

National Trust Press Release

For images and drone footage see editor's notes

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For peat's sake, it's time governments tackled climate change with immediate compost ban, say charities around the globe

- **National Trust organisations from 19 countries call for urgent ban on the use of peat in compost to tackle climate crisis**
- **Protecting peatlands our biggest natural way to heal climate harm**
- **The charities make direct appeal more than 8 million members to go peat free**
- **Over two million cubic metres was sold or used in the UK alone in 2019**
- **Peatlands store far more carbon than forests, as well as helping to control flooding and create homes for wildlife**
- **More than five per cent of all global carbon emissions caused by degraded and damaged peatlands**

National Trust organisations from around the world have teamed up to call for an urgent ban on the use of peat in compost as part of an international effort to tackle the effects of climate change.

Organisations from 19 countries including those from Scotland, Ireland, Germany, Guernsey, Indonesia and Jersey [1] are among those adding their call to a ban to tackle the nature and climate crises.

Healthy peatlands act as carbon sinks, trapping in carbon to help mitigate the impacts of climate change. They also help to control flooding and encourage vegetation that can provide homes for an array of wildlife.

But when they are damaged, such as mining for compost, they lose these abilities and emit their carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. [2]

The international organisations are also calling on their cumulative 8million members to stop buying products that rely on peat and seek sustainable alternatives [3].

By stripping the demand for peat used for horticultural purposes [4], conservation organisations hope to protect one of the most important naturally occurring defences to climate change – which take thousands of years to develop once lost.

They say that a failure to implement a ban will undermine any climate and nature commitments made by world leaders at COP 26.

National Trust Director General Hilary McGrady said: "We often hear how difficult it is to get world leaders to work together to create the change that is needed to tackle the climate crisis. Indeed,



our own prime minister has recently publicly admitted his fears over the success of COP 26. But here we have an easy win that would have the dual benefit of protecting one of our most important natural assets in the fight while creating homes for wildlife and simultaneously significantly reducing the amount of carbon dioxide we are pumping into the atmosphere.

“We are all taking action in our organisations to eliminate the use of peat in our gardens and through our supply chains - but we can’t end this practice alone. So today, I join a host of international National Trust organisations in calling on our members to make a positive choice for climate and for nature when shopping at garden centres and buy peat-free compost to use in their gardens and check whether the plants they are buying are peat free. It is through this sort of collective effort that we can unite in the fight against climate change.

“We also need government to step up and play their part by bringing in legislation that bans the sale of products containing peat.”

In the professional sector peat use saw a very small drop in use, down from 63.9 per cent in 2015 to 62.9 per cent in 2019.

More than two million cubic metres of peat was used in the UK in 2019, with about half imported from the Republic of Ireland, 220,000m³ from other EU countries and 800,000m³ dug from domestic peatlands.

This prompted the National Trust to join the RSPB, the Wildlife Trust and the Royal Horticultural Society, among others to write to Environment Secretary George Eustice last year and call for a ban on peat in compost by 2025.

The letter said: “Allowing peat use to continue rewards failure and undermines the prime minister’s commitment . . . to lead the way on climate change and to tackle the loss of biodiversity.”

Despite the publication of the Government’s England Peat Action Plan in May, with a promise to consult this year on banning the sale of peat and peat containing products to the public by 2024, the expected consultation has yet to launch, forcing international National Trusts to once again call for action.

Now, the National Trusts are going one step further, and calling for amateur gardener members to choose to go peat free, while offering a range of alternative options.

Ends

Picture notes to editors:

Images to support this story can be found here:

https://nationaltrustonline.sharepoint.com/:f:/s/MediaAssets/EuTkJWw4Vr1KtV7oibZmE4YBAdKGo_YsGPOGEM3tS84NDg?e=aRveSc

Images should only be used in conjunction with this story and credited as indicated.

Remarkable drone footage showing [peat bunds, that have turned Holcombe Moor, West Pennines into a giant sponge](#) can be found [here](#)

Partner quotes:

Stuart Brooks, Head of Conservation and Policy at National Trust for Scotland said “The National Trust for Scotland has been managing its beautiful gardens across Scotland on a peat free basis for many years. We teach our gardeners how to use alternatives to peat but the results are spectacular as our thousands of visitors attest. Everyone can go peat free but we need our growing media industry and our garden centres to step up and help people to buy or make their own peat free composts. Peat should be kept in the ground not in a bag”.

A spokesperson for An Taisce The National Trust for Ireland said: “The rapid development of sustainable alternatives to peat compost is an international priority. For substitution of the garden centre marketing of peat An Taisce The National Trust for Ireland has launched an initiative for home composting of organic material. “

Dr Catrini Pratihari Kubontubuh, Chair of the Indonesian Heritage Trust (BPPI) said: With degradation still a threat to many peatlands in Indonesia, it is our role to support their restoration. Saving our peatlands will counter climate change and provide better homes for wildlife.”

Notes to editors:

[1] Full list of international National Trust's calling for ban: National Trust (England, Wales and Northern Ireland), National Trust for Scotland, An Taisce, Bermuda National Trust, Din l'Art Helwa, National Trust of Malta, Falkland Island Museum and National Trust, Fundació Catalunya- La Pedrera, Indonesian Heritage Trust, Kulturerbe Bayern (Germany), Monuments and Relicts Commission (Sierra Leone), National Trust for Jersey, National Trust of Guernsey, National Trust of Korea, National Trust of Land and Culture (British Columbia), National Trust of Slovakia, National Trust of South Australia, Saint Lucia National Trust and Taiwan Environmental Information Association (TEIA) Scotland, An Taisce (Ireland), Falklands, Guernsey, Indonesia, Jersey, Guernsey, Saint Lucia, Bermuda, Korea, British Columbia, Kulturerbe Bayern (Germany), Indonesia, Falklands, New Zealand, Taiwan, Sierra Leone

[2] Damage to these peatlands from extraction, draining and other activity means that this carbon is being released, equating to more than 5.6% of all global human carbon emissions. Fires in Indonesian peat swamp forests in 2015 emitted nearly 16 million tonnes of CO₂ a day, or more than the daily emissions from the entire US economy. <https://www.iucn.org/resources/issues-briefs/peatlands-and-climate-change>

[3] For more info on how to go peat free see here <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/features/going-peat-free>

[4] Defra figures show the total volume of peat sold in garden centres 2018 was 2.11 million m³, and 2.06 million m³ in 2019. <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-10-30/109348>

Further information on figures of retail peat in amateur and professional can be found here:

<https://hta.org.uk/uploads/assets/baa50362-3876-4a46-9690c7fb711446a9/70af0da8-7f83-4a93-8cb4df18d781617a/Report-vf.pdf>