**Ymarfer 18**

**The shocking impacts of extracting peat for use in horticulture**

New analysis has estimated that as much as 31 million tonnes of CO2could have been released into the atmosphere since 1990, as a direct result of using peat in gardening, and its use by professional growers of fruit, vegetables, and plants.

**The campaign to stop peat extraction took off in the 1990s but only now are the UK and Welsh Governments conducting a public consultation on ending the use of peat in the retail sector by 2024. The Wildlife Trusts believe we cannot wait this long.**

Despite thirty years of campaigning against extraction and increased public outcry, peat continues to be sold in vast quantities for amateur and professional horticultural use, with huge consequences for nature and climate.

Industry progress towards peat-free alternatives has been slow and inconsistent, and peat consumption in the UK increased rapidly by 9% as lockdown drove more people to buy compost for gardening.

If peat is left undisturbed – in bogs, not bags – it can store many thousands of tonnes of carbon for millennia to come. However, once peatland habitats are disturbed for extraction, stored carbon becomes carbon dioxide (CO2) and is lost to the atmosphere forever, contributing directly to climate change.

The peat extracted for UK horticulture in 2020 could release up to 880,000 tonnes of CO2over its lifetime as a growing medium. This amount is equivalent to driving an average passenger car 2.2 billion miles – to the moon and back more than 4,600 times.