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Dear John,

In response to your phonecall this morning.

First I must thank you for the work you've put into your discussion document. This initial phase of activity around the local food issue has been speculative, trying to build an alliance which can create a strong enough platform to have some influence. Contributions like your paper and Rachel Wileman's commitment to put time into the project help give the process credibility and are much appreciated. I've been deliberately holding back from defining the project too strictly so far, so that the views of as many of the partners as possible have a chance to consider the issue from their own perspective.

In some ways you could say that this is one of the good points about what the S.A. are proposing, although it does seem rather airy-fairy to me too. Our original understanding of Food Futures was that it would just be the bare bones to hang other projects on, an umbrella to represent what is undoubtedly an under-represented and undervalued sector. To some extent, me and Darrell just wanted the S.A. name to put on a letterhead to add weight and credibility to the project.

Can I also say that your comment that SOFI should concentrate on doing what it's good at was very helpful to me personally as I've been allowing myself to get a bit distracted by Food Futures and could easily lose sight of the actual issue. I still think it will be vital to set a broad and inclusive agenda to link together all the disparate sectors with an interest in sustainable and local food.

As far as the content of your paper is concerned, I just wondered if you could update it to add in some of the notes which are hand-written on the copy that I received. What you've compiled is very similar to what I originally set down as the basis for Food Futures in Sheffield when we approached the S.A. in November, piecing together bits of the jigsaw that are already in existence or imminent.

There are a couple of points that you could add. First, if the Healthy Gardening Group are successful in securing funding from the Lottery, there will be a network of development workers citywide to support healthy gardening and growing activities. I helped draft the bid and I'd say it's got a 50-50 chance of being accepted. If this network were in place, other initiatives could be added on, such as one of my pet projects, distributing fertilisers to anyone who is a committed and practising food grower and improving allotment usage.

Second, I think it will be vital in the long run to engage representatives of the statutory sector such as Council, Health and Education. They are aware of the importance of the issue and can see that they can fulfill their own job requirements by being involved. I believe that there is now more chance than ever before that government and decision-makers may be able to support long-term objectives which fits many of their criteria. Also, the involvement of people like Rachel could be really useful in convincing important bodies and institutions that the project is for real, such as getting ADAS on board. Again, personally, I feel like I've been actively discriminated against by the powers that be in the past, partly because of the way I look etc. but also because there's so much ignorance (wilful) of the basic facts of subsistence growing on the part of bureaucrats, but I'm sure you're well aware of that yourself.

Can I take this opportunity to advertise our own services. You mentioned that you would be looking for trainers / teachers and that the link with Whirlow would help. Myself and Darrell now feel confident enough to offer our services in respect to organic education, training, advice and consultation. Helping community groups is one of the things I've committed myself to as part of my work for SCEDU. The other strand of my work is running a one-day a week course, details enclosed. I'm also just coming to the end of getting a qualification, Training for Trainers (City and Guilds 7307), which has given me a lot more confidence to build on my practical experience and informal teaching record. I also enclose a copy of some information I put together for David M, which illustrates that we are building on from the educational material we compiled in the Sofidocument last year.

I'm hoping to arrange a meeting with Roger Butterfield and Carole Stocker in the next couple of weeks to discuss the prospects for setting up specific Organic training. Paper included.

CHEERS,