

Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee
Wednesday 13 November 2024
17th Meeting, 2024 (Session 6)

PE1945: Ban the extraction and use of peat for horticulture and all growing media by 2023

Introduction

Petitioner Elizabeth Otway

Petition summary Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to place a legal ban on the extraction of peat, peat imports, exports, and sales in order to protect peatlands both in Scotland and worldwide.

Webpage <https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE1945>

1. [The Committee last considered this petition at its meeting on 7 February 2024](#). At that meeting, the Committee agreed to the Scottish Government.
2. The petition summary is included in **Annexe A** and the Official Report of the Committee's last consideration of this petition is at **Annexe B**.
3. The Committee has received a new written submission from the Scottish Government which is set out in **Annexe C**.
4. [Written submissions received prior to the Committee's last consideration can be found on the petition's webpage](#).
5. [Further background information about this petition can be found in the SPICe briefing](#) for this petition.
6. [The Scottish Government gave its initial response to the petition on 12 August 2022](#).
7. Every petition collects signatures while it remains under consideration. At the time of writing, 860 signatures have been received on this petition.

Action

8. The Committee is invited to consider what action it wishes to take.

Clerks to the Committee
November 2024

Annexe A: Summary of petition

PE1945: Ban the extraction and use of peat for horticulture and all growing media by 2023

Petitioner

Elizabeth Otway

Date Lodged

8 August 2022

Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to place a legal ban on the extraction of peat, peat imports, exports, and sales in order to protect peatlands both in Scotland and worldwide.

Previous action

I have emailed Mairi McAllan, Minister for Environment and Land Reform about this issue. Sandra Carey of the Peatlands and Land Quality Team in the Scottish Government replied but was unable to confirm that a ban on peat would go ahead.

Background information

Protecting peatlands are vital in addressing the climate and nature emergency. Peatlands store vast amounts of carbon, reduce flooding and support unique biodiversity. The Scottish Government's investment in peatland restoration is undermined by continued peat extraction and use of peat in horticulture. Decades of voluntary measures have failed. A legal ban on horticultural peat imports and sales is urgently needed. We welcome the Government's pledge to 'ban the sale of peat related gardening products' but ask that this is reinforced by a 2023 deadline. Peat-free compost materials include: green waste, coir, wood, wool, bracken, comfrey, manure. A ban on peat by 2023 will help Scotland benefit from the economic opportunities of sustainable industries.

The Government should immediately review all peat extraction licences. All growing media must be peat-free by the end of 2023, at the latest.

Annexe B: Extract from Official Report of last consideration of PE1945 on 7 February 2024

The Convener: PE1945, on banning the extraction and use of peat for horticulture and all growing media by 2023, has been lodged by Elizabeth Otway and calls on the Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to place a legal ban on the extraction of peat, peat imports, exports and sales in order to protect peatlands both in Scotland and worldwide.

Since we last considered the petition on 3 May 2023, the Scottish Government has published its analysis of responses to its consultation on ending the sale of peat in Scotland. The analysis, an extract of which is available in today's papers, concludes that among individual hobby gardeners, there is broad support for introducing a ban on the sale of peat in Scotland. Among organisations, however, support was more limited, with several negative impacts anticipated. The most common year suggested for introducing a ban on the sale of peat for retail horticulture was 2023, with organisations preferring a later date of 2028 to 2030.

On the use of peat for cultural purposes, the Scottish Government's written response to the committee states that it is mindful of the needs of crofters and islanders and is working to determine the impact on those groups as a result of ending the sale of peat. The submission states that outcomes from the consultation, stakeholder engagement and impact assessments will form robust evidence that will guide Scottish ministers as to the scope of any sales ban.

Do colleagues have any suggestions or comments?

David Torrance: I wonder whether the committee would consider writing to the Scottish Government for an update on whether its delivery plan and timetable for phasing out a sale of horticultural peat will be published and whether it intends to look beyond the sale of peat and consider banning the extraction of peat, but with an exemption for crofters and traditional and cultural use.

The Convener: Are there any other suggestions? Are we content to proceed on that basis?

Fergus Ewing: I just want to emphasise the latter part of that suggestion and say that we interfere with crofters' traditional extraction of peat at our peril.

The Convener: Yes, all types of crofters, humble or otherwise.

Fergus Ewing: Well, there would be civil unrest if the crofters were denied the right to extract peat from their own land. I think that that would be unthinkable to many of us.

The Convener: Does the committee agree on the proposed course of action?

Members *indicated agreement.*

Annexe C: Written submission

Scottish Government written submission, 11 March 2024

PE1945/E: Ban the extraction and use of peat for horticulture and all growing media by 2023

Thank you for your e-mail regarding the above petition and for informing us that the official report of the committee meeting was published on Wednesday 14 February. I have provided responses to your most recent enquiries below, which I hope you will find useful.

An update on when the delivery plan and timetable for phasing out the sale of horticultural peat will be published.

Our consultation on “Ending the Sale of Peat in Scotland” closed on 12th May 2023 with 558 responses, 483 of which have been published. [A consultation analysis was published on 21 December 2023](#) and we are now reviewing findings, engaging with stakeholders and considering impact assessments ahead of offering advice to Ministers on the scope, pace of transition and any recommended exemptions. We hope to legislate for a ban on the sale of peat during this parliamentary term.

Confirmation of whether the Government intends to look beyond the sale of peat and consider banning the extraction of peat, with an exemption for crofters’ traditional and cultural use.

There are no current plans to ban the extraction of peat. Focussing on the sale of peat ensures that imports of peat, which constitute over 60% of the peat used in UK horticulture, are included so that peatlands in Scotland, and elsewhere in the world, are afforded similar protection from use in Scottish horticulture. We are mindful of the needs of crofters and islanders who have relied on peat for fuel for generations and we have been clear that any sales ban will not affect crofters cutting peat for their own use as a fuel.

Nature Division