch](#)), Diane Drinkwater (BBKA Chair), Chloe Underwood (IOW BKA), Lucie Chaumeton (N London BKA – soon BBKA trustee), Judy Hubble (New Forest BKA), Patrick Curry (Wiltshire BKA) and myself. In short it was agreed that we needed a structure that would have the support of DEFRA, was standalone from Beekeeping organisations, had the means to handle funding and was ultimately capable of continuing the process of YLH prosecution after any direct government involvement. We all agreed that this was doable, Patrick's substantial experience with government at the highest level (due to his business) will be used to start the ball rolling in government (DEFRA and above) and use already successful creation of bodies to support the funding and structure as entities such as CIO and CICs.

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One suggestion, which we will follow up with in the next meeting at the end of January, is using the already created CIO that is the support body for the AHA Catch application. More on this at the next meeting.

Cumbria Asian Hornet Team – Updated Plan

In respect of all these new developments we will now not be seeking to form our own CIO/CIC, preferring to rather form part of the countrywide organisation, directing donations to and acquiring funding from that body. It will of course involve all our volunteers reading, understanding and subscribing to that organisation's code of conduct, which I suspect will not vary too much from the ones we have proposed in last years' drafts.

We shall have more regular meetings via Zoom and appearances at BKA meetings to keep volunteers clearly in the picture with latest developments. It is of paramount importance that we ramp up our public education program, being in my opinion the most important role for Cumbria volunteers at the moment. I would very much like to be in Dover & District BKA's state of public awareness when YLH comes calling here.

There will be a meeting via Zoom, mainly to reiterate many of these points, and for you, as volunteers to ask questions and seek clarification. This meeting is on Tuesday 20th January, but will be followed up with another February meeting, for those unable to attend and to announce further developments. The invite for this meeting is with the email this has been distributed in.

Volunteer Requirements – Remaining Current

Please, if you are not already, as a volunteer, join the CAHT WhatsApp group. I would not usually insist on folk having to use a specific media; however, it has proven to be such a good method of updating volunteers with the latest and an instant mechanism for answering questions. The group itself is a sub-group of the already successful BBKA YLH group. Contact me if you are not on it already and I'll pop you on.

Cumbria Asian Hornet Team – Information and Volunteer Specific Webpage

Once again, may I draw attention to the two websites designed to inform and to assist. One is the public information page (<https://www.kendalbeekeepers.com/asian-hornet>) which is regularly updated. The second is the CAHT volunteers specific page below. Please feel free to contact me and let me know if you have any suggestions for changes or updates. It can be done quite quickly most of the time. I have piggybacked it onto the Kendal & South Westmorland BKA website for convenience but it is a separate discrete webpage for us. The URL address is: www.kendalbeekeepers.com/caht .



In Summary

Once again may I express a profound thank you to all of you who have unselfishly stepped up to the task and understood that we cannot be found wanting on this issue. Your assistance is much appreciated. Getting this process set up as soon as possible will reap huge benefits to our bees and other pollinators and save us a lot of despair later. Thank you and I'll catch up with you all soon I hope.

Andy Brown BBKA Cumbria AHT Coordinator

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Information :

<https://www.kendalbeekeepers.com/asian-hornet>

<https://www.bbka.org.uk/listing/category/asian-hornet-vespa-velutina>

* Be aware that the **blue text** has links to the various organisations.