

6th November 1998

TO : Joy Carey, Soil Association Local Food Links
From : Richard Clare, Sheffield Organic Food Initiative

I am writing to bring you up to date with the progress we are making in preparing the ground for a Food Futures project here.

Myself and my associate, Darrell Maryon, have approached Sheffield Community Economic Development Unit, who funded the printing costs for our document at the start of this year. We have submitted a request for a small amount of funding and resources to allow us to begin preparing for Food Futures. They were very co-operative and should be able to help in the very near future, since the winter is much the best time for us to do these kinds of mental and administrative tasks.

Before we can receive funds from SCEDU, we will have to become a constituted legal entity. We have been advised by Voluntary Action Sheffield that the most suitable structure for us would be a charitable educational trust, which should be in place and allow us to progress by the end of this month.

We have started to contact a variety of our existing connections and inform them about Food Futures: members of the Healthy Gardening Group, the council's Recycling 2000 group and Environment Forum, L.A.21 Officer, Rachel Wildman, allotments officer, John Martin, David Gray of Heeley City Farm, David Middlemas Community Composting Network, , Lembas and Beans Wholefoods. Everyone we have explained the idea to has responded very positively and suggested that the time is right for such an initiative.

On a smaller, personal level, we have also been legitimising and strengthening the voluntary projects which we have been co-ordinating. Richard has applied to a local area fund (SRB / ERDF in the north-west inner-city of Sheffield) to upgrade his allotment into a community supported agriculture project, providing advice and a year-long introductory course for beginners who are just starting plots and who are motivated to grow organically. Darrell's Heeley Health project, linked to the local G.P., is in the process of improving its profile, access and resourcing. We hope to improve the standing of the kitchen garden restoration at Unstone Grange to the point where it could serve as a demonstration centre for organic techniques. We are both planning to attend a City & Guilds course (Training Trainers -- 730/7) in the new year, which would give us a qualification accepted by South Yorkshire Open College and at Further Education / NVQ level.

We have a question about match funding, whether there are any restrictions on its source? Could we use any of the sources mentioned above? We have been involved in two other bids for funding, which would be complimentary to Food Futures if they are successful. The Healthy Gardening Group has submitted a bid to the Lottery for £90K, which would deliver support at a community level and promote healthy gardening over a period of three years. Heeley City Farm have applied to the Environmental Action Fund for a local food development worker, including contacting producers and trying to set up a farmers' market. Also, the Community Composting Network are bidding for funds to extend the number of local composting projects in Sheffield. These projects could be interlinked and co-ordinated with the aims of Food Futures. This confirms our impression that there are many different groups and sectors interested in various elements and that it will be vital for them all to be linked and understand the bigger picture they are part of. We are convinced that it will be possible to develop a broad and deep consensus about the benefits of local and organic food., which would be effective both in lobbying for and actually delivering more organic supply than is available at present.

Is it okay to continue to circulate the draft Food Futures description (June 98)? I've re-typed it so it fits on just two sides of paper and have it stored on disk.. It has been very useful in explaining the idea and provides a solid base. Is there any more information yet?

I've been asked to contribute an article to Permaculture News. Is it okay to mention Food Futures, since the editor I talked to hadn't heard about it yet? (they hadn't heard about the HDRA'S Grow Your Own Campaign or the DETR Future of Allotments report or The Land Is Ours' allotments campaign, which I will also mention). Is there anything you would like me to include?

We will continue to expand our contacts with potential participants in Food Futures, building up as comprehensive a picture as possible of what potential capacity exists in and around Sheffield. If you need more information, either about SOFI or about the profile of the area (S Yorks./ N. E.Derbys.) and the case for Food Futures here, please let us know.

Yours sincerely,

Richard Clare and Darrell Maryon