Briefing for the Public Petitions Committee

Petition number: **PE1410**

**Main Petitioner:** John Hancox, Chair of Scottish Orchards and Director of the Children’s Orchard.

**Subject:** Developing a Fruitful future for all young Scots, (and some older ones.) Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to support and encourage local authorities, schools and community groups to plant fruit trees in schools and community settings so children, families and the wider community can learn how to grow harvest, and enjoy their own local seasonal fruit by providing funding to enable this to happen. We also ask the Scottish Government to support the development of the Commonwealth Orchard – as a Scotland wide legacy of the 2014 Commonwealth Games. While some of this could be in Glasgow’s East end, our vision with the Commonwealth Orchard is for that to be widely geographically spread, and developed in partnership with a range of local community groups.

**Background**

The Children’s Orchard aims to encourage children outdoors through the establishment and maintenance of orchards. Their project Fruitful Schools helps develop school orchards. This petition seeks to expand the reach of this project through receiving official backing from the Commonwealth Legacy.

**Orchards**

In Scotland, orchards were historically cultivated in the Clyde valley (most significant), Dumfries and Galloway, the Borders and around the Carse of Gowrie on the Firth of Tay. In all of these areas, fruit growing has decreased and today there are few commercial orchards. The June Agricultural Census\(^1\) suggests there was a total of 67ha of orchard in Scotland in 2011. According to SNH, the loss of orchards represents a loss for biodiversity as well as a loss of unusual and local varieties of fruit.

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\(^1\) Scottish Government (2011) Final Results from 2011 June Agricultural Census
An SNH commissioned report describes the current and historical situation of orchards in the Clyde valley.

“The orchard and fruit growing industry expanded throughout the 19th century and into the 20th... The zenith of the fruit industry in Clydesdale appears to have been between 1908 and 1913. Thereafter there was a decline, with tomato growing in heated greenhouses becoming more prominent. The decline in orchards continued between the two World Wars, with the 1950’s marking a steep decline due to lack of labour and higher wage costs. The decline has continued through to today.”

As part of the research, 60 orchards were surveyed for condition, landscape and environmental importance. It was found that the majority of remaining orchards were being neglected and allowed to decline. The orchards were found to have significant importance for the landscape and local importance for biodiversity.

Children, health, food and the environment
In 2009, almost 30% of Scottish children were overweight or obese. Environmental organisations have drawn attention to the benefits that outdoor access can provide to children’s health. This is backed up by medical research which suggests that income-related inequality in health is less pronounced in populations with greater exposure to green space. Research also suggests that many school children are unsure where their food comes from. A 2007 survey carried out by farming interests suggested that some could not identify the source of products such as yoghurt, pork or beef burgers.

Commonwealth Games Legacy
In 2014, Glasgow will host the Commonwealth Games. The Scottish Government and Glasgow City Council have stated that they want to bring a longer living legacy to the city of Glasgow and more broadly, the people of Scotland. A games legacy for Scotland was launched in 2009. It aims to deliver a lasting and positive legacy from Glasgow 2014 and other major events, such as the London 2012 and the Ryder Cup in 2014. It is based around the four themes: Active, Connected, Sustainable and Flourishing. Environmental projects identified for the “Sustainable” theme include the establishment of community woodlands and the Clyde Walkway Pilot Project. The “Active” theme includes community sports hubs and school sports.

Scottish Government
Scotland’s National Food and Drink Policy - Recipe for Success was launched in 2009. It sets out how the Scottish Government plans to:

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• support the growth of the Scottish food and drink Industry;
• build on Scotland’s reputation as a land of food and drink;
• ensure Scottish consumers make healthy and sustainable choices;
• make the public sector an exemplar for sustainable food procurement;
• ensure Scottish food supplies are secure and resilient to change;
• make food both available and affordable to all; and
• ensure that people understand more about the food they eat.

The policy links actions across a number of different areas. Progress against these was last reported at the end of 2010. Of particular note is the establishment of Scotland Food and Drink, a not-for-profit organisation to help food and drink companies to increase their profitability. In addition “Food and Drink Forums” provide platforms for local businesses to exchange experiences linked through a Food and Drink Forum network. The Scottish Government also established a Grow your Own Working Group which produced a recommendations report currently being considered by the Scottish Government.

Scottish Parliament
The Children’s Orchard was congratulated in Motion S3M-04277 moved by Pauline McNeill. There have also been several motions (S4M-00782, S3M-07185) congratulating schools for taking part in the programme.

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