

# ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Friday 16th to Saturday 17th February 2024

CAFRE, Greenmount Campus, 45 Tirgracy Road, Antrim BT41 4PS

# IBIE III

Facing the Future

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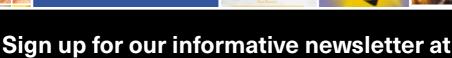
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# SUSIE HILL UBKA President

The Theme of this year's Conference 'Bee Prepared: Facing the Future' very much reflects the need for us, as beekeepers, to be forward looking and prepared for the challenges facing us.

With the effects of climate change already bringing unseasonal shifts in our weather patterns, and the Asian Hornet and other bee predators looming ever closer, the role of the UBKA as a champion of our bees and of promoting a bee friendly environment has never been more important.

Beekeepers have a much closer relationship to our environment and changes to it than Northern Ireland's policy makers. If we don't speak up to protect our bees and other important pollinators from the impact of pesticides and poor decisions regarding intensive farming and invasive species, then who will?

On the plus side, ever more people are coming to beekeeping and some Councils have moved to replace the ubiquitous grass verges with wild-flower meadows and other bee friendly planting. Great in so far as it goes but much more needs to be done if we are to secure the future for our bees.

This year's Conference is its usual heady mix of state-of-the-art lectures on the science of beekeeping, practical bee management techniques and managing current and future challenges facing apiarists in Northern Ireland and beyond. As in previous years we have brought together a first-rate mix of speakers from the United States, Great Britian and Ireland.

Our Conference is remarkable for leavening its heady mix of national and international speakers with excellent practical workshops. These cover the nuts and bolts of beekeeping, from the arts and crafts of candle making and mead brewing to microscopy, skep making and encaustic art.

Once again, we will be running targeted workshops for beekeepers at the start of their bee keeping journey and for young beekeepers, two groups essential to the future of beekeeping in Northern Ireland.

Whilst the lectures and workshops are essential ingredients of a successful Conference, an important part of the conference is bringing together beekeepers to exchange information, anecdotes and practical knowledge. It is often during informal networking and exchanges over coffee or at the Conference dinner that the real learning is done.

Enjoy the conference and make sure that you participate fully to get the most out of what promises to be an excellent event!

Susie Hill UBKA President

#### **Professor Jay Evans**

Jay Evans was born in Seattle, Washington, USA. He knew from a young age he wanted to study biology but did not realize the path would involve bees until after finishing undergraduate (Princeton University) and graduate (University of Utah) degrees in genetics and behaviour.

He is a Lead Scientist in the US Department of Agriculture's Bee Research Laboratory (Beltsville, MD), where he has focused on interactions between bees, microbes, mites, and insects. He was a leader in the Honey Bee Genome Project and has helped develop new genetic tools for bee breeding and disease diagnostics, while looking for safe medicines to reduce the impacts of bee disease.

Jay is also interested in the ways nutrition, chemical stress, and disease interact to harm honeybees. He has received USDA awards for 'Early Career' (2003) and 'Senior' (2023) Scientist of the Year, and the James Hambleton Award for Bee Research. He has enjoyed



mentoring dozens of students and professional researchers. He writes a monthly research column for Bee Culture magazine (www.beesfoundintranslation.org) and enjoys frequent talks with beekeepers. He is a sometime sheep and goat farmer and likes to mess around in rowing boats in his spare time.

At the Conference he will be speaking on:

- Good and bad microbes in honeybees, covering pathogens and the gut microbes that help bees digest food and resist threats;
- Varroa and viruses in bees, discussing new insights into measuring mite threats, understanding the roles of mites in transmitting viruses, and trying to break that cycle); and
- Genetics of bees and their non-human associates, covering efforts to understand honeybee behaviour and interactions with parasites, pathogens, and mutualists through a genetics eye.

#### **Emeritus Professor Robert Pickford**

Professor Robert Pickard is an international authority on the biology of honeybees and President of both the Cardiff Beekeepers Association and the UK Central Association of Beekeepers.

Currently Chairman of CoRWM at the Department of Energy and Climate Change, Robert has also recently down-hived, "I used to have 10 hives here but now only have 2 or 3. I had 200 hives at one time in fields near the Gower; Not an ideal place, as bees find the coastal winds a bit disruptive and flying over water is difficult for them".

"The most important thing bees have given to human beings is the evolutionary process of flowers having developed colour and scent. All plants were initially pollinated by wind or water and were simple shades of green and yellow with bowed heads waiting for the wind to blow. When insects started to collect pollen as protein,



immediately there was huge competition amongst plants to attract insects and different and therefore flower colours and shapes evolved'.

One of the reasons I love gardening is that the microcosm in a garden reflects what's happening on the Planet. A World without flowers would be a very impoverished world.

Robert has been studying bees since 1956 and his postgraduate students are spread through 50 different countries worldwide.

His lecture takes a fascinating tour through the factors leading to the successful nutrition of honeybees and humans, from the cosmic creation of heavier elements to the processing of nutrients and their importance to health, growth and survival. Robert notes that honeybee and humans haver 60% of their genes in common and have vital symbiotic relations with many of other organisms. Whilst honeybees are herbivores, and humans omnivores, they share very similar dietary requirements.

#### **Associate Professor Meghan Milbrath**

Megan began working bees over 25 years ago, and now owns and manages the Sand Hill Apiary, a small livestock and queen rearing operation in Munith, Michigan.

She studied biology at St. Olaf College in Northfield, MN, and received degrees in public health from Tulane University and the University of Michigan, where she focused on environmental health sciences and disease transmission risk.

Meghan worked as a postdoctoral research associate at Michigan State University, studying Nosema disease, and at Swedish Agricultural University. She is currently an Assistant Professor in the Department of Entomology at MSU, where she does honeybee and pollinator research and extension and is the coordinator of the Michigan Pollinator Initiative.



Meghan is active in multiple beekeeping organizations, writes for several beekeeping journals, and speaks about bees all over the US. She currently runs the Northern Bee Network, a directory and resource site dedicated to supporting queen producers, and is passionate about keeping and promoting healthy bees.

Megan will be talking on:

- Amazing anatomical adaptations of Apis mellifera or "Why honeybees are the most amazing organisms ever". We'll see beautiful pictures and hear interesting facts about this fascinating creature. The focus of this talk is how honeybee anatomy drives their experience and perception and can guide our care.
- Small scale queen rearing Many beekeepers would like to raise their own queen cells but are intimidated by the process. This talk is targeted towards the beekeeper that is interested in getting started raising some queen cells. We will cover the basic steps involved with raising queens, and discuss options for raising queens, including those that do not require grafting.





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#### **Gavin Ramsey**

Gavin has kept bees from the mid-1990s and since then he has managed to make most of the possible beekeeping mistakes! He chairs the Scottish Native Hiney bee Society (SNHBS), helps his local association and presents regularly on bee topics across Scotland and beyond.

Gavin was the Bee Health and Science Officer for the Scottish Beekeepers Association (SBA) until May 2020. He has also given up being a plant geneticist and is starting to find that running a beekeeping business is not for the easily distracted or the disorganised!

Gavin's lectures will be on two important topics: bee communication; and swarm biology and swarm control.

Bee communication will explore how learning what honeybees are thinking and saying to each other can help your beekeeping. Some of giants of animal behaviour research in recent decades have overturned previous views on insect cognition and behaviour.

Placing these advances in the context of real beekeeping allows us to understand where our bees are foraging, how advanced a swarm may be in its decision to relocate plus exactly where they are thinking of going, and even whether individuals are frustrated by self-cleaning issues or by a lack of help when wanting to offload the goodies brought back home. Bees also remember things and can plan their own strategies to do things in the best way.

Swarming is a perennial topic for beekeepers. Gavin will consider why bees swarm, how they prepare and how you can head them off by delaying and especially control them by appropriate means once they start preparing. Concerns about swarming is becoming more prevalent in the non-beekeeping community with more urban beekeepers, more vigorous bee stocks (due to genetic mixing) and climate change encouraging more vigour in honeybee stocks in the north of their range.

This is one area where the advice beekeepers receive must be of the highest quality and there is a real need for beekeepers to understand and control swarming better.

#### Colm O'Neill

Colm has been beekeeping for over 50 years, he and his three brothers worked 30 colonies with their father until Colm took over the beekeeping operation in his early 20s. With his wife, Imelda, he manages 60 honey production colonies, and another 30 colonies and nuclei, for the production of Amm queens and nuclei for sale.

Colin and Imelda only use Apis Mellifera Mellifera (Amm) bees for local adaption, ease of management, and rapid Spring build-up. Both he and his wife have full-time jobs, working the bees on the weekends and queen-rearing tasks as needed on weekday evenings. Colin is the education officer for his local association, a committee member for the Native Irish Honey Bee Society (NIHBS), and holds beekeeping,



bee improvement and queen-rearing classes at his home and association apiaries during the summer.

Along with Jonathan Getty, he has been giving online training to the more than 400 members of the NIHBS Queen Rearing Group Scheme since 2021.

#### Lynne Ingram

Lynne lives in Somerset where she has kept bees for over 30 years, currently running 15-20 colonies in 3 apiaries. She is a Master Beekeeper and was awarded the National Diploma in Beekeeping in 2021.

Lynne is on the Executive Committee of Somerset Beekeepers Association (SBKA), is a delegate to the South West Beekeepers Forum, and a member of the Devon Apicultural Research Group. Lynne is a member of the BBKA Exam Board, and is an assessor for both the practical and theory assessments.

Lynne is actively involved in the education of beekeepers through running module study groups, and practical training sessions. She curates and hosts the popular SBKA online Lecture series. She regularly appears in the press and media, and is an engaging and popular speaker.



Lynne is also the SBKA Asian Hornet Team Coordinator, and having served her Asian Hornet 'apprenticeship' in Jersey, has developed a network of Asian Hornet teams in Somerset and an Asian Hornet roadshow that appears regularly at honey and agricultural shows. She organised the South West Asian Hornet Teams Conference in 2021.

Lynne is the founder and chair of the Honey Authenticity Network UK (HAN UK), and campaigns to raise awareness of honey adulteration and fraud globally and in the UK.

Lynne's talk - 'The Truth about Honey?', will lift the lid on the how, why, and wherefore of honey fraud and adulteration, and the shocking impact it is having on the livelihoods of beekeepers around the world. We look at why this fraud continues, and what can be done about it.

Lynne's second talk - 'Know your enemy - facing the Asian Hornet threat head on', will take a close look at the Asian Hornet, its spread globally, and how we might prevent its' establishment the UK.

#### **Professor Noleen Smyth**

Noleen is a qualified botanist and chartered horticulturalist with national and international experience in environment, amenity horticulture and conservation botany.

A lecturer and Assistant Professor at UCD, she uses her horticultural and botanical skills in conjunction with advanced laboratory skills and field studies to address issues affecting plant conservation, sustainability and biodiversity at home and abroad.

Noleen has a deep interest in, and knowledge of, the plant species and products in global trade and, as part of her current role she acts as the CITES National Scientific Authority for Ireland. In that role she advises, and risk assesses trade in CITES listed species into and out of Ireland,



and represents Ireland on the CITES EU Scientific Review Group, which advises on sustainable trade in wild products within the EU.

Coleen describes her mission as being one of cultivating a wider perspective for the role of horticulture and the skills it brings to building a better and more environmentally sound and sustainable future for all. She will be talking on the top pollinator plants of interest to native honeybees and beekeepers. She

will also be introducing some of the best garden and ornamental plants which can provide recourses for bees and other pollinators.

Her talk is based on the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan booklet on Top 10 Pollinator friendly Plants, developed between UCD and the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan.

#### Rose Muir

Rose is Team Lead of Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) Team in the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (an Agency of DAERA). She has spent more than a decade working specifically with invasive species, often involving her in crossing over into work of other teams such as planning, designated sites, habitat survey and wildlife.

Rose works closely with many large stakeholders on projects to manage and remove INNS/IAS from their estates. She either chairs or sits on many groups such as Asian Hornet Taskforce, British Irish Council INNS Group, Spartina Control Group, Muntjac control Group, Strangford Lough INNS Working Group. She also represents the Northern Ireland government in UK Administrations INNS Group.



Rose's talk will range to over the wider subject of invasive non-native species, reflecting her very wide remit.



## **UBKA CONFERENCE 2024**

## **LECTURES**

FRIDAY	FRIDAY 16TH FEBRUARY				
1.30	Reception	Registration and Trade Show open			
2.30	Main Hall	Gavin Ramsay - Bee Communication			
4.45	Main Hall	Opening Ceremony			
5.00	Main Hall	<b>Prof Jay Evans</b> - Good and Bad Microbes in Honey Bees			
6.00	Comfort Break				
6.05	Main Hall	Emeritus Professor Robert Pickard - Nutrition for Honeybees and Humans			

SATURDAY 17TH FEBRUARY				
9.30	Main Hall	Professor Meghan Milbrath - Small Scale Queen Rearing		
9.30	Lecture Theatre	Lynne Ingram - Asian Hornet		
10.20	Tea/Coffee Break			
10.50	Main Hall	Colm O'Neill - Maximizing Production with Native Bees - Double Brood Management System		
10.50	Lecture Theatre	<b>Prof Jay Evans USDA</b> - The Genetics of Bees and their Non-Human Associates		
11.40	Break			
12.10	Main Hall	Lynne Ingram - Honey Fraud		
12.10	Lecture Theatre	Professor Noleen Smyth - Top 10 Pollinator Plants		
13.00	Lunch (booking essential)			
14.30	Main Hall	Gavin Ramsey - Swarm Biology and Swarm Control		
14.30	Lecture Theatre	<b>Meghan Milbrath</b> - Why honey Bees are the most Amazing Organisms ever		
15.20	Tea/Coffee Break			
16.00	Main Hall	Professor Jay Evans - Varroa and Viruses in Bees		
16.00	Lecture Theatre	Rose Muir - Invasive Species and how you can help		
16.50	Main Hall	Close		
13.00	Main Canteen - Conference Supper and Entertainment (booking essential)			

## **WORKSHOPS**

SATURDAY 17TH FEBRUARY		
10.30	Microscopy – TBC	
10.50	Beekeeping – Starting Off – Jackie Barry/Mark Wallace	
10.50	Candle Making for Beginners – Una McNeill	
10.50	Skep Making – Louise McLean	
10.50	Encaustic Art – Lorraine Priestley	
10.50	Mead Making – Trevor Dawson	

14.30	Microscopy – TBC	
14.30	Beekeeping – Starting Off – Jackie Barry/Mark Wallace	
14.30	Candle Making for Beginners – Una McNeill	
14.30	Skep Making – Louise McLean	
14.30	Encaustic Art – Lorraine Priestley	
14.30	Mead Making – Trevor Dawson	
14.30	Young Beekeepers – Valentine Hodges	

Please Note: Conference admission is free to Young Beekeepers under 18 years of age. Contact the Conference Organiser at: bgrzymek@icoud.com for tickets.

## TRADERS AND SUPPLIERS

An extensive Traders and Suppliers Show will be held on Friday and Saturday in the main sports hall of the College.

Entrance is included in Conference Tickets but can be bought separately for those who wish to attend the trade show but not the conference.

#### **2023 WORKSHOPS**

#### INTRODUCING MODERN BEEKEEPING

This workshop is focused on helping beginners and recent entrants to beekeeping to gain a fuller appreciation of the joys of keeping bee, offering participants practical advice, tips and insights into the world of bees and what it takes become a successful beekeeper. Jackie Barry and Mark Wallace, both experienced beekeepers, will be providing a stimulating and practical workshop for everyone who is new to the game or who would benefit from a back-to-basics refresher.

#### **SKEP-MAKING**

This fascinating craft is a great favourite at UBKA Conferences. Louise McLean returns once again to weave her magic in creating beautiful skeps out of straw and rushes. This ancient tradition links participant back to the very foundations of beekeeping in the UK and Ireland.

#### MEAD MAKING

Mead is a drink said to have been discovered before both agriculture and ceramic pottery in Neolithic China. This workshop introduces participants to the art and craft of mead making. Led by award winning mead-maker, Trevor Dawson, it takes participants through the process of producing a very palatable mead and signposts some of the pitfalls along the way. An extremely popular session which may involve sampling some of Trevor's classic meads!

#### **MICROSCOPY**

AFBI will once again be providing two sessions on microscopy techniques for beginners and experienced beekeepers. These will include practical demonstrations of the procedures to investigate disease diagnosis in bees. The sessions will be of particular interest to those planning to sit microscopy exams. Booking is essential – please contact ubkaconference@gmail.com by 8 February to secure a place.

#### **ENCAUSTIC ART**

Encaustic art, or wax painting, is a fascinating art form. Encaustic art has a very long history, going back even further than oil painting. The word "encaustic" alone has been around for over two and a half thousand years, dating back to Greco-Roman antiquity. This workshop will provide participants with an introduction to this art form, along with a detailed step-by-step guide to producing your own wax masterpiece, guided by the expert hands of artist, Lorraine Priestly. At the workshop you will have the opportunity to produce at least one encaustic art picture, using the techniques demonstrated by Lorraine.

#### CANDLE MAKING

This session sheds light on the ancient craft of candle making, giving beekeepers a practical use for the that wax which we all tend to accumulate over the year. Una McNeill, a very experienced candle maker, will demonstrate candle-making techniques and provide participants with the basic do's and don'ts of candle making. She will also offer practical advice on getting started and how to produce beautiful candles with that unmistakable beeswax scent.

#### YOUNG PEOPLE IN BEEKEEPING

A workshop, led by Valentine Hodges, focused on the development of young beekeepers, aimed at those under 18 who want to know more about beekeeping or want to further develop their beekeeping skills. The workshop will also provide information on the International Meeting of Young Beekeepers (IMYB) which will be in its 13th year in 2024. This comprises a mixture of cultural presentations and competitions at three levels;

- Best international team
- Top-scoring country (combining scores of the three team members)
- Best young beekeeper (highest individual score)

Individuals and teams are judged on aptitude, attitude and general beekeeping skills across a wide range of areas including frame/hive assembly, bee-handling skills, bee anatomy, honey tasting, and botany for bees. Members of the young beekeepers Slovenia Team from 2023 will also be present at the workshop, telling their stories.



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#### **WORKSHOP DEMONSTRATORS**

#### **Trevor Dawson - Mead Making**

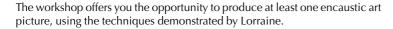
A well-known and award-winning mead maker, Trevor has been keeping honeybees for six years and is currently managing more than 15 colonies. He was awarded his Preliminary Beekeeping Certificate in 2017 and has been working his way through the Intermediate Course Certificates since then.

Trevor is current Secretary of Randalstown and District Beekeepers' Association (RDBKA) and edits the UBKA Newsletter. He was awarded UBKA 'Beekeeper of the Year' in 2021/2022.



#### **Lorraine Priestley – Encaustic Art**

Lorraine Priestley lives in the South of Scotland where she works as an Occupational Therapist. An enthusiastic beekeeper, she is keen to use beeswax creatively. Her extremely popular workshop introduces participants to techniques in painting with beeswax using a travel iron and other heated tools.





#### **Jackie Barry – Beekeeping – Starting Off**

Jackie has been keeping bees for more than 15 years, starting off by helping in her father's apiary after her retirement.

She thoroughly enjoys beekeeping and, as a chemistry graduate who worked in the pharmaceutical industry, is particularly interested in the scientific aspects of beekeeping. She is a tutor with the Fermanagh beekeepers and enjoys encouraging new beekeepers to develop their knowledge and skills.



#### Mark Wallace - Beekeeping - Starting Off

Mark, a County Tyrone Beekeeper began beekeeping as a teenager and has been making his own equipment since the age of 16. A member of the Three Rivers Beekeepers' Association he describes his role as a 'bee problem fixer'.

Mark has been heavily involved in teaching the art of beekeeping at both Preliminary and intermediate levels. He brings a wealth of practical experience to this workshop.



#### **WORKSHOP DEMONSTRATORS**

#### **Louise McLean – Skep Making**

Louise McLean is a 3D willow artist/designer of bespoke and traditional baskets with a workshop and studio on the outskirts of Portrush.

Each hand-crafted piece of her work is inspired by the rugged landscape and coastlines of Ireland. Louise Integrates a wide variety of natural materials into her art.

Louise teaches basketry and skep-making courses province-wide, has exhibited and sold works internationally, and appeared on national television.



#### **Una McNeill – Candle Making for Beginners**

Una lives in the Stormont area of Belfast where, with her intrepid husband Jimmy, they have created an oasis of beekeeping in their back garden, Always one to innovate and look at new ways of promoting sustainable beekeeping, Una had been keen to make best use of all bee products, including wax.



Una's candle making is well regarded and her demonstrations of the art have been a regular feature at the Belfast and District BKA's Summer Programme.

In her workshop, Una will introduce the basics of candle making with helpful tips on what you need to get started and how to produce a range of beautiful beeswax candles.

#### **Valentine Hodges**

Valentine and her husband Chris jointly own Veesbees, which is dedicated to breeding Irish black bees and creating a a range of natural bee-related products.

Based at the Loughshore Apiary in Greyabbey, Valentine is a keen beekeeper with a strong interest in the environment. Currently Chair of the Ulster Beekeepers Association (UBKA), Valentine is involved in the development of a conservation and protected area for our native black bee on the Ards peninsula.



Valentine was awarded 'Beekeeper of the year in 2016-17 by both the Ulster Beekeepers Association (UBKA) and the Northern Irland Institute of Beekeepers.

Valentine has a keen interest in the development of young beekeepers and has been involved in the International Meeting of Young Beekeepers for several years.



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#### **CONFERENCE BOOKINGS**

#### To book a place, accommodation, food etc. go to TicketTailor online at: https://buytickets.at/ulsterbeekeepersassociation/960628

If you are having problems booking on-line, ask your Association to help or contact ubkaconference@gmail.com

Please note the following:

- Friday bookings include one free cup of tea or coffee plus a biscuit
- Saturday bookings include one free cup of tea or coffee morning and afternoon plus a scone
- Beekeepers under 18 years of age are admitted free
- Introduction to beekeeping students are entitled to an additional discount (as set out below) but must be registered at CAFRE and UBKA
- Early Bird prices are available on all bookings up until midnight on 31 January
- Prices are in pounds Sterling. If using Euros, the exchange rate at the time of booking will apply

CONFERENCE PRICES 2023				
Event	Full Cost (£)	Early Discount Rate (£) (up to 31 January inclusive)	Introductory Beekeeping Student rate (£)	
Friday Includes conference and trade show	£30	£24	£17	
Saturday Includes conference and trade show	£46	£37	£28	
Friday and Saturday Includes conference and trade show	£65	£52	£39	
Trade Show Friday excludes Conference attendance	£9	£9	£9	
Trade Show Saturday excludes Conference attendance	£9	£9	£9	

**Greenmount B&B** With ensuite accommodation Friday Night £45 Saturday Night £50

**Saturday Lunch** (includes tea/coffee)

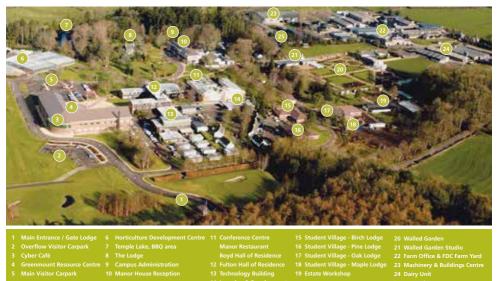
£20

**Conference Supper** & Social Evening 19.15 - late

#### **Greenmount** Campus

#### Getting around





- 11 Conference Centre
   15 Student Village Birch Lodge
   20 Walled Garden

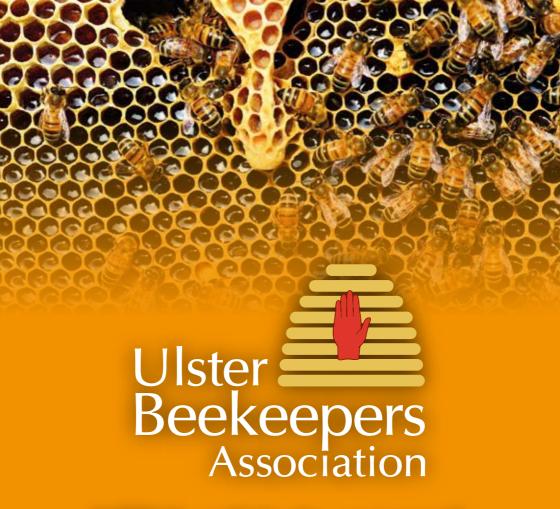
   Manor Restaurant
   16 Student Village Dire Lodge
   21 Walled Garden Studio

   Boyd Hall of Residence
   17 Student Village Oak Lodge
   22 Farm Office & FDC Farm Vard

   12 Fulton Hall of Residence
   18 Student Village Maple Lodge
   23 Machinery & Buildings Centre

### WHERE THE CONFERENCE ACTION IS

THE MAIN CONFERENCE LOCATIONS ARE:		
1	Entrance	
5	Main car park	
4	Main reception with Trade Hall to the right and workshop rooms and Lecture Theatre to the left	
3	Cyber Café on 1st floor	
11	Main Hall and main dining room (for lunch and Conference Supper)	
12	Conference accommodation	



# UBKA exists to support honey bees & beekeepers by:

- Enabling beekeepers to maintain healthy colonies and to practice beekeeping legally, safely, responsibly and sustainably
- Informing the wider public about the behaviour and benefits of honey bees and encouraging the growth of beekeeping
- Supporting environmental conservation, for the benefit of honey bees and other pollinators