

Transition Wilmslow



2 February 2020

Rt Hon Esther McVey MP
Member of Parliament for Tatton
84 Chapel Lane,
Wilmslow SK9 5JH

Cc defra.co.uk

Dear Ms McVey,

I am writing on behalf of Transition Wilmslow on World Wetland Day to ask you to support the banning of peat sales and peat burning in the UK. We know that you are well aware that climate change is the greatest threat faced by humanity, and urgent action, not just target setting, is required. Banning peat sales and bog burning could make a significant UK contribution to COP26 and demonstrate that the UK is indeed a world leader in taking practical steps to fight the Climate Emergency.

This is a real opportunity for the UK Government to send a very strong message to the UN Climate Summit in Glasgow at the end of this year by taking immediate action to restore our damaged peat bogs, including our own local Lindow Moss, and to ban sales of peat in the UK as well as bog burning. The UK is one of the world's top ten countries in terms of peatland area, covering two million hectares. The UK's peatlands store over three billion tonnes of carbon, around the same amount as all the forest in the UK, France and Germany put together. In the UK, 80% of peatlands are damaged. https://www.iucn-uk-peatlandprogramme.org/sites/default/files/2019-06/Peatland_Leaflet_ONLINE_V2.pdf

2019 has seen all four devolved governments across the UK declare a climate emergency which will require urgent action and a dramatic reduction in the UK's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to reach a target of Net Zero by 2050 (2045 in Scotland). GHG emissions from UK peatlands are estimated to contribute [around 4% of the UK's total annual greenhouse gas \(GHG\) emissions](#) and therefore represent a significant opportunity to reduce emissions through restoration activity (IUCN 2019). This year's CCC Report (Land Use: Policies for a Net Zero UK) emphasises the importance of:

Banning damaging practices such as rotational burning on peatland (by 2020), peat extraction and the sale of peat and peat imports (by 2023);

- Regulating that peat soils are not left bare;
- Mandating all peatland within a Site of Special Scientific Interest to be under restoration and mandate water companies to restore peatland under their ownership and
- Regulating internal drainage boards to maintain optimal water table levels.

There are people in the horticultural industry who maintain that peat free compost is not as effective for plant germination and growth as composts containing peat. This is not the case as there are excellent peat free composts available, made by innovative UK manufacturers such as Dalefoot (who use sheep's wool and bracken) and Sylvagrow, who use sustainable bark, wood fibre and coir. We should also be encouraging everyone to compost where possible. Expert gardeners like Monty Don are vocal advocates for banning peat sales.

Lord Goldsmith has advised consumers to stop buying peat or to "lobby Defra" if they feel strongly about stopping its use. We do not think that advising consumers is enough: we need clear leadership from Government to ban peat sales and burning. We have copied this letter by email to Defra. We would be most grateful for your help in making peat restoration and the banning of peat sales an urgent priority for legislation.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Backhouse
Chair, Transition Wilmslow