

<p>Title of Report:</p> <p>Update on the Importation of Italian Bees into Northern Ireland</p>	<p>Officer Presenting: Director of Environment and Regeneration</p> <p>Author: Biodiversity Officer</p>
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1 Purpose of Report/Recommendations

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is present Members with an update on the concerns raised at February and May 2021 Environment and Regeneration Committee meetings (ER41/20 and ER160/20), in relation to the potential impact of the importation of bees from Italy into Northern Ireland.

2 Background

- 2.1 Members will recall a request to write to The Republic of Ireland Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, to request details on the measures that they are currently developing or enforcement action that has been taken to address the risk posed by the importation of Italian bees into Ireland (ER160/20).
- 2.2 The Derry and District Beekeepers working in partnership with Council, have expressed their concern in relation to a company based in Kent (England), which plan to import Italian bees into Northern Ireland, through the Republic of Ireland, as a result of BREXIT. They will be then transported from Northern Ireland to Great Britain.
- 2.3 This potential practice could lead to the non-native Italian bees mating with the native bee population. This could result in a sub-species of aggressive bees and impact the genetic pool across Northern Ireland and within the District.
- 2.3 The importation of Italian bees into Northern Ireland could also inadvertently result in the import of the Small Hive Beetle, which poses a threat to UK and EU bees. In 2014, the Small Hive Beetle was confirmed in Italy and there is an increased risk of

introducing it into the Northern Ireland with this potential practice. The Small Hive Beetle can significantly multiply within infested colonies, where it eats brood, honey and pollen; destroys combs; and spoiling of honey. If beetle infestations are not controlled, they can destroy the colony.

2.4 Council wrote to the Department for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, to outline these concerns. The Minister's Private Secretary has provided a written response (Appendix 1), outlining the key measures that they are implementing to prevent the potential harmful effects of the importation of Italian bees into Ireland (ER160/20).

3 Key Issues

3.1 As outlined below and in Appendix 1 in their response letter, are the key measures that Department for Agriculture, Food and the Marine are implementing to prevent the potential harmful effects of the importation of Italian bees into Ireland:

- a) The movement of honey bees into Ireland from Italy, is permitted under regulations governing intra-Community trade with other EU Member States. The specific health requirements for trading in bees are outlined in Regulation (EU) 2016/429. All imports of bees must be accompanied by a health certificate, issued by the country of export. This is to ensure that imported bees are healthy and do not harbour pathogens or parasites, which could be harmful to our native bee stocks, including the small hive beetle (*Aethina tumida*). Also, the health certificate outlines the import restrictions that apply on regions that have confirmed cases of the small hive beetle.
- b) The Department for Agriculture, Food and the Marine has a contingency plan in relation to diseases and pests that affect bee health. Discussions regarding animal health issues take place on an ongoing basis between the Department for Agriculture, Food and the Marine and the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in Northern Ireland.

4 Equality, Rural Needs, Climate Change and Data Protection

4.1 No equality, rural needs, climate change or data protection implications arise.

Financial, Legal, HR, Improvement and Other

4.2 No financial, legal, HR or other implications arise.

5 Recommendations

5.1 Members are asked to note the contents of this report.

Background Papers

ER41/20, ER160/20

Appendix 1 – Department for Agriculture, Food and the Marine Response