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Emma Hennessey
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Dear Ms Hennessey

Management of the National Fruit Collection – options for the future

I understand an open competition is underway to establish how best to manage the National Fruit Collection in the future. Kent County Council strongly supports the retention of the collection in Kent. This letter represents the Council's official position regarding this matter.

There are significant historical connections between Kent and the fruit industry at a local, national and international level. The 'Garden of England' branding of Kent is inextricably linked with both soft and top fruit. East Malling Research has a long history of scientific excellence in relation to the fruit industry, and is renowned worldwide for this. We feel it is particularly important for the collection to be retained in its entirety in one location.

I understand if the collection is to be retained on the Brogdale Site, Tony Hillier, the landlord, is committed to working effectively with the successful bidder. He has indicated his intention to upgrade its facilities as a visitor attraction, including a restaurant, commercial garden centre and units for rural businesses, along with the on-going scientific research and management of the collection.

To date we have been made aware of only one bid from Kent, involving East Malling Research and the Brogdale Trust. If this bid is successful I believe it would involve moving the collection to the East Malling site. I understand there are plans to create a focal point for the national fruit industry, using the collection as an on-going research platform, along with a high quality educational/visitor centre to raise the profile of the value of fruit nutritionally, culturally and economically.

I am unaware of any further bids, but appreciate there may be other organisations within Kent interested in taking on the collection.

At this stage we believe the bid that provides the most robust scientific future for the collection is the one most likely to be favoured. From the information we have received to date we believe this to be the East Malling option, as it would provide a particularly strong scientific connection.

I hope this helps clarify KCC's position. I look forward to learning of the final outcome.

Yours sincerely



Roger Gough