



Herefordshire is symbolised by the apple and has a long history of orchards and cider & perry making. This plan is concerned with old traditional orchards and not modern bush orchards. A traditional orchard is defined as a minimum of 5 standard fruit trees in parcel of land, typically managed grassland often grazed by sheep or cattle. Trees are grown on vigorous or seedling rootstocks and can have a lifespan of several hundred years. They usually contain other important habitats such as hedgerows, ponds and dead wood. A bush orchard is densely planted with trees on dwarfing rootstock with an intensely managed ground flora and normally has a productive life span of 15-20 years. Orchards are more than just an important habitat for biodiversity and a source of traditional and heritage fruit varieties, they also form a historic landscape and are part of the counties folklore and traditions.

In recent decades the intensification of orchard production has led to the increased planting of 'bush' orchards which can be mechanically managed and produce larger crops. As a result, areas of traditional orchard, requiring much greater time and labour to manage and harvest, have been lost or neglected with the biggest threats now being loss of trees due to excess mistletoe and a pressure for small building plots. To make Traditional Orchards viable other 'commercial' markets must be developed for their fruit, heritage, public enjoyment and access.

Threats

- Increased demand for commercial production of cider and perry.
- Orchards are no longer recognised as a UKBAP habitat, although traditional orchards are currently listed as a Habitat of Principal Importance (Priority Habitat) in Section 41 of the NERC Act).
- Over grazing and lack of practical orchard management (e.g. not cutting mistletoe)
- Nutrient enrichment of grasslands and other habitats
- Use of fertilisers and pesticides
- Use of non-native/local apple varieties
- Keeping a "tidy" orchard reducing the amount of dead wood
- Traditions attached to orchards are not so widely celebrated
- Changes in agri-environment scheme targets and funding

Current Action

- Boom in 'artisan' cider and perry making
- Helping Britain Blossom and Three Counties Traditional Orchard Projects
- Orchard reserves (HWT)
- Orchard conservation activities through Orchard Origins
- Bulmer Foundation, Herefordshire Sustain Project, Marcher Apple Network, Big Apple, Cider Museum all contribute towards awareness
- National orchard inventory (NE)

	Objective	Action
A	Locate and map existing habitat extent	8
B	Maintain extent and distribution	2
C	Incorporate appropriate habitat mitigation in planning consents	2
D	Raise awareness of importance, best management and local varieties	1,3
E	Research alternative markets for apple products	4
F	Assess condition of sites through biodiversity surveys	8
G	Target resources to restore 50ha and create 10ha primarily in BEAs	5,6,7

	Actions	Target
1	Continue annual events to raise awareness especially of local varieties of apples	Annual
2	Review Traditional Orchard Inventory and ground truth current status of orchards process	Annual
3	Produce advice, set up demonstration events and workshops with relevant land managers	Annual
4	Develop alternative markets for apples from traditional orchards	Annual
5	Work within planning system to retain, restore and create Traditional Orchards	Annual
6	Encourage and support 'artisan' cider and perry makers	Annual
7	Develop and promote a Mistoetoe Management Plan	2020
8	Survey all sites and conduct specialist surveys on 20 key sites	2020

Lead Partner	HC (P&C)
Key Partners	Heineken, HWT