

In May, the Scrutiny Panel Chair, Councillor Smyth, asked that we look into the approach adopted by three councils: Bristol, Southampton and Oxford City Councils.

**Bristol City Council - policy is to reduce Glyphosate use where it can and to use the minimum amount possible.**

Trialled alternative weed control methods in 2017 and point of reference: [Weeds, treatment of unwanted vegetation \(bristol.gov.uk\)](#)

Conclusion in relation to Parks - will soon be testing newly licenced pelargonic acid along with other naturally occurring herbicides. The choices at the moment are acetic acid and pelargonic acid. This will require re-educating the spraying operators.

Conclusion in relation to street scene - for BWC to find a progressive contractor and find out technologies of spraying with sensors etc. for best reductions. This would require longer-term contracts to allow the contractors to invest in appropriate machinery and be able to follow latest developments in the industry.

Current reference policy is [Ecological Emergency Action Plan 2021-25](#) and Strategy Goal for pesticides is to **reduce the use of pesticides in Bristol by at least 50 per cent by 2030.**

**Southampton City Council - no response to email questionnaire to date.**

Online information available: [Appendix 2 - Green City Plan Final Draft Cabinet Feb 2020.pdf \(southampton.gov.uk\)](#) - references introducing a sustainable pesticides and herbicides policy in the future.

**Oxford City Council - no response to email questionnaire to date.**

Online information available: Council Minutes ([Public Pack](#))[Minutes Supplement for item 82 - written responses to supplementary questions \(Questions on Notice\) Minutes Supplement for Council, 30/01/2023 17:00 \(oxford.gov.uk\)](#)

*Has the Council trialled the use of any alternatives to glyphosate?*

ODS has carried out extensive research on this issue, and concluded, that at present, there are no practicable/financial viable alternatives. The current approach is therefore to use as little as possible and only where strictly necessary.

*Could you provide details of the extensive research that ODS has carried out into alternatives and about what alternatives are dismissed as unviable? Other cities similar to Oxford have made alternatives work, so it would be interesting to know why we can't do that here.*

ODS' last detailed assessment of glyphosate against comparable alternatives to managing weeds on hard surfaces was pre-2020, and it would be appropriate to review this again, not least in the light of the fact that important EU regulators are due to come to a view about its continued licensing by the end of the year. The UK, as you know, has given weedkillers with glyphosate licence to be used till 2025 but may reconsider if the EU does come to a different view. In March we will be bringing a paper to Cabinet setting out the scope for developing a Biodiversity Strategy for

Oxford. Consideration of the use and impacts of herbicides and pesticides will naturally be part of the work proposed. ODS will in parallel undertake a further assessment of alternative processes for weed management. Taken together the information should provide new guidance for decisions on future use of glyphosate – balancing environmental impacts and costs.

The Scrutiny Panel also asked what information was available on the **Local Government Association** website:

- Climate implications toolkit published by Hammersmith and Fulham Council - [Climate implications toolkit.pdf \(local.gov.uk\)](#) - a self-assessment to help officers think about how their projects, procurements, commissioning, and services can align with H&F's net zero carbon target.
- Growing in the Community document - [growing-community-second--8f5.pdf \(local.gov.uk\)](#) - funded by the LGA in Sep 2006, the objective of the guide is to assist those who are responsible for managing allotments, either within local authorities or under schemes for devolved management, to work efficiently and effectively by emulating examples of good practice. Contents include section on herbicides and pesticides.

Separately, the Parks Team has tried to make contact with **51 Council Bodies** (inc. those above) through email and telephone contact, including those shown on the PAN UK website as making a commitment to reduce or ban pesticides and/or glyphosates, to establish their current approach to managing unwanted vegetation. These councils are a split of Borough and District Councils, City Councils, and Town and Parish Councils.

Based on individual responses or documentation published on the council's websites or readily available, we understand:

- 33 councils are still using glyphosate and this is a mix of those working towards reduced usage and those who still wish to use for specific treatments (such as invasive species).
- 2 councils have re-introduced the use of glyphosate as part of their treatment programme.
- 8 councils stated as pesticide free, of which 1 is a city council and the others town and parish councils and one suburb (some of which do not actively manage some or all the green space)
- the remainder either have no information readily available or we are still carrying out research.

-

This is an ongoing piece of work, but to date, we have received 16 responses. Overall, the alternative methods and change of approach (where adopted) are reflective of those we are currently trialling or have already implemented as part of our approach to reducing pesticide use to a minimum.

We've also had conversations with Fareham Borough Council, Brighton and Hove Council and Lewes and Eastbourne Council. I will be able to give verbal response to any questions arising at the next Scrutiny Panel meeting.

*Adrian Rozier, Parks Development Manager, Culture, Leisure and Regulatory Services.*