It is very encouraging to see the many goals which NIHBS has achieved this past year. Sincere thanks go to the NIHBS committee and some of the NIHBS members who helped achieve these goals. The committee members have been wonderful to work with, positive, creative, hardworking and supportive. We can see the fruits of their labour from the following list of achievements.

Cooperation with UBKA, INIB, FIBKA and IBA on co-signing a Statement against Importations.

It is a historical document as it is the first time that all the major Irish beekeeping organisations have come together as a united front. In so doing, they have made a powerful statement that Ireland does not want importations of non-native honey bees into Ireland.

Establishment of the Queen Rearing Group Scheme (QRGS).

This scheme will be heading into its second summer. Many thanks go to the dedicated coordinators, led by Colm ONeill, Jonathan Getty, Alan Forskitt and Paula Somers-Kennedy. I hope that those groups participating this year will gain plenty of experience, education and insights. Self-sufficiency is vital in queen production. It was one of the founding principles of the Irish movement of native honey bee conservation and improvement. If each region can produce queens for their locality, we will go a long way towards combatting honey bee importations.

Development of a Voluntary Conservation Area subcommittee.

The establishment of VCAs links closely to the Queen Rearing Group Scheme. NIHBS is increasingly referring now to VCAs as CAs. In doing so, we are striving to put across the message that they should be mandatory in regions where Ireland has pure populations of *Apis mellifera mellifera.* Conservation areas will be more fluid in the future. While at the moment, mainly consisting of these regions generally based around local BKAs, we will also be seeing more CAs on a smaller scale here and there. We are hoping to set up a new office of a Conservation Officer. We will soon have Conservation Area signage printed and ready for distribution around Ireland. Thanks to Redmond Williams for the contribution of the image for these signs.

Introduction of the Protection of the Native Irish Honey Bee Bill to the Seanad.

This bill was introduced to the Seanad by Senator Vincent Martin, the Green Party. It has cross-party support from numerous senators. And hopefully, it will be eventually passed as a law. It is a ten-step process - five steps in the Seanad and five in the Dáil. The Bill essentially proposes a ban on importing non-native honey bee subspecies. A dedicated subcommittee within NIHBS and the Climate Bar Association, Senator Martin and Professor Grace McCormack worked on this Bill for over a year. We are sincerely thankful for the help received from all involved. As a result of this bill, we have established a subcommittee to help promote it.

Development of the NIHBS website.

This site now contains an online shop. It has also made it more convenient to renew NIHBS membership online. Overall, it looks more professional and reflects the image and ethos of NIHBS very well. Thanks to our web developer Garreth O'Doherty for his help. Many thanks to Imelda O’Neill who manages the orders of the NIHBS labels and distributes them.

Publication of 'The Native Irish Honey Bee' book.

It was thrilling to hold the first copies of this book in our hands—a wonderful collection of writings from beekeepers across Ireland. I have said it several times already this year - it was a privilege to have Professor Thomas Seely on board to write the foreword and be present for the online book launch. Thanks again to Jane Sellers for puttiing together this book.

I would like to genuinely thank the NIHBS committee for cooperating so well with each other this past year. I am very grateful for the work of my fellow officers, John Thorpe, PRO; Paula Somers-Kennedy, Treasurer; Aideen Day, Membership Secretary; Thomas Hayden, Editor; Jonathan Getty, Webmaster; Gerard Coyne, Vice-Chairperson; and Pauline Walsh, Fundraising Officer. A very special thank you to Loretta Neary, Secretary. Without her drive, dedication, encouragement and energy, NIHBS would not be where it is today. She will be stepping down from her office as secretary. She will be sadly missed but will be taking a well-deserved break.

I felt honoured to have been Chairperson of NIHBS this past year. And I hope that NIHBS is as fruitful and productive over the next 12 months.