

March 3rd 2015



The Chairman
Environment and Ecology Forum
Herbert Warehouse
The Docks
Gloucester
GL1 2EQ

Dear Mr. Trelfa,

I am writing to seek support for a low-cost community project that I think will benefit both the residents of Gloucester and also the local environment. While not wishing to overwhelm anyone with details at this stage, I hope you will give the following outline your consideration.

[The proposal](#)

My proposal is to establish a community apiary, based on the experience I have gained with community farms and apiaries in Australia. A community apiary is a resource for an urban community, designed for education, participation, and development of practical skills. All participation is voluntary and unpaid.

[The concept](#)

A community apiary is a public site where beehives are placed and where the community is encouraged to participate in their management, under supervision. It would be provisioned with bees and equipment and managed by volunteer beekeepers, initially myself. Once established, the apiary will regularly be open to any member of the public for a casual visit, or for a longer-term relationship.

Visitors will experience beekeeping as observers or 'hands-on' as they prefer. Regular visitors will learn beekeeping through practical experience, mentoring and discussion. Those who wish to become more involved can themselves assist with running the apiary or can add hives (within the capacity of the site).

[Community benefits](#)

Experience – my own and more generally – suggests these are numerous, going beyond education and interest towards building communities, providing purpose and focus and even therapy. Some of these themes are explored in the links provided below.

What is requested from Gloucester?

- Assistance in locating a site or sites meeting the requirements outlined below.
- Any necessary modification, such as fencing or screening etc, if this is required.
- Assistance in meeting any public health and safety requirements
- Desirable but optional would be provision of a small storage shed; access to a covered area for meetings post-session, during winter, during bad weather or for instruction; assistance with purchasing extra protective clothing.

What does Gloucester gain?

- Some substance behind its 'bee-friendly' messages.
- Genuine community enrichment and engagement.
- Demonstrating the ability to turn unused land to a useful community purpose.
- Some good PR. Similar schemes elsewhere have been well-received and widely reported. Any honey from community apiaries would be labelled as coming from the scheme, eg 'Gloucester Community Apiary', rather than be sold under the beekeeper's own label. The apiary also has an opportunity to forge links with 'Bees Abroad', allowing Gloucester to be visible as a supporter of subsistence projects in Africa.

Site requirements

- An apiary can be placed anywhere there is forage for bees available in the vicinity. Bees forage widely and the site itself need not be anything special. Rough or 'brown' sites are often fine and I ran one apiary on an old landfill cap. Public buildings with unused gardens, or parks with neglected or unused space, also might be suitable.
- The site can be temporary and earmarked for another purpose. Bees can be moved fairly easily, with some constraints.
- The most critical requirement is that it needs to be geographically accessible to a reasonable catchment of people. It must be physically accessible, especially for visitors of limited mobility or lacking private transport. Some of Gloucester's designated Open Spaces probably fail this criterion even though providing good spots for bees.
- Unfortunately the site will need to be fenced and out of casual public view. Vandalism and theft are potential problems. People interfering with hives are also likely to get stung or can disturb the bees so others get stung.

Desirable extras

- Shelter available for holding discussions or making tea. This could be a nearby café or community centre if there is nothing suitable on site.
- Small lockable shed for storing equipment.

- Availability of bee-suits is a limiting factor for visitors and these will be in short supply at first. We would hope to get these at low price through sponsors or supporters. Regular visitors usually acquire their own suits.

Finance

The intention is to be self-funding from the start, dependant on finding a site that does not need structural modification, such as fencing. Clearing undergrowth or similar manual tasks needed to prepare the apiary will be done by volunteers.

There are two components: 1) the operation of the apiary, and 2) the provision and management of the bees.

In operation a small charge (£2.50 approx?) will be made per visitor and visit, to be divided between improving and maintaining the apiary for the benefit of visitors, the provision of additional protective equipment (allowing more people to participate) and a bee charity (Bees Abroad). The operation of the apiary will be run on a not-for-profit basis with income being used to benefit the project and increase public access.

All bees and equipment will be provided and owned by the beekeeper(s). Any earnings from honey sales or bees will therefore go to the beekeepers, primarily to be used to meet the expense of keeping hives and bees in good condition and provision of bees and hives. Note that each hive costs about £350 to establish and around £30 annually to maintain, plus needing many hours of work over the season. This is not a commercial enterprise and in some years will make a loss, entirely borne by the beekeepers. The beekeepers also risk loss from theft or vandalism.

About myself

I am 59 and a 3rd generation beekeeper recently moved to Hucclecote from Melbourne, Australia. I was one of two beekeepers running the Ceres community apiary from around 2001. Through the Ceres Community Farm, Melbourne, and other routes I have trained and mentored several hundred beekeepers. Beekeeping is my hobby, not my profession.

Prior to my move to the UK, I worked for the Victorian Environment Protection Authority, Melbourne, managing their Major Projects Unit. I am accustomed to work in partnership with the community, government and industry to deliver environmentally beneficial projects.

I am available as required to discuss the proposal in more detail and my contact details are provided above.

Yours sincerely,

Chris Strudwick

[Links to some examples](#)

Ceres and Collingwood community farms in Melbourne, Australia. I ran part of the apiary at Ceres and assisted with Collingwood.

<http://www.ceres.org.au/>

http://www.ceres.org.au/about/AR2014_FINAL.pdf

<http://www.farm.org.au/>

<https://www.facebook.com/collingwood.bees>

Recent BBC Food Programme reporting on urban beekeeping projects.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b04jhmhh>

Danish community apiary website, mentioned in the programme above.

<http://bybi.dk/?lang=en>