



## The Rt. Hon. David Maclean, M.P.

PENRITH AND THE BORDER CONSTITUENCY

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10<sup>th</sup> February 2005

  
Dear Mr Ashton

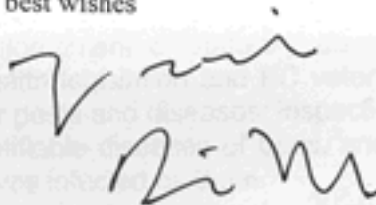
Thank you for your letter of 25<sup>th</sup> January, regarding the proposed reduction to the National Bee Unit's health programme. I raised this matter with DEFRA late last year on behalf of several other constituents and I enclose a copy of the reply I received from Margaret Beckett, Secretary of State at DEFRA.

As you will see, the Secretary of State justifies the reasons for the cut in funding to the NBU.

As you may be aware the Haskins Report investigated how services provided by DEFRA could be rationalised, simplified and made more cost-effective. Reducing the budget of the National Bee Unit was not specifically mentioned in the 33 main recommendations of the Haskins Report.

I recognise the value of pollination that bees provide to the agricultural and horticultural sectors and I am keenly aware of the importance of preventing animal diseases from entering this country. To deregulate Varroa and Foul Brood is an unnecessary step especially given the increasing problem of disease movement between countries. I also understand that this might lead to the closure of Bee Diseases Insurance Ltd which is effectively your industry's 'self-help' group to cover disease loss. That too would be a regrettable consequence of this Government's policy.

With best wishes



The Rt Hon David Maclean MP

cc. N J Utting, NFU, North West Region