

# Ending the sale of Peat in Scotland Consultation

February 2023

# Ending the Sale of Peat in Scotland

## Contents

Ministerial Foreword .....	2
Our pledge .....	3
Our proposal.....	3
Your views .....	3
Impact on businesses.....	3
Peat policy in the rest of the United Kingdom.....	4
How we will use your responses .....	5
Overview .....	5
Why your views matter .....	6
Consultation Questions.....	7
<i>You or the organisation you represent</i> .....	7
<i>Your use of peat</i> .....	8
<i>Labelling of horticultural products</i> .....	10
<i>Moving away from using peat</i> .....	11
<i>Understanding the Impact of Banning the Sale of Peat</i> .....	15
<i>Anything else you'd like to tell us</i> .....	17
<i>About you</i> .....	18
Respondent Information Form.....	20
Responding to this Consultation .....	21

## Ministerial Foreword



Peatlands are an integral part of Scotland's cultural and natural heritage. Covering over a third of our land area, they store around 1.8 billion tonnes of carbon. In good condition, they offer multiple benefits and resilience to our environment and communities.

Restoring Scotland's peatlands can help us fight climate change, support biodiversity and provide good, green jobs – often in rural communities. This is why we have

invested £250 million to restore 250,000 hectares of peatlands over a 10 year period to 2030.

In poor condition, though, the benefits are lost and peatlands become a source of carbon emissions. Their protection and restoration are vital and form important components of Scotland's response to the twin crises of climate change and loss of nature.

Hand in hand with our efforts to restore peatlands, we must do all we can to protect them. This means we must consider how to stop using peat, whether extracted in Scotland or elsewhere.

Horticulture is vital for our recreation, food supply and economy. The upsurge in gardening during recent lockdowns reinforces its role in our general wellbeing. However, it is also the main user of extracted peat and we need to understand how to move away from using peat in order to protect peatlands from further damage.

I invite you to respond to this consultation whether you are a professional grower or enjoy gardening at home or in an allotment. We also want to hear views from industry – those who extract peat, those who supply it, garden centres and other users of peat such as the fuel and whisky industries. We welcome a wide range of views to ensure that we can set dates for ending the sale of peat that are both realistic and ambitious. Working closely with industry, businesses and all users of peat, we will take the steps necessary to protect peatlands, both at home and abroad, supporting our Just Transition to net zero by 2045.

Mairi McAllan MSP  
Minister for Environment and Land Reform

## **Our pledge**

We have pledged to develop policy on banning the sale of peat-related gardening products, as part of our wider commitment to phase out the use of peat in horticulture ([2021-22 Programme for Government](#)). Our overall aim is to protect peatlands and preserve the ecosystem services they can offer, not least their role in capturing and storing carbon, thereby contributing to Scotland's transition to Net Zero by 2045. Whilst horticulture is the main end use of extracted peat, we need to consider all uses of peat, and the impact of its extraction on peatlands, in order to develop effective policy.

## **Our proposal**

We are proposing to ban the sale of peat in stages, beginning with the retail horticulture sector (peat sold to amateur/hobby gardeners), which accounts for around two thirds of all peat used in UK horticulture. We would then widen the ban to the sale of peat for professional horticulture. This might be achieved by applying a general ban on the sale of peat (for all purposes) with exemptions, some time-limited to allow for transition.

## **Your views**

We would like to hear your views whether you enjoy gardening at home, on an allotment or represent professional horticulture – professional growers, gardeners and landscapers. We also want to hear from those within the supply chain – those who extract, supply or sell peat. We are keen to gain insight into the wider context of extracted peat and invite all users of peat (such as the fuel or whisky industry) to answer any questions relevant to them.

## **Impact on businesses**

We want to develop a deeper understanding of how ending the sale of peat might affect industry, particularly professional horticulture, so that we can support a swift transition. We recognise that this will be easier for some sectors than others and we would like to hear from any parts of the industry that might face transitional challenges so we can consider measures that might ease transition, such as time-limited exemptions.

We appreciate the complexity of supply chains for peat-containing products and will work with industry and other UK administrations to find ways to minimise burden for businesses where we can.

Defra have recently carried out an assessment on the effects of banning the sale of peat for horticulture with the intention that this would be relevant for all UK nations. That UK level impact assessment is available here: [Consultation Impact Assessment Ending the Retail Sale of Peat in Horticulture in England and Wales.pdf](#) ([defra.gov.uk](https://defra.gov.uk)) and we would encourage respondents to consider its contents.

However, further to this, we want to consider specific effects on Scottish businesses to support them as best we can. We are working to gain relevant data to enable us to undertake a Scotland-focussed Business and Regulatory Impact Assessment (BRIA) that will examine what effects banning the sale of peat in Scotland might have on Scottish businesses.

## **Peat policy in the rest of the United Kingdom**

To allow consideration of how policy developments in other parts of the UK might align with Scottish policy developed following this consultation, the following statements on current positions were provided by the other UK administrations in January 2023.

### England

“Defra undertook a joint consultation covering England and Wales on measures to end the sale of peat and announced on 27 August 2022 its intention to legislate for a ban on the sale of peat and peat containing products in the amateur gardening sector in the course of 2024. Time limited exemptions would be made available for professional growers in recognition of technical barriers yet to be overcome in relation to the propagation of certain plants and the production of some edible crops. The Welsh Government also announced in December last year that they would work with the UK Government on next steps to implement the ban in Wales.”

### Northern Ireland

“The Draft Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy to 2040 has undergone public consultation and is currently being revised prior to approval to publish by an incoming Minister and the Northern Ireland Executive. A proposed action in the revised draft Strategy is to conduct a review and publish a key issues paper on peat extraction and the use of peat and peat products and take forward any recommendations made. The aim of the proposed review is to explore supply and use of peat products and peat alternatives in Northern Ireland in order to develop future policy direction.”

### Wales

“The Welsh Government announced on 5 December 2022 the retail sale of peat in horticulture will end in Wales. This follows a public consultation which shows 92% of Welsh respondents supported an overall ban of the sale of peat compost. Evidence from the consultation and stakeholder workshops suggests a ban for the amateur sector should be introduced rapidly (by the end of 2024) with the bans for ornamental and edible horticultural use coming in as quickly as practically possible thereafter. This will be in line with Defra’s announced plans to ban all sales of peat to amateur gardeners in England by 2024 to protect peatlands and the natural environment. The Welsh Government is working with the UK Government on next steps to implement the ban in Wales.”

## How we will use your responses

Responses to this consultation will inform our policy on ending the sale of peat in Scotland. Your responses will guide timescales for introducing a ban in Scotland and help us to devise a plan for exemptions, supported by further discussion with industries. A suite of impact assessments to consider the effects on the environment, businesses, islanders and equality will provide further evidence. We will engage with stakeholders as part of the consultation process, gathering views from those who might be affected by a peat sales ban. This approach will allow us to devise a plan to end the sale of peat in Scotland that is robust, workable and fair.

## Overview

Scotland's peatlands have a critical role to play in responding to the twin crises of the global climate emergency and loss of biodiversity.

In good condition, peatlands are a significant natural carbon store. They hold around 1.8 billion tonnes of carbon, equivalent to around 145 years' worth of Scotland's total net carbon emissions. Covering about a third of our country, peatlands support important ecosystems and biodiversity, improve water quality and reduce flood risk. However, when degraded or in poor condition, these benefits are lost and peatlands become a net source of carbon emissions. This is why the Scottish Government is dedicated to protecting and restoring our precious peatlands, supporting a Just Transition to Net Zero by 2045.

In 2020 we set out ambitious plans to invest more than £250 million to restore at least 250,000 hectares of degraded peatlands by 2030, scaling up our restoration efforts which have already seen over 30,000 hectares of peatland restored since 2012.

Our National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) was adopted on the 13 February 2023 and contains policies to restrict peat extraction. New commercial peat extraction, including extensions to existing sites, is not supported except in very limited circumstances. NPF4 is now part of the development plan and will be influential in all planning decisions.

We are aware that around 1,000 hectares of Scotland's peatlands are being used to produce peat for horticulture. In 2021, Scotland supplied around 300,000 cubic metres of peat used in UK horticulture or exported. This represents 16% of the total with 22% originating elsewhere in the UK and 62% coming from outside of the UK. Ending the sale of peat in Scotland would help to protect our own peatlands as well as peatlands elsewhere in the world.

The horticulture industry has made commendable efforts to move away from peat in recent years. In 2011, peat accounted for 62% of all growing media used in UK horticulture (both retail and professional) or exported, declining to 36% in 2021. Whilst those efforts cannot go unpraised, we recognise that clear targets are needed to eliminate peat from horticulture entirely. The professional horticulture sector is finding it harder to overcome its dependency on peat and, in 2021, peat accounted

for over half of the growing media used in UK professional horticulture compared with around 30% of growing media used in UK retail horticulture.

In September 2021, we pledged, through our 2021-22 Programme for Government, to take forward work to develop and consult on a ban on the sale of peat-related gardening products as part of our wider commitment to phase out the use of peat in horticulture. Using this two-step approach, we intend to ban sales for the retail sector (amateur/hobby gardeners), which uses most peat, followed by the professional sector, which may need more time to transition to alternatives. We welcome a wide range of views to help shape our policies on the use of peat.

Some of the questions may not apply to you and you do not need to answer these.

### **Why your views matter**

Your views will help us shape our policy development. We have stated our intention to ban the sale of peat-related gardening products as the first stage of our commitment to phase out the use of peat in horticulture.

We now need to devise timescales for banning the sale of peat, in particular:

- peat in retail horticulture (peat that is sold to the general public for gardening)
- peat for professional horticulture (peat sold to professional growers, landscapers and for plants sold to the public)

It is important, for reasons set out in the Overview, that we ban peat sales as quickly as possible whilst considering the needs of individuals and industries including the horticulture industry, which in itself contributes so much to our environment, food supplies, recreation and wellbeing.

## Consultation Questions

### You or the organisation you represent

Please tell us about you and any company or organisation that you represent.

To find out how we handle your personal data, please see our [privacy policy](#).

1. Which of the following best describes you or the business you represent?  
(Answering this question will help us to categorise your responses)

- Commercial Grower
- Hobby gardener/private gardener (amateur)
- Growing Media Manufacturer
- Representative of an environmental non-governmental organisation (eNGO)
- Representative of a trade body
- Professional Gardener/Landscaper
- Retail plant sales (selling plants to public)
- Retail growing media sales (selling growing media to public)
- Business to business plant sales
- Business to business growing media sales
- Peat extractor
- Fuel industry representative
- Whisky industry representative
- Other food/drink industry (please specify)
- Other (please specify)

Please specify if necessary

2. For those responding on behalf of a business, what does the business sell, produce or grow?

Please specify



3. How many employees are there in your organisation?

- Less than 10
- 10-49
- 50-249
- 250+

### Your use of peat

We want to understand the various uses of peat including why peat is used in horticulture.

Please answer the following questions to let us know why you use peat and, for horticultural use, how you decide on which growing medium to use. We're interested in whether you consider environmental impact and how easy it is to find alternatives to peat for your use.

Related Information: Growing media/medium is often referred to as "potting compost". It can be composed of various substances such as coir, compost or peat and may be a blend of more than one of these. It can be bought in bags in shops such as garden centres, DIY stores or supermarkets. The term also refers to any "potting compost" within container-grown plants sold to the public.

4. For what purpose do you use peat?

- Gardening – professional
- Gardening – amateur
- Growing ornamentals – professional
- Growing fruit/vegetables – professional
- Retail sales
- Business to business sales of peat
- Heating - extracted from own/rented land for own use as fuel
- Heating - buy for own use as fuel
- Heating - sell for fuel
- Food/drink production processes (please specify)
- Other (please specify)

Please specify if necessary

5. Do you consider environmental impacts when using peat?

- Yes
- No

If so, please explain your concerns and the measures you take to avoid using peat

6. Is it easy to find alternatives to peat in your local retail outlet?

- Yes, they are readily available and clearly labelled
- They are there but I need to scrutinise packaging to find them
- I often find it hard to tell what is contained within products
- I find it very difficult to find alternatives
- I actively seek products containing peat and do not wish to use alternatives
- I don't consider what growing media is contained within products
- Other (please specify)

Please specify if necessary

7. When buying growing media, on what do you base your choice?

	Not important	Quite important	Important	Very important
Performance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cost	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Consistent product quality	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Environmental consequences	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Brand loyalty	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Do you have any other considerations? Please explain here

### Labelling of horticultural products

We would like to know how easy it is to understand what is contained within bags of growing medium and potted plants and how this could be improved to allow consumers to make informed choices.

8. Is the information provided on growing media packaging (e.g. printed on bags of compost) or signage sufficient to allow you to make an informed decision regarding:

	Yes	No	I don't look at information on packaging/signage
the environmental impact of its contents?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
whether growing media contains peat?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

9. Do you think there should be more information about the growing medium present in potted plants at the point of sale?

- Yes, so I can make an informed decision on what I purchase
- Yes, so I can avoid buying plants in peat
- I don't wish to know what growing medium the plants I buy are growing in
- The plants I buy display information detailing the growing medium used

Please use this box if you wish to share further views on labelling

10. If you are a retailer/grower, how difficult would it be to indicate whether peat is present in growing medium within pots?

- Impossible
- Difficult
- Fairly Easy
- Very Easy

Please provide any further explanation here

### **Moving away from using peat**

Your views will help inform timescales for ending the sale of peat. It is important that we have a clear vision of how you or your business will be affected by a peat sales ban.

One approach to ending the sale of peat might be to apply a general ban on the sale of peat (for all purposes) with exemptions, some time-limited to allow for transition. The questions here will help us to develop policy and devise timescales.

A wide range of responses from all users of peat will help us to form a bigger picture and aid our policy development.

11a. Could you or your company stop using peat now?

- Yes
- No

Please provide any further explanation if required

11b. If you answered 'no' then why can't you stop using peat now?

- Availability of suitable alternatives
- Cost
- Change in equipment/machinery required
- Storage
- Performance
- Other (please specify)

Please specify if necessary

11c. If not now, when could you feasibly stop using peat?

Please indicate a date (year) when it is likely that you could stop using peat

12. Are there any plants for which peat is vital for growth and you are not aware of suitable alternatives?

If yes, please provide further information

13. Is peat necessary for propagation (raising a plant from a seed/bulb/corm/tuber/vegetative cutting)?

- Yes (please specify)
- No
- Sometimes (please specify)

Please specify if necessary

14. Are there any instances where a % of peat should be permitted within a container-grown plant and what are those instances?

- A small percentage should be allowed to account for that which is transferred when replanting propagated material
- A percentage should be allowed, for a finite period of time, to facilitate transition away from peat for certain plants (please specify plant and %)
- Other (please specify)

Please explain further if necessary

15. Should there be a ban on the sale of peat and peat-containing products in Scotland?

- Yes - for all/ most peat sales
- Yes - for all horticultural peat sales
- Yes -for retail horticultural peat sales (amateur/hobby gardeners)
- Yes - for professional horticultural peat sales
- No

If yes, please explain anything that should be exempt

16. Will your business be affected by a peat ban?

- Yes, positively
- Yes, negatively
- No

If yes (positively or negatively), please explain.

17. In what year should peat sales stop for retail horticulture (amateur/hobby gardeners)?

Please state year

18. In what year should peat sales stop for professional horticulture (growers/landscapers/producers/business to business horticultural enterprises)?

Please state year

19. In what year should peat sales stop for other uses? (please specify)

Please state year. You may break this down to different years for different parts of the sector.

## Understanding the Impact of Banning the Sale of Peat

We want to understand the impacts, both positive and negative, that banning the sale of peat may have on stakeholders.

Please answer these questions to share your views with us.

20. Please explain any potential costs or burdens that you or your business might face as a result of the outcomes arising from this consultation

Please describe any costs or burdens

21. Could outcomes arising from this consultation have implications, positive or negative, for the environment?

Please explain potential implications for the environment

22. Might outcomes arising from this consultation affect one age group more than another, either in a positive or negative way? Please specify and explain.

Please specify age group and provide explanation



23. Might any outcomes arising from this consultation have any positive or negative impacts on data protection or privacy?

Please specify impact on data protection or privacy

24. Could any outcomes arising from this consultation have any positive or negative impacts on those on low incomes or in socio-economically disadvantaged areas?

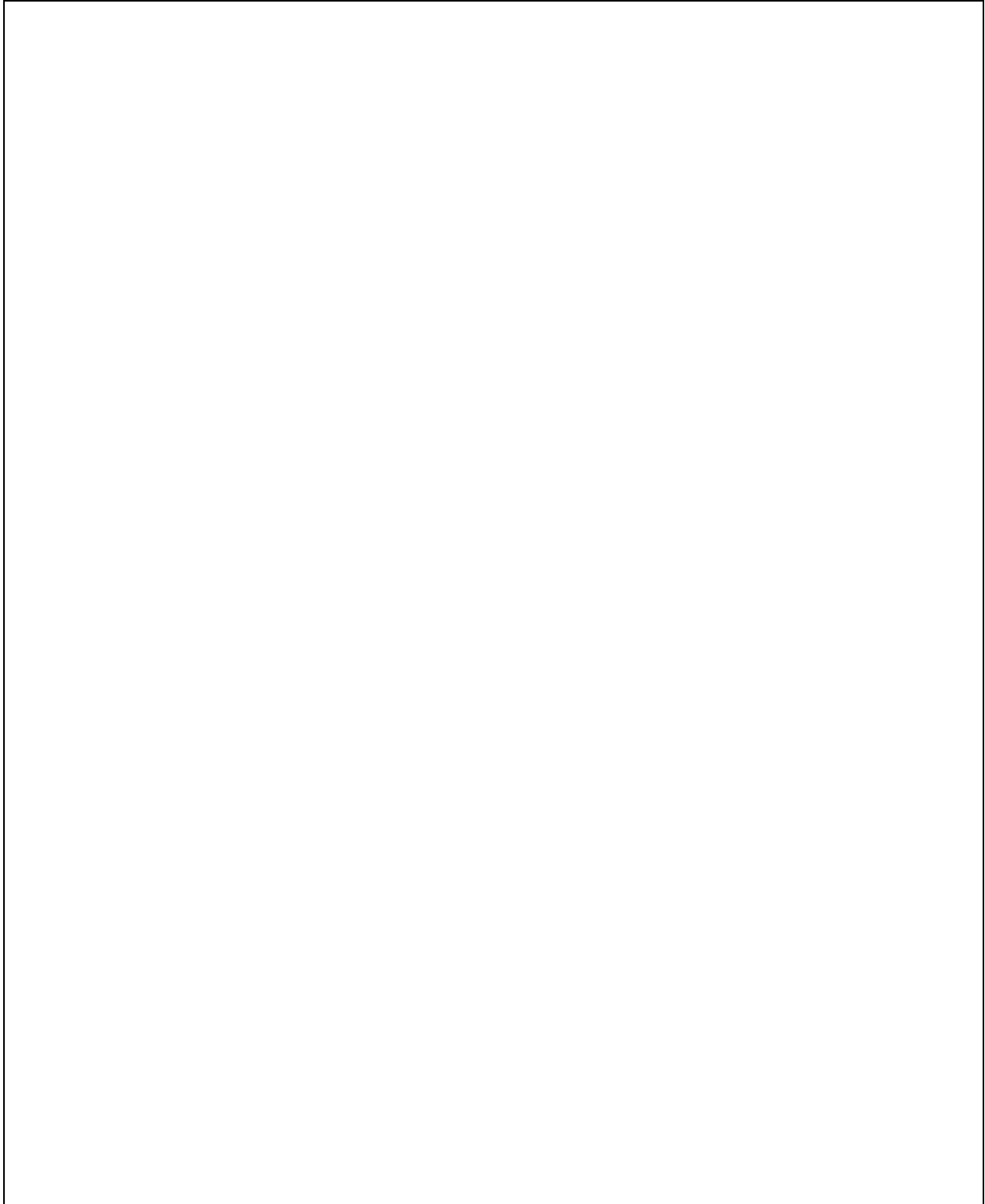
Please specify impacts on socio-economically disadvantaged groups or areas

25. Might any outcomes arising from this consultation have any positive or negative impacts specific to island communities?

Please specify potential impacts on island communities

**Anything else you'd like to tell us**

26. Please use this space for anything else you'd like to tell us in relation to ending the sale of peat.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the respondent to provide additional information or comments related to ending the sale of peat.

## About you

Please indicate how you wish your response to be handled and, in particular, whether you are content for your response to be published. If you ask for your response not to be published, we will still take account of your views in our analysis but we will not publish your response, quote anything that you have said or list your name. We will regard your response as confidential, and we will treat it accordingly.

To find out how we handle your personal data, please see our [privacy policy](#). By clicking submit you agree to our privacy policy.

27. What is your name?

28. What is your email address?

29. Are you responding as an individual or an organisation? (Required)

- Individual
- Organisation - commercial business
- Organisation – eNGO
- Organisation - trade body
- Other (please specify)

Please specify as necessary

30. If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, which organisation do you represent?

31. Where are you based?

- Scotland
- Another part of the UK (please specify)
- Elsewhere (please specify)

Please specify if necessary

32. The Scottish Government would like your permission to publish your consultation response. Please indicate your publishing preference:  
(Required)

- Publish response with name
- Publish response only (without name)
- Do not publish response

**Information for organisations only:**

The option '*Publish response only (without name)*' refers only to your name, not your organisation's name. If this option is selected, the organisation name will still be published.

If you choose the option '*Do not publish response*', your organisation name may still be listed as having responded to the consultation in, for example, the analysis report.

33. We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?  
(Required)

- Yes
- No

34. I confirm that I have read the [privacy policy](#) and consent to the data I provide being used as set out in the policy.  
(Required)

- I consent



## Respondent Information Form

**Please Note** this form **must** be completed and returned with your response.  
To find out how we handle your personal data, please see our privacy policy:  
<https://www.gov.scot/privacy/>

Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?

- Individual  
 Organisation

Full name or organisation's name

Phone number

Address

Postcode

Email Address

The Scottish Government would like your permission to publish your consultation response. Please indicate your publishing preference:

- Publish response with name  
 Publish response only (without name)  
 Do not publish response

### Information for organisations:

The option 'Publish response only (without name)' is available for individual respondents only. If this option is selected, the organisation name will still be published.

If you choose the option 'Do not publish response', your organisation name may still be listed as having responded to the consultation in, for example, the analysis report.

We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?

- Yes  
 No

## Responding to this Consultation

We are inviting responses to this consultation by 12 May 2023

Please respond to this consultation using the Scottish Government's consultation hub, Citizen Space (<http://consult.gov.scot>). Access and respond to this consultation online at <https://consult.gov.scot/environment-forestry/ending-the-sale-of-peat/>. You can save and return to your responses while the consultation is still open. Please ensure that consultation responses are submitted before the closing date of 12 May 2023.

If you are unable to respond using our consultation hub, please send your response and the Respondent Information Form to:

Peatlands Policy Team  
Nature Division  
Scottish Government  
Area 3-H (South)  
Victoria Quay,  
Edinburgh,  
EH6 6QQ

Or email us at [horticultural.peat@gov.scot](mailto:horticultural.peat@gov.scot)

### Handling your response

If you respond using the consultation hub, you will be directed to the About You page before submitting your response. Please indicate how you wish your response to be handled and, in particular, whether you are content for your response to be published. If you ask for your response not to be published, we will regard it as confidential, and we will treat it accordingly.

All respondents should be aware that the Scottish Government is subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 and would therefore have to consider any request made to it under the Act for information relating to responses made to this consultation exercise.

If you are unable to respond via Citizen Space, please complete and return the Respondent Information Form included in this document.

To find out how we handle your personal data, please see our privacy policy: <https://www.gov.scot/privacy/>

### Next steps in the process

Where respondents have given permission for their response to be made public, and after we have checked that they contain no potentially defamatory material, responses will be made available to the public at <http://consult.gov.scot>. If you use the consultation hub to respond, you will receive a copy of your response via email.

Following the closing date, all responses will be analysed and considered along with any other available evidence to help us. Responses will be published where we have been given permission to do so. An analysis report will also be made available.

### **Comments and complaints**

If you have any comments about how this consultation exercise has been conducted, please send them to the contact address above or at [horticultural.peat@gov.scot](mailto:horticultural.peat@gov.scot).

### **Scottish Government consultation process**

Consultation is an essential part of the policymaking process. It gives us the opportunity to consider your opinion and expertise on a proposed area of work.

You can find all our consultations online: <http://consult.gov.scot>. Each consultation details the issues under consideration, as well as a way for you to give us your views, either online, by email or by post.

Responses will be analysed and used as part of the decision making process, along with a range of other available information and evidence. We will publish a report of this analysis for every consultation. Depending on the nature of the consultation exercise the responses received may:

- indicate the need for policy development or review
- inform the development of a particular policy
- help decisions to be made between alternative policy proposals
- be used to finalise legislation before it is implemented

While details of particular circumstances described in a response to a consultation exercise may usefully inform the policy process, consultation exercises cannot address individual concerns and comments, which should be directed to the relevant public body.



© Crown copyright 2023

**OGL**

This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated. To view this licence, visit [nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3](https://nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3) or write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

This publication is available at [www.gov.scot](http://www.gov.scot)

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at

The Scottish Government  
St Andrew's House  
Edinburgh  
EH1 3DG

ISBN: 978-1-80525-485-0 (web only)

Published by The Scottish Government, February 2023

Produced for The Scottish Government by APS Group Scotland, 21 Tennant Street, Edinburgh EH6 5NA  
PPDAS1227962 (02/23)

W W W . g o v . s c o t