

The high-rise hives of east London

Rooftops used in beekeeping boom

Mark Prigg
Science Correspondent

BEEKEEPING is growing in popularity as Londoners respond to fears the insects may become extinct.

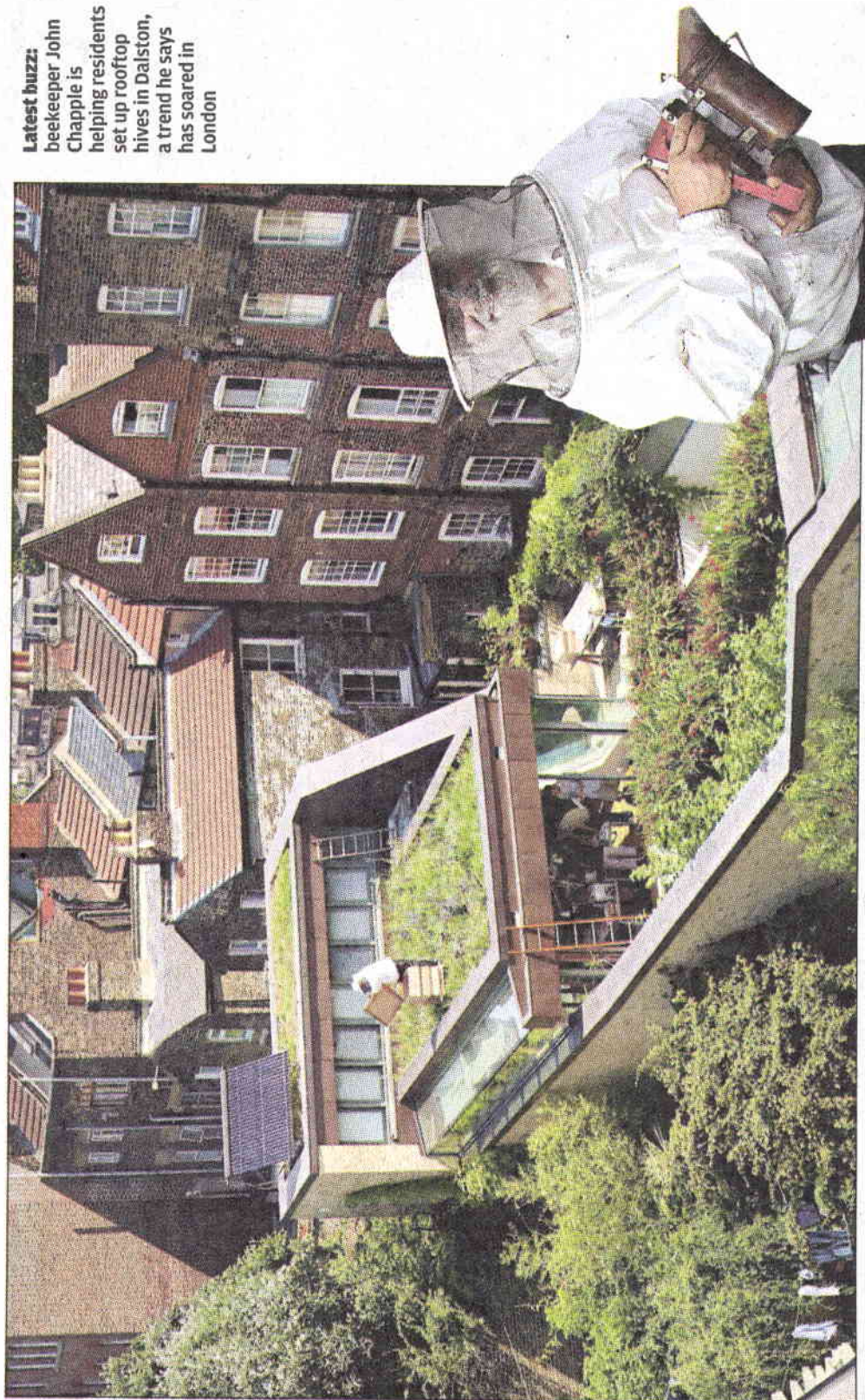
The London Beekeepers Association has been inundated with people keen to set up hives to produce honey and protect bees. It has begun helping install rooftop hives in Dalston.

Chairman John Chapple, who looks after a hive on the roof of the Royal Festival Hall, said: "Beekeeping is surprisingly popular within London, and we think there are around 5,000 beekeepers within the M25, with more appearing all the time.

"You can put a hive anywhere, even on a concrete roof. And if you look after them, they are perfectly harmless."

The number of bees in Britain has fallen by 10 to 15 per cent in the past two years because of disease, with some estimates suggesting the drop could be as high as 30 per cent.

Mr Chapple says an average hive costs about £300 to set up, and requires an hour of work a week. If maintained, each hive can produce around 50lb of honey a year and can help increase wild flowers. Each hive can support up to 40,000 bees.



Latest buzz: beekeeper John Chapple is helping residents set up rooftop hives in Dalston, a trend he says has soared in London

DAN KITWOOD/GETTY IMAGES