

Project 4: “What do responsible growing media look like?”



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Background

- Peat “debate”
- Early Government targets
- Government White Paper 2011
 - Peat-free targets
- Sustainable Growing Media Task Force (est. Oct 2011)
 - Pragmatic and achievable industry response
 - All stakeholders
 - Environmental NGO’s



12 Project areas (for the working groups)

1. Defining & agreeing the environmental problem we are trying to solve
2. What are the non-market methods for protecting peat bogs?
3. Clarifying the GHG emissions associated with different growing media.
4. **What do sustainable growing media look like?**
5. Sustainable growing media stewardship principles & certification.
6. What is the role of public policy (England, UK and EU) in achieving the solutions to the “non-bog” problems?
7. Performance standard for amateur products
8. What are the price issues for growers & what is left (other unique issues)?
9. Consumer messages and green claims
10. How to measure success and progress
11. Engagement and Commitment – establishing a charter
12. What will the horticultural sector look like in 2030?

Responsible not sustainable

- Project 4: “What do responsible growing media look like?”
- The “aspiration”
 - **Differentiate a more responsible product from a less responsible one**
 - **Compare same material from different sources**
 - **Voluntary scheme**
 - Practical & simple
 - Robust & meaningful
 - Cost effective



“The Promise”

- **All growing media¹ are made from raw materials² that are sourced³ and manufactured⁴ in a way that is both socially and environmentally responsible⁵.**
1. Substrate at the point of being mixed but not bagged, excluding need for consideration of packaging, transport from the manufacturer to the retailer (or direct to the customer), transport by the customer from the retailer, use by the customer and disposal and decomposition.
 2. Including all bulk ingredients (organic and inorganic)
 3. To cover the processing of the raw materials up to the point of arriving at the growing media manufacturer.
 4. To cover the processing of the raw materials from arrival at the growing media manufacturer to the point of being mixed but not bagged, e.g. processing of wood chips into wood fibre, etc.
 5. Economics and price dealt with by the market. As we are not covering that pillar of sustainability using the term responsible rather than sustainable.

Suggested Responsibility Criteria

- **Proposed environmental criteria**
- Habitat (positive and negative impact)
- Fuel/embedded energy/Global Warming Potential –project 3
- Renewability
- Biodiversity (positive and negative impact)
- Soil conservation
- Resource security/availability/scarcity
- Water use in production
- Waste use/recycling/bi-product use
- Pollution (water, soil and air – including odour)
- Alternative market competition (opportunity cost)
- Waste creation and disposal
- Need for additives, e.g. fertilisers
- Land use change
- Hydrological impact
- **Proposed social criteria**
- Ethical Trading Initiative Basecode (e.g. not child labour, fair wage, etc.)
- Jobs (not exporting industry)
- Community development
- Fair Trade
- Cultural issues
- Rural economy



Criteria Context

- What things are we trying to avoid?
- What do we want to encourage?
 - Good practice / innovation
- Avoid double counting
- Where to start and stop measuring
- Industry wide voluntary representation
 - Agreement by consensus & wider review
- Reflects what “we” regard as responsible
- “Spirit” of the scheme

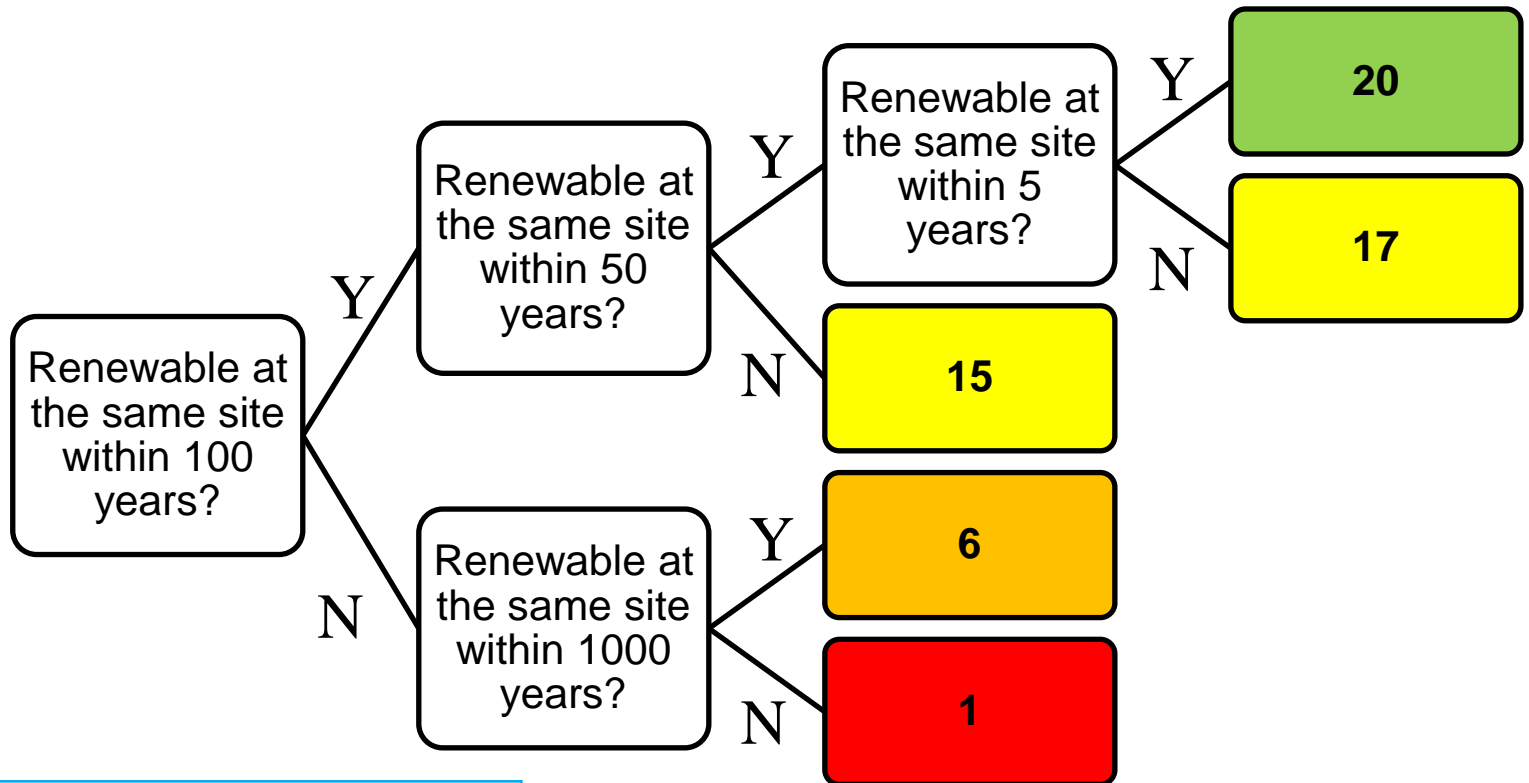


Responsibility Criteria

1. Energy use (in extraction, transport and production)
2. Water use (in extraction, processing and manufacturing)
3. Social compliance
4. Habitat and biodiversity (impact of gaining the materials)
5. Pollution (effluents as a result of production processes, not fuel use)
6. Renewability (feedstock material)
7. Resource use efficiency (source of material and waste generated in processing)



Example - Renewability



0-5 = red (worst practice)

6-11 = orange

12-17 = yellow

18-20 = green (best practice)

EXAMPLE Calculator Summary Table

Manufacturer / Supplier:

Product:

Sheet ID	Material	Volume (%)	Energy	Water	Social Compliance	Habitat & Biodiversity	Pollution	Renewability	Resource Use Efficiency	MATERIAL TOTALS	
										Unweighted	Weighted
Material 1	Wood fibre	30	8	14	17	10	12	17	9	87	26
Material 2	Coir	50	6	4	15	6	8	20	9	68	34
Material 3	Green Compost	20	8	20	20	20	12	20	18	118	24
Material 4											
Material 5											
Material 6											
Material 7											
Material 8											
Material 9											
TOTALS * :		100	7	10.2	16.6	10	10	19.1	10.8		84

- Every ingredient in a product assessed proportionally
- None of the flow charts return all 20 possible scores (flexible)

Calculator

- Growing media manufacturer will need to provide details
- Requires knowledge of the supply chain
- Level of required detail is high
- Default options (where proof is difficult to produce)

- Calculator walks you through the flowchart questions
 - Drop down options
 - Able to see what different selections will score (understand how & where improvements can be made)



Further developments

- Continual improvement mechanism
- Revise minimum scores
- “Red lines”
 - Minimum product total score?
 - Minimum individual or product criteria scores?
 - Minimum ingredient (unweighted) scores?
- Should anything be completely excluded no matter what proportion it is in a mix?
- Greenwash?



Current Position

- Released the calculator for testing (publicly available – not audited).
- Differentiate a more responsible product from less responsible product
- Could stimulate supply chain improvements
- Allows limited comparison
- No independent checking
- No continual improvement



Next steps

- Launch pilot scheme
 - Auditable
 - Consumer recognition?
- Government response to industry scheme proposal?
- Cross industry support
- Not about banning products
- Provision of information to help consumer choice



Acknowledgements

- Working Group (representing sectors)
 - Manufacturers
 - Retailers
 - NGO's
 - Growers
 - Defra
- All were volunteers
- Wider stakeholders (workshops)

