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Peat-free Partnership, Plantlife and B&Q available for comment

## Major retailers, B&Q and the Co-op, sign letter urging UK government to legislate to end peat sales

*Peatlands across the UK continue to be devastated by the commercial extraction of peat, with dire consequences for climate and wildlife*

A letter signed by more than 100 retailers, compost manufacturers, nursery owners and conservation charities calls on Keir Starmer and his cabinet to urgently legislate to end peat sales – bringing an end to years of uncertainty.

It is the first time retailers, charities and the horticultural industry have joined forces to demand a change in legislation.

Coordinated by The Peat-Free Partnership - a coalition of horticultural organisations and environmental NGOs within the UK – the letter includes support from B&Q, the Co-op, major compost manufacturer Evergreen Garden Care and supplier Vitacress - and calls on the new government to fulfil its legal commitments on climate change and biodiversity.

Extraction and sale of peat for use in horticulture remains legal, despite tireless campaigning to stop it. The previous UK Government repeatedly pledged to pass legislation\* to end peat sales in England by the end of 2024 - but failed to keep its promise.

In 2022, the horticultural industry still used 950,000m<sup>3</sup> of peat – enough to fill 380 Olympic-sized swimming pools.

This trade impacts biodiversity and carbon stores, as well as reducing our ability to withstand flooding and improve the quality of our water supplies.

Peatlands are home to some of the UK's most distinctive plant communities. They are also vital carbon sinks. When bogs are drained or peat is extracted, it releases carbon dioxide, turning a significant carbon store into a major emitter of greenhouse gases, exacerbating climate change.

**Nicola Hutchinson, Director of Conservation, Plantlife, the host organisation for the Peat-free Partnership, said:**

“There is overwhelming support for the ban on the sale of peat – with major retailers, the horticultural industry, MPs, conservation charities and 95% of the public backing a fully peat-free, sustainable UK horticultural industry.

“We’ve been talking about this for too long. We’re calling on the government to act now. Let’s legislate and keep peat in the ground and out of our gardens.”



**Joanna Gluzman, Responsible Business Director, B&Q, said:**

“At B&Q we have always taken the issue of peat removal within our products very seriously and since 2023 all of the bagged compost we sell has been peat free. We are currently working on removing peat from our nursery plants, so that going forward we can offer a full range of peat free plants by 2026.

The environmental impact of using peat is well known and we’re committed to working with our growers and to bringing them on the journey to peat-free plants with us. We’re delighted that by helping them to understand B&Qs peat-free commitment, we have led our growers to make great strides forward in working with peat alternatives. As a result, our growers are now seeing more demand for peat-free plants.

Whilst we’re making good progress to meet our target, we would welcome regulation to ensure progress on such an important topic is maintained so that the use of peat is fully eradicated in the future.”

**Alys Fowler, gardener and writer, and former BBC Gardeners’ World presenter, said:**

“There is no acceptable level of peat for use in horticulture - or elsewhere. It must stay in the ground for the sake and health of the planet, because it is a unique and precious habitat and because any form of extraction releases huge amounts of greenhouse gasses through degradation of the stored carbon held in the peat. Peat mining can only successfully happen with thorough legislation and I urge the government to see this through.

We, as a nation of garden lovers, could be the first country to make a lasting ban, not just on the sales of our own peat, but on imported compost and plants grown in peat too — what a legacy that would be for future generations.”

Legislation to end the sale of peat across the UK is needed to provide:

- A **legal and enforceable end to peat use**, as repeated voluntary targets set by previous governments were consistently missed.
- A **level playing-field** for the market, so that peat-free companies don't lose out as they're continually undercut by cheaper peat-grown, environmentally-damaging products.
- **An end to imports** and exports of peat, protecting peatlands in other countries as well as here in the UK.
- A catalyst for more **sustainable gardening**, moving away from reliance on raw materials and artificial inputs, and towards 'greener' gardening and a circular economy.



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## About The Peat-free Partnership

The Peat-free Partnership is funded by Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and hosted by the wild plant conservation charity Plantlife. It is a broad coalition of horticultural businesses and environmental NGOs across the UK with the overarching goal of ending the commercial trade in peat across the UK. Despite the widely recognised environmental damage caused by the use of peat in horticulture and progress towards using alternatives, the trade in peat is still ongoing.

[www.peatfreepartnership.org.uk](http://www.peatfreepartnership.org.uk)

## Notes to editors

See attached letter with full list of signatories.

\* The *Horticultural Peat (Prohibition of Sale) Bill* was within a week of being published when the General Election was called.

## What we're calling on the government to do:

The Peat-free Partnership is asking the UK Government to bring in legislation at the earliest possible opportunity as part of a fair transition to peat-free horticulture. We are asking for:

- **An end to sales of peat to amateur gardeners** i.e. in bagged compost as soon as possible; in practice, within six months of legislation coming into force
- **A two-year general exemption for all commercial growers** to allow time for those who have not yet done so to carry out trials, reskill the workforce and upgrade equipment
- **A longer but time-limited technical exemption for plants which require more research and development to find peat-free alternatives.** This should end by 2030 at the latest, after which time all sales of peat should end.
- In addition, **a conservation exemption would licence institutions such as botanic gardens to use small amounts of peat where unavoidable**, for conservation purposes only.

## Media contact

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