

24th October 2005

Dr Heather Robertson
English Nature
Northminster House
Peterborough PE1 1UA



Dear Heather

BAP Case For Traditional Orchards

Sustain: the alliance for better food and farming advocates food and agriculture policies and practices that enhance the health and welfare of people and animals, improve the working and living environment, enrich society and culture and promote equity. We represent around 100 national organisations working at international, national, regional and local level (www.sustainweb.org/member_details.asp).

Sustain is a registered charity (1018643) and a company limited by guarantee (2673194). Our membership meets biannually and, at the AGM, elects a governing council of trustees (see www.sustainweb.org/about_council.asp). Co-ordinating staff report to the Council quarterly. Each project is guided by a working party chaired by a Trustee.

A newly formed working party for our Traditional Orchards project oversees a partnership project between Sustain, English Nature and Leader+ to conserve traditional orchards through active management to achieve a number of benefits, including environmental, social and economic.

Following consultation with members, I am writing to offer the support of Sustain's Traditional Orchards Project Working Party for your case to include traditional orchards as a new habitat action plan in the coming revision of the Biodiversity Action Plan.

For too long, despite local and anecdotal evidence from the UK, and scientific evidence from EU partners including Germany and France, traditional orchards have been overlooked as valuable habitats. Your new work is therefore very welcome. The diversity of the structure and elemental species within orchards can add to their ecological value at a local level, within a mixed agricultural landscape. In towns and cities, such as Worcester, Lincoln, Exeter and Rainham, moribund and

redundant commercial orchards have long been successfully managed for birds, bats and especially for deadwood invertebrates, to the delight of local residents.

Members of our working party agree that the inclusion of traditional orchards in the revised BAP will help deepen ecological interest in orchard conservation and data collection, and provide more systematic and locally sensitive support for the inclusion of traditional orchards in agri-environment payments, as well as underscoring the value of the ecological and cultural patina represented by what are essentially micro-biospheres.

Several of the working party members are actively involved in local projects to protect orchards and re-weave their management into local economic practice. The continuation (or revitalisation) of opportunities to realise a return from a mixture of orchard-based activities will pave the way for a sustainable future for traditional orchards. However, policy supports such as a traditional orchard BAP will be an essential forerunner in achieving this vision.

With best wishes,
Yours sincerely

Daniel Keech
Sustainable Food Chains

enc. Working party membership list