



# Enrich the British Countryside



# Enrich the Earth

[Enrich the Earth](#) is a collaboration of influential organisations seeking to restore our natural capital and enrich the soil.

Our policy requests aim to:

- Provide financial incentives for British farmers and growers to improve the quality of their soil through adding organic matter.
- Boost food security by enriching the soil, reducing dependencies on unsustainable and expensive soil improvers.
- Support the UK horticulture and food sector's transition from peat to more sustainable alternatives.
- Maximise the value of green waste collected by local authorities.
- Create a localised circular economy.

Developed following extensive collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders from across the supply chain, the requests are practical, considered and together will create a positive systemic shift facilitating the end of peat extraction for growing.



# Policy Requests



## 1. Boost financial incentives for growers to compost

Government subsidies for transforming biowaste to energy are currently between £33 to £58 per tonne for new anaerobic digester plants. Incentives encouraging growers to use biowaste for composting are estimated to be between £0.10 - £0.30 per tonne.

Given that compost is a recognised way of increasing soil organic carbon levels, we are calling for payments to be made available to biowaste composters through the Sustainable Farming Incentive at an equivalent level to those available for new bioenergy. This would provide a 'level playing field' creating more balanced and sustainable outcomes.

The opportunity cost of failing to do so could **undermine the UK's ability to grow enough food sustainably** to feed citizens. Ultimately the drive for bioenergy and the need to improve agricultural soils must go together. Fundamentally, the bio-waste-soil policy links needs reconnecting.

## 2. Create a level policy playing field to support sustainable composting

Ending peat extraction for growing is a long-held but unmet ambition of government. Delivering this ambition requires finding cost-effective sustainable alternative materials available at sufficient scale. Woodchip is a key material in this process.

Through the Renewable Heat Incentive, woodchip heat boilers received subsidies for the materials they used. No such subsidies were available to the horticultural sector making it difficult for the sector to secure the quantity of material they require and has increased costs. Our request is for a **similar subsidy to that provided for woodchip boilers be available for the horticultural sector** which will ease the transition to peat free products.

Current policy prevents waste fed digestate from Anaerobic Digester plants being used by the horticulture and growing sector. Removing this restriction for appropriate applications or allowing further digestate processing when needed will increase the value of this digestate and make available a new material that can be used to help replace peat.

# Policy Requests

## 3. Promoting local circular systems

Green and food waste should be an integral part of the composting process. Green waste could constitute up to 25% of the materials used in mixes to replace peat. To get maximum environmental value from these materials, we are calling for **waste disposal authorities to be transparent regarding what happens to the green and food waste they are handling and the rationale for the choices they have made.** This includes the financial and environmental costs of transporting and processing the materials

Research indicates that recycling rates increase if people are confident that their efforts make a difference and greater transparency enables this to happen, particularly if people know the material is being handled locally.

Specifically, we will encourage local authorities to promote and incentivise households to home compost where they can, for example by providing and promoting the availability of subsidised compost bins.

To make it easier for local organisations and community groups to compost green waste in their locality, we are requesting that the **legislative burden of running community composting schemes is reduced;** for example, by reforming regulation T23.



# Policy Requests

## 4. Reducing contamination levels

It costs £50 million a year to remove contamination such as plastics from our green waste. This increases the cost of household waste collections and lowers the value of the collected material.

To address this issue, we are calling for **policies that give local authorities more tools to ensure that households are properly using their recycling facilities.** This includes providing sufficient resources for them to effectively communicate with households and to simplify the criminal enforcement routes which are currently onerous and expensive. This simplification might include enabling local authorities to issue written warnings, civil penalties or fixed penalty notices to households that do not comply with household recycling requirements.

Greater clarity is required enabling households to understand what items are truly compostable. For example, compostable food caddy liners need to be **standardised and independently certified to British Standard EN 13432.**



## 5. Support through the transition period

An RHS survey of professional growers revealed that the additional costs of moving to peat free growing media are currently between 15 and 25%. To hasten the transition in a way that is just and financially viable, this **cost differential needs to be reduced.**

We are suggesting that the Aggregate Levy and/or the carbon floor price should be extended to cover peat extraction and apply pre-warned increases up to the ban date. This will act as an incentive for the extraction businesses to transition from peat and increase the cost-competitiveness of alternatives. This will also provide revenue which could be allocated to help fund the transition as below.

Short-term transition funding, including capital grants, should be available to the horticultural sector recognising that they will require new systems, more space, new equipment and are taking on higher levels of risk as they transition from peat.



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