SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT

POLICY

Index

1. Introduction

This document sets out the council's policies on sustainable procurement and replaces the earlier document entitled "Green Purchasing Policies"

2. Sustainable Procurement - definition

What is Sustainable Procurement? It is about the process of purchasing goods and services that takes into account the social, economic and environmental impact that such purchasing has on people and communities. It is about considering what products are made of, where they have come from, who has made them, how they are transported and how they are eventually disposed of. It may even be about whether the purchase requires to be made at all.

3. Council Policy

It is the policy of East Renfrewshire Council to demonstrate sound environmental management in the acquisition of goods and services so as to ensure that such acquisitions have the minimum impact on our environment.

The Council has demonstrated its commitment to sustainable development via the Sustainable and High Quality Environment theme of the Community Plan. The Council's Corporate Strategy – *Making a Difference for East Renfrewshire*, also makes specific commitments to safeguarding and improving the environment, social justice and quality of life.

In April 2004 the Council approved a Sustainability Strategy which outlines a number of specific commitments to address sustainable development. In relation to procurement the Council is committed to making every effort to minimise our reliance on non-renewable resources and, where possible, make resource efficiency a core requirement of all our operations. In particular and where practicable the Council will promote and facilitate the reduction, re-use and recycling of waste; promote responsible energy management, practice energy efficiency and support the development and use of renewable energy resources whose long-term security is assured.

As a major purchaser of goods and services the Council has a significant impact on both the local and wider environment. As such, it is the Council's responsibility to implement appropriate controls and policies to ensure that negative impacts on the environment are kept to a minimum.

The Council is conscious that the purchasing decisions it makes can have a significant effect on the environment as a result of;

- Manufacturing processes, which use valuable resources, consume energy and create waste.
- Transportation and distribution costs incurred.
- Packaging used and the subsequent disposal thereof.
- Operating costs during the life cycle of the products.
- The eventual disposal of redundant materials as waste.

There are two main themes within East Renfrewshire Council's Sustainable Procurement Policy;

- **Evaluation**
- **Communication.**

4. EVALUATION

Evaluation of Product

Does the intended product represent optimum value in terms of whole-life costing and quality so as to minimise any environmental impact?

Evaluation of Supplier

East Renfrewshire Council will work with its supply chain partners to develop sources of supply, which support a culture of improvement of social and environmental performance. It will also adopt specifications, which develop socially and environmentally preferable goods and services at competitive prices.

Evaluation of offers

East Renfrewshire Council has adopted a Contract Evaluation Strategy, which incorporates sustainability criteria as part of the quality evaluation process.

The council gives favourable consideration in the tender evaluation process to those companies who are able to demonstrate sound sustainability polices.

5. COMMUNICATION

Communication with supply chain partners

As part of its Sustainable Purchasing Policy, East Renfrewshire Council will seek to promote its Sustainable Procurement Policy at every opportunity with its supply chain partners so that we can justifiably claim to be "greening our supply chain".

Free practical guidance on how to improve business practices and reduce environment impacts is available to any UK business from Envirowise, a government funded agency. Independent guidance is available through a dedicated free helpline (0800 587794), on site visits, information resources including case studies and best practice guides and an informative website (www.envirowise.gov.uk)

Internal communication

Officers of the Council who are involved in the supply chain are required to follow the guidance contained within the Sustainable Procurement Policy.

The purchasing activity of council departments is constantly monitored to ensure compliance with the provisions of this sustainability policy.

6. SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT POLICY

The Council is committed towards working towards sustainable development. Our clear intention is to manage our environmental impact, prevent pollution and continuously improve our environmental performance.

In this respect the Council is committed towards;

- Raising environmental awareness
- Taking full advantage of renewable energy sources and reducing energy requirements
- Reducing waste and increasing the amount of waste recycled or composted
- Reducing travel generated pollution
- Adopting a responsible view of purchasing goods and services

7. COMMITMENTS TO SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT

As part of its Sustainable Procurement Policy, East Renfrewshire Council makes the following commitments.

EN1	Procure goods and services, which reflect up-to-date specifications or standards for environmental sustainability.
EN2	Promote a level of environmental awareness amongst the Council's supply chain partners and encourage them to adopt a sustainability strategy.
EN3	Include sustainability issues as part of the tender evaluation process.
EN4	Prohibit the use of products or processes, which are potentially damaging to the environment, where a less environmentally damaging alternative is available. Specifically banned are; • Chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) and other ozone depleting chemicals. • All timber or timber products, which do not have a Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification or equivalent including, Canadian Standards Association (CSA), Pan European Forest Certification (PEFC) or Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) all as approved by the Department of the Environment and Rural Affairs. • Virgin paper (even if FSC approved) unless specially authorised (see EN12). • Leaded petrol. • Asbestos in the composition of any products (under exceptional circumstances where it is essential to performance, Chrysolite (white) asbestos may be used, subject to prior agreement in writing by the Environment Department).
EN5	Restrict the use of the following products by using practical alternatives. • Peat and peat-based products. • PVC and PVC products. • Chlorine bleach • Aerosol containers. • Solvent-based products • Hazardous and deleterious materials such as pesticides, weed killers and preservatives, where it is not possible to avoid these, appropriate suppliers will be instructed to ensure that the required COSHH data accompanies all deliveries of hazardous products.
EN6	Reduce the purchase of new products by re-using, repairing or refurbishing existing products.
EN7	Specify products, which are made from recycled material.
EN8	Specify products, which can be recycled.

EN9	Specify products which are the most energy efficient available, both in their manufacture and operation.
EN10	Specify products, which cause minimal damage to the environment in their manufacture, distribution, use and disposal.
EN11	In order to reduce the negative impact of pollution from vehicles, purchase or rent vehicles which, as a minimum requirement, are currently approved to European exhaust emission standard Euro 3 and, from 2007, are approved to Euro 4 emission standard.
EN12	Paper • Where paper is to be used for printing, letterheads or photocopying, purchase 100% recycled paper, which comprises 100% post consumer waste and is UK sourced. • Other paper and paper products should be at least 75% post consumer waste recycled content, with envelopes being at least 70% recycled (brown manilla) or 30% recycled (white manilla). • Virgin paper (even if FSC approved or equivalent) should only be used for specialist printing or specialist applications where it can be proved that an alternative use is not possible with available technology or reasonable modifications. Any virgin paper purchased should be FSC certified or equivalent. • Paper disposables should be 100% post consumer waste recycled. • Any unwanted paper should be re-used or recycled.
EN13	Where possible, consider the purchase of second-hand or refurbished furniture and equipment.
EN14	Where possible purchase local products and services.
EN15	Where possible use FAIRTRADE Mark products.

8. GUIDANCE ON THE PURCHASE AND USE OF SPECIFIC PRODUCTS

FAIRTRADE PRODUCTS

East Renfrewshire Council passed a resolution supporting the aims and objectives of Fairtrade in October 2004. Work is currently ongoing to gaining Fairtrade Zone Status for East Renfrewshire.

FAIRTRADE Mark products guarantee farmers in developing countries a fair and stable price for their products, the opportunity to improve their lives, greater respect for the environment and closer links between shoppers and producers.

Wherever possible, East Renfrewshire Council will support and promote fairtrade through:-

- Using FAIRTRADE Mark products
- Guidance, consultation and education to increase awareness of fairtrade among consumers.
- Trading partnerships that offer direct benefits to producers and enable consumers to buy fairly traded products.
- Capacity building of producer organisations to improve the impact of fairtrade among producers.

For further information on Fairtrade policies and products, go to www.fairtrade.org.uk

STATIONERY & PAPER PRODUCTS

Using recycled paper in preference to virgin paper and recycling waste paper reduces negative environmental effects, saves money and creates employment. The environmental impact of different papers and boards can now be compared using the Eco-Grade Environmental Assessment system developed for the Paper Users Environmental Forum.

Recycled paper is paper manufactured from that, which has been previously used. It is not paper which has been manufactured from off-cuts and residual paper produced as part of the manufacturing process, which has been put back into the process. All stationery, including photocopying and computer printer paper, paper for posters, leaflets, newsprint, hand towels and toilet rolls can be obtained which is of an acceptable quality whilst containing recycled fibers.

There is an apparently insatiable appetite for paper and paper products in the United Kingdom. In 2005 just under 12.5 million tonnes of paper was consumed in the UK of which 62% (over 7.7 million tonnes) was collected, an increase of 8% on 2004 figures. These figures reflect the worldwide changes in the collection and reprocessing of recovered paper, as well as the increase in global demand for

recovered paper as a raw material. The growing demand for paper has serious environmental implications. It takes 16 trees to make enough wood pulp to produce 1 tonne of paper.

Disposing of waste paper is also expensive. Approximately 3 million tonnes a year of potentially useful paper materials are wasted. The cost to industry and the consumer of disposing of this amount of waste is currently around £125 million a year and this will rise still further in the future as landfill sites become more scarce and waste has to be transported over greater distances.

In order to reduce the amount of paper consumed every attempt should be made to minimise usage of paper in every possible way. For example, people should be encouraged to write and to copy onto both sides of paper, to use waste paper as scrap, to circulate reports and memos rather than sending copies to each individual, to re-use envelopes and to make oral reports rather than issue written documents.

As British native broad-leaved trees such as oak and ash are slow growing and are high-density timber, conifer plantations have to be grown in many parts of this country and abroad simply to keep up the supply of wood pulp. However, these plantations are generally hostile to the natural environment, destroying wildlife habitats and displacing birds, plants and animals which inhabit those areas. They are also responsible for increased acidity of the soil and water supplies, further reducing ecological diversity.

Paper processing presents other problems. It takes about 13,000 gallons of water, mixed with a cocktail of chemicals, bleaching agents and dyes to produce 1 tonne of virgin paper. The effluent is then discharged into rivers and streams which, if not properly treated, will cause severe pollution. Chlorine, which is used to bleach wood pulp and paper reacts with a form of non-toxic dioxin present in wood to form highly toxic chlorinated dioxins which are extremely poisonous to animals, fish and marine life.

The environmental benefits of using recycled paper are:

- It saves energy. Producing paper from recycled pulp requires only half the energy to produce virgin paper.
- It reduces pollution. Paper produced from recycled pulp creates less pollution than the production of virgin paper.
- It reduces resource consumption, i.e. the need to cut down trees.
- It helps to protect natural habitats. Using recycled paper reduces the need for conifer plantations, thus conserving ecologically sensitive areas for wildlife.
- It reduces the amount of waste produced. Recycling of waste paper reduces the cost of collecting, transporting and disposing of waste and reduces the volume of waste sent to landfill sites.

The economic benefits of using recycled paper are:

- The UK is a net importer of paper and board products. Stimulating the demand for home produced recycled paper will significantly reduce the need for costly imports.

- It can create employment since collecting, sorting and processing waste paper for recycling is labour intensive. (In 2005 East Renfrewshire Council's kerbside collection scheme for paper collected approximately 2,800 tonnes of paper a year and provided work for 11 people).

- Energy is required to manufacture both virgin paper and recycled paper but much less total energy is need to produce recycled paper. Industry quotes for typical energy savings from producing recycled paper range from about 28% - 70% (depending on paper grade, processing and proximity to a waste paper source etc).

- Councils who operate well-controlled paper recycling schemes benefit from lower waste disposal costs, more cost effective working practices, better staff motivation and environmental awareness and a positive public relations image.

Available Recycled Paper and Paper Products:

- Headed Paper, Compliment Slips, Note pads, Lined Pads and Order Pads. These can all be supplied as 100% recycled paper.

- Envelopes (for general use) Envelopes should have a minimum of 40% recycled material. However it is possible to obtain envelopes with 80 - 100% recycled content.

- Envelopes (for automatic mailing/packing) Due to problems with trials conducted, we do not recommend envelopes with a recycled content of over 40%.

Print Paper

As much recycled print paper as possible should be used. Paper made from alternative waste materials can be used if standard recycled papers are inappropriate. Where this is not possible 'environmentally friendly' paper should be given preference.

Laser Printer Paper

Most printers can use 100% recycled paper. Certain high-speed printers cannot, but trials indicate that 75% recycled content paper may prove satisfactory. Photocopy Paper, Numerous papers have been successfully tested and 100% recycled paper can be used. The paper should have a proportion of post consumer waste and no more than 25% mill waste. The remainder should be bought in waste (normally described as Grade B). All listing paper should have a minimum recycled content of 50%. It is possible to obtain paper containing 75% recycled material.

Print Card

Recycled print card is expensive. However efforts should be made to use as much recycled or environmentally friendly card as possible within budget allowances.

Files, Diaries and Folders, such products should contain 100% recycled fibre whenever possible. Diaries are readily available using 100% recycled fibre as are wallet files and folders containing 60% recycled material.

Leaflets, Booklets, Promotional Materials, Posters and Glossy Papers should be avoided where alternatives are available, due to the extra resources consumed during production and the difficulties of recycling after use. Efforts should be made to utilise as much recycled or environmentally friendly paper as possible in these areas.

Toilet Rolls, Hand towels etc. and other paper disposable products such as these can be obtained using 100% recycled material and containing over 50% post consumer waste. Waste avoidance is of primary importance in the need to avoid wasting paper.

The following guidelines should always be applied:

- Cancel any communications you receive or no longer need.
- Circulate just one copy of a document around a department.
- Use both sides of a sheet of paper, particularly when photocopying. Use the blank side of printed papers for note-taking, letter drafting etc.
- Use smaller sizes of paper when you can.
- Re-label and re-use files, wallets and ring binders.
- Re-use envelopes, particularly large ones, for internal use.
- Use 100% recycled paper when possible.
- Copy onto both sides of paper.
- Use e-mail to communicate.
- Make oral reports rather than written.

CHLOROFLUOROCARBONS

The specification, purchase, and use of products containing Chlorofluorocarbons (CFC's), or products manufactured using CFC's must be avoided unless absolutely necessary and where no alternatives exist.

Background

During the 1980s convincing scientific evidence was published linking CFC's to the destruction of the ozone layer as a result of their high chlorine content. CFCs have a lifetime in the atmosphere of about 20 to 100 years and consequently one free chlorine atom from a CFC molecule can do a lot of damage, destroying ozone molecules for a long time.

The inherent danger of CFC's can be best understood by recognising that, molecule for molecule, CFC's are 10,000 times more effective at trapping heat than carbon dioxide. If the worst probable scenario of global warming is realised (a 3 degree Celsius increase over the next 60 years), the world will be warming fifty times as fast as it did at the end of the last ice age. The pace of warming at that time caused 32 families of mammals to become extinct, representing hundreds of individual species. The effect on human life through increased sea levels and reduced protection from ultra violet radiation is expected to be devastating.

Following the signing of the Montreal Protocol, officially known as the Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, in September 1997, most ozone depleting chemicals have or are being phased out of use in most applications.

When purchasing products including refrigeration units, foam plastics, carpet backing, packaging, fire extinguishers, industrial solvents and air conditioning units the Council will take steps to ensure that these products do not contain CFCs or other ozone depleting substances and that environmentally friendly options are purchased.

BUILDING MATERIALS

Wherever possible consideration should be given to re-use of existing buildings in lieu of new construction.

The use of materials and energy in the building industry has wide reaching environmental consequences. It is not the intention within a strategy to give comprehensive or definitive guidance; the vast range of available materials precludes such an approach. Much valuable research has been done by the Building Research Establishment, CIRIA and others.

This policy addresses areas commonly encountered by local authority specifiers particularly the purchase, specification and use of tropical hardwoods, insulation containing CKs, damaging wood preservatives such as pentachlorophenol, lindane or tributyltin oxide, paints containing lead pigments, asbestos products, high alumina cement, sea dredged or land obtained aggregates and leaded solder (all of which should be avoided).

Aggregates

The purchase, specification and use of new aggregates should be minimised but additionally be affordable, taking into consideration all Council policies. Wherever possible re-used brick and building stone, and secondary or recycled aggregate for concrete should be used.

Tropical hardwoods, although rarely used for constructional purposes, are frequently used or specified in plywoods, fittings such as doors, windows, frames and sills, and in decorative features.

Almost all tropical hardwoods are produced by removing virgin rain forest trees, often by clear felling of whole areas resulting in massive loss of wildlife habitat, extinction of species, soil loss, desertification and genocide of indigenous peoples. This felling is usually accompanied by burning, resulting in large scale pollution and carbon dioxide release contributing to global warming.

Entirely different materials have often been found to be suitable as replacements for tropical hardwoods. For example door thresholds can be made from mixed recycled plastics and alternative, sustainable timbers, plastics and metals can be used.

CFCs

Gases, which have been introduced to replace CFCs (mainly HCFCs) generally still cause damage to the ozone layer and contribute to global warming although to a lesser degree. Good alternatives are expanded bead polystyrene, mineral fibre insulation, or insulation made from reprocessed newspapers, foam glass or less desirably, foams blown with alternative gases.

Urea Formaldehyde foam must be avoided on health and safety grounds.

Wood Preservatives

Wood preservatives, particularly Pentachlorophenol, Lindane or Tributyltin Oxide, while effective, are considered to present health risks to humans, are poisonous to mammals such as bats and persist in the environment for long periods. Perinethrin is a better alternative.

Some preservatives will need to be used in order to comply with Building Regulations and to guard against insect attack, but the correct use of design to enhance air flow can reduce the need for certain preservatives, and particularly re-treatments.

Lead, Asbestos and Paint

Leaded solder, asbestos products in any form, and paint and primers containing lead pigments all present clear health risks and should not be used. Waste disposal in the U.K. is rapidly becoming a major environmental problem. Demolition, construction, mining and quarrying account for 27% of all waste produced within the U.K This, combined with the noise, pollution, dirt, land use, habitat loss, traffic, energy use and visual problems associated with extraction of materials for building makes use of 'recycled' products particularly attractive.

Areas, which should be considered include re-used brick and building stone and secondary or recycled concrete aggregates. Secondary aggregates include colliery waste and pulverised fuel ash. Consideration should be given to using blocks with high-pulverised ash content.

Shuttering and hoardings should be reused rather than disposed of at the completion of a project. Recycled car tyres can be used to form the basis for carpet backing and matting.

Energy and Water Use

By limiting the use of energy and water within buildings, through the many methods available, vital raw materials and finite resources are saved and pollution reduced.

In order that energy can be saved, specifications should include provision for greater water control, double glazing, low energy lighting and C17C free insulation. In addition, sites and buildings should be positioned to minimise energy requirements (e.g. passive solar design). Wherever possible reusable materials with high-embodied energy content (e.g. metals, cement, plastics, glass, fired clay etc.) should be used sparingly. Wherever possible locally produced materials should be used to minimise the energy content arising from transport.

Equipment and supplies should be specified or purchased taking into consideration the following factors:

Lighting

Low energy lighting should be used.

Air Conditioning

Design should reduce need for air conditioning to a minimum and where air conditioning is necessary, environmentally friendly refrigeration should be used.

Water Usage

Domestic water usage equipment should be specified or purchased in order that water usage can be minimised, for example, provide a shower in addition to or in lieu of a bath wherever possible.

Energy

All energy saving should be considered including use of double/triple glazing, condensing boilers, roof, wall and other insulation, draught stripping, draught lobbies, reclaiming heat from waste air and water, extracting energy from waste solids and careful selection of fuels to minimise C02 output.

MOTOR VEHICLES AND POWERED MACHINERY

Motor Vehicles and Powered Machinery

Most councils, either directly or indirectly, run large fleets of commercial vehicles, and may also provide leased vehicles for use by their staff. In addition there is also the use of various forms of other powered machinery, such as grass cutting equipment and plant. This all has a global and local environmental impact.

Background

The motor vehicle, in all its forms, is the biggest single source of pollution in the world today. Through its manufacture, to the pollution generated by its use, it is the main global environmental threat.

All motor vehicles or equipment burning fuel contribute to the greenhouse effect, primarily through the production of carbon dioxide. Approximately half of the carbon dioxide produced in this country originates from motor vehicles.

Clearly, if vehicle use can be avoided, or if better fuel economy can be achieved, the emission of harmful gases will be reduced.

Diesel

It is generally considered that vehicles running on diesel fuel are the least environmentally damaging, due mainly to the fact the diesel is more fuel efficient. Additionally diesel engines do not produce the concoction of poisonous gases that petrol engines emit. However, diesel engines emit soot and other particulates, which can be carcinogenic. They also produce nitrous oxide, which contributes to acid rain. Regulations have been produced which will force improvements in diesel engine design to reduce emissions, but these will take several years to come fully into effect.

In the meantime, the Council should ensure that all diesel vehicles whether commercial vehicles or leased cars, are regularly serviced in accordance with the manufacturers recommendations to reduce soot emissions to a minimum and to maintain maximum fuel economy.

Petrol

Petrol engines are considered more environmentally damaging than diesel. Pollutants include carbon monoxide, hydrocarbons and oxides of nitrogen, which are associated with photochemical smog, acid rain and health risks, such as respiratory disorders.

Improvements are being made to petrol engines. Lead pollution can be almost eliminated by the use of unleaded fuel and catalytic converters can reduce the other pollutants by as much as 90%. However, neither of these reduce the effect on global warming.

Catalytic converters are generally known as 'two-way' or 'three-way'. Two-way catalytic converters cut down on emissions of carbon monoxide and hydrocarbons, but not nitrogen oxides. Three-way catalysts cut down emissions of all three. Typically two-way catalysts reduce emissions by 45% - 55%, whereas three-way catalysts cut down emissions by up to 90%.

Guidelines

Heavy Commercial Vehicles

All vehicles purchased equal to or over 7.5 tonne gross vehicle weight should run on diesel fuel only. LPG fuelled vehicles should also be considered.

Medium and Light Commercial Vehicles

All commercial vehicles purchased below 7.5 tonne gross vehicle weight may run on diesel or petrol fuel. A preference for diesel fuel should be shown for the reasons stated above.

If the vehicle required is not available in diesel form, and if there is no alternative vehicle that is suitable for the purpose, then a petrol-driven vehicle may be purchased. However, such a vehicle should be capable of running on unleaded fuel and be fitted with a catalytic converter.

Powered Machinery

All powered machinery purchased (such as mowers and strimmers) should be capable of running on either diesel or unleaded fuel.

Fuel Efficiency

When purchasing vehicles, Departments should consider fuel efficiency, not just in terms of running costs, but also taking into account the environmental gains of a more fuel efficient vehicle.

Leased Cars

All cars obtained under the Council leased car scheme should be either diesel powered or must run on unleaded fuel and be fitted with a catalytic converter.

Car Users

Existing and new staff who qualify for an essential or casual car user allowance should be made aware of the financial and environmental benefits that can be achieved by running on unleaded fuel and the environmental benefits of fitting a catalytic converter, although it is generally understood that new vehicles are thus equipped on purchase.

Transport

All staff should be encouraged to use alternative forms of transport where possible. Information on the benefits of using trains, buses, bicycles or walking, should be made widely available.

HERBICIDES AND PESTICIDES, WOOD PRESERVATIVES AND PEAT

Herbicides (and Pesticides) are chemicals designed to kill organisms that are considered to be economically damaging or a threat to human well being.

Most herbicides and pesticides are toxic to humans and wildlife, with some of these chemicals being particularly dangerous. This danger is magnified due to the fact that herbicides and pesticides are washed from the ground by rainwater into rivers, streams and underground waterways. This pollution damages fish and other water life, and can also access sources of drinking water.

Herbicides and pesticides in the environment originate from four main sources; agriculture, railway embankment spraying, local authority use and domestic homes and gardens.

Herbicides

A number of herbicides are usually used by local authorities in landscape contracts. These can be split broadly into two types: residual and non-residual.

Residual herbicides are those which present the greatest danger to the environment, wildlife and water supplies.

At all times non residual herbicides should be given strong preference over residual pesticides, and usage must be minimised while maintaining effectiveness in operation.

The EC and UK Government issue comprehensive lists of substances which represent the greatest threat due to their toxicity, persistence and ability to bio-accumulate. These are known as the Red and Black Lists. These substances should be avoided wherever possible for horticultural use.

Pesticides

Most of the comments made on herbicides also apply to pesticides. The Council should make limited use of pesticides, with particular attention being given to minimising the use of residuals. Usage must also be minimised. Officers must ensure that this requirement is included in any pest control or other relevant contracts.

All pesticides used should be those that are shown to be least harmful to human health and least environmentally persistent while retaining effectiveness in operation. On completion of each job, any residue poisons must be collected for re-use or safe disposal to avoid unnecessary environmental damage.

Red list and black list substances should not be used.

Wood Preservatives

Wood preservatives containing pentachlorophenol (PCP), lindane or tributyltin oxide (TBTO) must not be used.

Peat

Peat bogs provide a unique and wildlife rich habitat. They are also amongst the most damaged and threatened habitats.

Despite the arguments of the trade and others with a vested interest, it is a fact that since 1850 96% of Britain's lowland peat bogs have been destroyed. The remaining 4% are far from safe. Of the 10 largest and most valuable lowland raised peat bogs identified by the Nature Conservancy Council in 1977, 6 are now partially or completely destroyed. If any of this habitat is to be saved, use of peat must be reduced dramatically and then ceased entirely in the near future.

The need to use peat has been almost eliminated. Compost and coconut fibre are proving a suitable alternative for all uses except germination. It is expected that even this very limited use can be overcome in the near future.

Peat should not be used for tree planting, potting, mulching or as a soil conditioner. Where no suitable alternatives exist, peat may still be used for germination purposes, with the continuing aim of seeking alternatives.