

Norstrand - water holding tables

- testing staff time for waiting

10:00 Welcome

10:10 Speakers

Q + A

Introduce Mentimeter

10:45 - 11 Tea

11 - 12 Themes 1 + 2

12 - 12:45 Lunch

12:45 - 13:45 Themes 3 + 4

Initially Eng + Wales, then changed to UK wide

→ Main concern is non-ban within EU

→ Ministerial decision to go UK wide (still needs to be debated)

→ What will stop EU producers from sending peat/undercut

Overview of

- Choice to make illegal to import peat or peat products
- Amenity choice greatly reduced.

Ornamentals

Infrastructure

- Need to have provision in place before a date can be put on a ban
 - There is not enough evidence for peat-free horticulture
- Wlin Hort ~~there~~ we are not united
 - NT, RHS Support peat-free
 - Some sectors are not ~~able~~/ready for a transition due to lack of research or
- Need exemptions
 - Ex - move to Electric Vehicles is on a 10-15 yr plan
 - need a phased approach so that each sector has a time frame.
- Ban on retail peat is cherry-picking on who uses peat - disproportionate
 - need to ban peat clay, in Agriculture, energy, etc.
 - needs to be evenly distributed
- Retail is getting an inferior product
 - peat-free products lose Nitrogen
richness

- Peat-free stability - after 3mo product is very different
 - Sochet of fert.
- Raw material availability - if everyone switched at once then would not be enough material available
- Growers who have converted are often specialists, growing a small range of crops
- Ericaceous growers, young plant prod.
- Machinery for peat is not designed for peat-free
 - all machinery would need changed
- Consistency is NOT there
- Need to have a retail perspective to get consumer perspective
- Mental Health of consumers
- If a consistent, successful product was available, growers would transfer.
- Gov't has many long-term plans for reforestation, electric vehicles - why can't this approach be taken with Hort?

- Finland has drained 4.7 million ha of land
- Coir is also a finite product and also has price volatility
- Variations in that products + even what is used at a given time of year (NI especially)
- * How can UK gov't prevent import of plants grown in peat
 - Also retail compost coming from RuI?
- Do we need to re-align with Dutch experts?
- Other EU countries are at different points
- Some
- MLAs should be involved in consultation to learn facts about
- Replacing one bad thing (peat extraction) with another bad thing (forestry - which dries out + damages peat bogs)
 - No joined up thinking from gov't.
 - ~~not really~~
- Gov't agenda is taking precedent over Economic impact.

- Lack of research in NI to determine potential replacements.

Economic Barriers

- What is driving this if not consumer demand?
 - Multi-national companies are pushing peat free but why?
- * Changing today would bankrupt horticulture
 - Crop failure
 - Every company/producer has a different mix, different base
 - Blends/mixes need to be consistent to allow machinery to be adapted
 - there needs to be an industry baseline (as with peat) to build your mix around
 - Industry would need a basic standard/base that can be built upon

- Horticultural equipment needs to be specified to the growing media — sitting up for peat-free will link you to one supplier — if you change supplier or recipe changes you may need to change equipment.
- Wood fibre differs from species to species
- Gov't support for alternatives
- To change tomorrow, ^{what} how much would you need?
- Dutch will work everything out scientifically first & then make changes
- Need more links — Dutch are ahead on all this
- Weight of products
- Storage of products — may need specialist facilities
- RoI hort gets 40% grants — and supports the growers to complete applications
- RoI has dedicated Minister for Horticulture
- How to stop peat grown plants into NI? → this would stop Garden retail

- If there is a stop — how will they enforce — will there be inspectors checking.
- NI can't stop peat coming in from EU due to agreements SPS
- SPS reset — November → EU will not agree to peat ban on UK timeframe — possibly on EU timeframe
- EU will not agree to anything that damages EU sector — only will happen when EU is ready — & will likely have all the resources
- & Machinery ready
- Why are we banning peat — what is the scientific evidence for NI
- Peat extraction is a devolved issue, NI has an EU perspective — BUT movement of goods is not a devolved issue
- DAERA open-ness with other 3 nations regarding peat decisions & refusal to hear minutes to date.
- Research & development — involve AFBi in finding suitable alternatives

Quality Control + Standardisation

* No ban in 1st place

- Even to set out a timeline - There is no "ground zero" to start from - we're not even there yet
- If everything is in place, a time line can be set
- There is nothing to consult on at this stage
→ There is no product in place and therefore nothing to say about quality or standard.
- If peat was readily available people would not be using peat free.
- Price means more than ethos.
(at end product)
- People who do not know about plants in gardens are deciding what happens in horticulture
- Science needs to be determining projection - not what Ministers want.
- Perception of standardisation (to consumer) vs. reality - consumers assume that a standard of ethics ~~also~~ means quality product.

Education

- Managing peat-free takes a big investment to change practices
- Wider societal impacts - mental health - gardening becomes more difficult.

Quality cont'd:

- Generally the public do not care about the sustainability of the product
- Weight of peat-free is much heavier - This would affect the size/weight of bags
- Growers can't take time to see what does or does not work until there are viable options
- Insurance claims - growers being penalized by supermarkets b/c of crop failure
- Complaints from growers that supply supermarkets w/ peat free - plants fail / compost collapses or not watered

- Research - not even ready for Education
- → leading to an end product
- ADAS trials
- Materials used in initial trials are less available and/or have moved on
- Bringing in a ban before research does not work
- Pay for crop to be researched
- No centre for research (ie AHDB)
- Difference between RHS representation vs. commercial growers typically smaller
- Dedicated advisors for horticulture sectors
- CAPRE facilitators for grower organisations
→ needed as the link between growers & government - not needed 1:1 support
- Compare differences between agriculture removal from peat lands vs. horticultural extraction - where does horticulture really stand.
- Have we looked at Sustainable ways to extract peat? There are drained bogs not being harvested or used for farming or forestry - that would be better

used towards hort

- 0.7% of peat is used for hort in NI
- Can GM companies harvest peat in NI and sell to RoI. They would need a licence or can they import peat to sell on to EU/RoI

- Disease issues in PF being researched
 - may have a bio security issues - various range of phytophthora found in coir & more in composted coir
- Weigh up overall environmental impact of
 - peat-based grown plant + plastic + label + plant + other components
- vs
 - peat-free

* Share Neil's email

* Keep sector responses separate

* Can sector values be put against response?