



## **BOOST FOR UK WILDLIFE WITH NEW PEAT-FREE COMPOST**

The UK's largest garden retailer, Dobbies Garden Centres, has launched a new peat-free compost containing John Innes standard material. It will be the first own-brand product of its type in the UK.

Peatlands are the nation's largest carbon store, as well as a haven for rare wildlife and natural providers of water regulation. Historically they have been a major source of raw material for compost.

Earlier this month, the UK Government launched the England Peat Action Plan supported by an expected over £50 million between 2021 and 2025. The Scottish Government also has a £22 million fund to undertake peatland restoration projects.

Dobbies has welcomed proposed deadlines from DEFRA and the HTA for retailers to be peat-free. The garden centre launched its #sustainabledobbies campaign and part of Dobbies' sustainability pledge is to reduce the use of peat in its product range. The company is on track with its commitment to be 90% peat-free in 2021 and 100% peat-free in 2022 in relation to bagged compost. The retailer has also worked with nursery suppliers to produce a roadmap for an annual reduction in peat use for growing plants.

Dr Dan Hoare, Butterfly Conservation's Director of Conservation, added: "Using peat in our gardens is a disaster for nature and the climate, so we're absolutely delighted to see companies like Dobbies making big strides to end its use.

"Peat extraction is a direct threat for some butterflies and moths like the Large Heath, and destruction of the peat bogs where they live destroys ecosystems and releases carbon that has been stored in peat soils for thousands of years. Every year, billions of litres of peat are used to make garden compost in the UK alone. The extraction of this peat destroys precious habitats where insects and wildflowers thrive. Everyone can play their part in preventing this destruction by choosing peat-free alternatives for their garden, and suppliers and retailers need to make it easy for people to do the right thing."

Marcus Eyles, Horticultural Director at Dobbies, said: "Even before the pandemic it was clear that businesses needed to be providing more environmentally-friendly options for customers. We've carried out research which underlines that point, with people taking a fresh look at what's important to them. We started on our own peat-free journey in 2018 and this new peat-free compost is another important milestone. We will have more products launching soon."

Dobbies supported Butterfly Conservation with the Nurture for Nature campaign, which centered on building a natural world which supports butterflies and moths.

Ahead of the launch of the new product, a survey commissioned by Dobbies from Censuswide found significant consumer demand for more environmentally-friendly products, driven in part by the covid pandemic.

- Just over 3 in 5 (61%) respondents said using peat-free compost is important\* to them, with over a fifth (23%) saying very important.
- A quarter (25%) of respondents said their primary reason for buying eco-friendly, sustainable gardening products is environmental concerns
- Over half (55%) of respondents do\* buy their own eco-friendly, sustainable gardening products, with just over 1 in 7 (15%) saying they do so regularly.
- Nearly half (47%) of half respondents agree\* with the statement 'I have made significant changes to my lifestyle to lessen my environmental impact'.
- Nearly half (47%) of respondents agree\* with the statement 'I make a conscious effort / go out of my way to buy products which are environmentally friendly'.

The new peat-free compost is on sale in all Dobbies stores from today (Monday 14 June).

Dobbies' own-brand peat-free products, including this new item with added John Innes, are priced competitively when compared to the products containing peat, so that there is no financial disincentive for consumers.

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### **Notes to editors**

#### **About Dobbies**

- Dobbies was founded in 1865 by James Dobbie and is headquartered near Edinburgh.
- It is the UK's largest garden centre retailer, with 73 stores, having bought 37 stores in 2019.
- The company employs around 4000 team members.
- It is privately owned by Midlothian Capital Partners Limited and Hattington Capital LLP.
- In the financial year to 1 March 2020 its revenue was £252m and EBITDA was £25m.