

Hive got news for you: Act now to save bees!

A CALL for more action to protect the beekeeping industry has been backed by the owner of the Island's bee farm.

Sudi Austin, who runs Flynn's Bee Farm near Brambledown, says she fully supports Euro MP Caroline Bearder who has taken up the cause of beekeepers across the south east.

The MEP feels not enough is being done to protect bees from over-development across the continent.

Her stance has been welcomed by 41-year-old Mrs Austin, who has been involved with the bee farm since she was a teenager.

She inherited the business on her aunt's death six years ago.

She said: "The more supporters we can get for this the better."

Mrs Austin believes more beekeepers and better education are key to the future of the honeybee - and the industry.

"Children are not being taught enough about the importance of honeybees," she said.

"They are the most prolific pollinating insects and are vital to the ecology of the planet.

"We would lose one-third of what we eat if we lost honeybees."

She added that beekeepers had always tended to be seen as "a bit of joke in the past"



BEEKEEPER: Sudi Austin runs Flynn's Bee Farm near Brambledown. She backs the MEP's call for action

Picture: Mike Smith PD795651



HEALTHY HIVE: Bee larvae, the white grubs in the combs, with workers in attendance

Picture: Andy Payton PD1567098

but that nothing could be further from the truth.

"There is a real art to beekeeping," she said. "You need to care for them the same way as you would any other animal."

Mrs Austin, whose farm is the breeding centre for an international conservation project, said governments needed to do more to highlight the importance of the honeybee.

"We get no government funding for this project whatsoever,"

she said. "The government has only just re-employed scientists who were made redundant six years ago to find out what the problem is - but it's too little too late. This should be given publicity at least 15 years ago."

■ Mrs Austin advises would-be beekeepers to take a basic British Beekeeping Association-approved course. For more information call her on 01795 874935 or go to www.britishbee.org.uk

Europe must tackle crisis

IN the European Parliament last week, Mrs Bearder voted for a resolution calling for more action to step up the fight for Europe's bees.

She said: "Europe must address the problem of bee deaths. Quite literally, life on earth depends on it.

"It isn't just about honey. Without bees pollinating plants, plant life and crops will be threatened. The food the world depends on to survive will not exist."

The MEP said she wanted to see co-ordinated action across Europe in research, information sharing and in training young beekeepers.

"Bees in the UK and across Europe have been plagued in recent years by the double whammy of increased death rates and fewer beekeepers," she said.

"It's a real bee crisis."

ARGAR
es all her friends
PPY CHRISTMAS
one for their cards and
cial thanks to Paul and
eam and the nurses and
d for their excellent care.

Sheerness East Working Mens' Club
FREE ENTRY Saturday 11th December
ROCK and ELVIS Tribute Night
with the sensational **LEE RIVERS**
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Friday 17th December - **Matchbox** £12
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Beach and caravan blazes

A CARAVAN and beach blazes kept Island fire crews busy in the last week.

Firefighters were called to a derelict touring caravan which was alight in Halfway Road, Sheerness, at 10.05am on Thursday. A crew from Sheppey was there for about half an hour.

And on Monday a blaze on the beach at Grove Avenue, Leysdown, took nearly 45 minutes to put out.

Again it was crews from Sheppey sent to the fire about 5.15pm on Monday. It had been started by somebody burning rubbish.