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Flintshire
COUNTY COUNCIL

WEED CONTROL IN FLINTSHIRE

BRIEFING NOTE



Weed control in Flintshire

Briefing Note - November 2025

Flintshire County Council are moving away from the use of Glyphosate based products for weed control.

- The largest UK-wide survey on pesticide use in towns and cities, identifies Glyphosate as the dominant chemical used in our urban environments. It makes up at least 90% of the pesticides used in public spaces.[i] (Pesticide is the term used for any herbicide, pesticide or fungicide.)
- The majority of pesticides applied in public spaces are herbicides or weed killers, used to remove unwanted vegetation, often for cosmetic reasons.
- Public space exposure is believed to be one of the most significant routes of pesticide exposure in the UK.[ii] Glyphosate has been linked to the development of cancers and other serious diseases such as Parkinson's.[iii]
- Pesticides have been shown to have negative impacts on biodiversity, removing plants relied upon by wildlife for food and shelter and contaminating soil and water courses, harming aquatic species.
- The health and wellbeing of our residents is a priority, that's why Flintshire County Council are among the 45% of UK councils taking action to end or reduce pesticide use.[iv]

Why move away from Glyphosate?

- Glyphosate is classified as "probably carcinogenic to humans" in 2015 by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC)[v]
- Glyphosate can indirectly affect our natural environment by disrupting food chains and reducing sources of food and shelter.[vi]
- Glyphosate will travel through the whole plant and kill any plant it comes into contact with. It's called a systemic, non-selective herbicide.

- Welsh Government guidance is “To consider non-chemical control methods first. And only use chemical pesticides, including Glyphosate-based products, where alternatives are impractical or will not work” [vii]

- Minimising pesticide use supports our pollinators and compliments our action for local authority Bee Friendly status which we received in January 2024.[viii]

- More than 100 councils are taking action to reduce pesticide use or go completely pesticide free.[ix]

- France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany and many other countries have varying restrictions on the use of Glyphosate, some prohibiting household use and others having strict controls in public spaces.[x]

What we are doing in Flintshire

- We have brought our weed control in-house to allow greater flexibility with our approach.

- We need a range of alternative approaches to undertake weed control where it is needed. To understand our options we hosted a ‘Demonstration day’ to showcase a range of chemical-free methods attended by neighbouring local authorities, WG, North and Mid Wales Trunk Road Agency and Network Rail.

- We are trialling and investing grant funding in chemical-free alternatives, such as hot foam and mechanical systems such as weed rippers.

- Avoiding the use of Glyphosate herbicides within our town centres, school grounds and green spaces, for example in parks, sports pitches and recreational areas, in addition to excluding the use of chemical herbicides in contracted services, such as the schools’ grounds maintenance contract.

- We are monitoring the effectiveness of our alternative weed control approaches and learning from our experience

- We are developing ways we can support local pro-active practical weed control groups

- We will take a proactive approach where accessibility is impacted by changes in weed control

- We are continuing to raise awareness about the importance of protecting people and nature through minimising harmful herbicide use.

- We are still using targeted use of Glyphosate for the control of invasive species where it is necessary. For species like Japanese knotweed and Giant Hogweed, we will administer targeted Glyphosate where it is growing on our land. The presence of Ragwort on council-owned land will be addressed in accordance with a risk-based approach, with preference given to non-herbicidal control methods

- Flintshire are one of the leading authorities in Wales to be committed to developing new and healthier methods of addressing weed control across our county.

References

i. Pesticide Action Network UK report on pesticide free towns outlines use across local authorities from Freedom of Information data obtained https://issuu.com/pan-uk/docs/pesticide-free_towns?fr=sNTBmNzg3MjIzNjc

ii. Although no formal ranking exists in UK government literature, the UK Parliament POSTbrief on Pesticides and Health acknowledges environmental exposure as a significant non-occupational pathway (UK Parliament, POST-PB-0043). https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/POST-PB-0043/POST-PB-0043.pdf?form=MG0AV3

iii. Glyphosate has been linked to both cancer and Parkinson's disease, the strength and nature of these links vary across studies and regulatory bodies.
The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), part of the World Health Organization, classified Glyphosate as "probably carcinogenic to humans" in 2015. https://publications.iarc.who.int/549

This classification was based on limited evidence in humans and sufficient evidence in animals for carcinogenicity. Legal cases in the U.S. have awarded damages to individuals claiming Glyphosate exposure caused non-Hodgkin lymphoma https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-53174513#:~:text=Bans%20on%20glyphosate,now%20been%20banned%20in%20America

A 2020 study from Chiba University in Japan found that Glyphosate exposure in mice exacerbated dopaminergic neurotoxicity, a hallmark of Parkinson's disease
https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0304394020303025
https://www.parkinsons.ie/call-to-ban-glyphosate/?form=MG0AV3&form=MG0AV3

iv. Pesticide Action Network UK report on pesticide free towns https://issuu.com/pan-uk/docs/pesticide-free_towns?fr=sNTBmNzg3MjIzNjc

v. The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), part of the World Health Organization, classified Glyphosate as "probably carcinogenic to humans" in 2015. https://publications.iarc.who.int/549

vi. Review of the research undertaken on Glyphosate GIG Lloegr - https://www.england.nhs.uk/personalisedcare/social-prescribing/green-social-prescribing/

vii. Welsh government debate on Glyphosate Plantlife - https://www.plantlife.org.uk/learning-resource/managing-meadows/

viii. https://www.biodiversitywales.org.uk/en/get-involved/bee-friendly/about-the-scheme/

ix. According to the Pesticide Action Network UK (PAN UK), out of 368 councils surveyed, 165 councils (approximately 45%) have taken steps to reduce or end their use of pesticides. This includes:
50 councils that are already pesticide-free.
Another 50 that have significantly reduced their pesticide use.
https://pesticidecollaboration.org/faq-items/which-uk-councils-have-stopped-or-reduced-their-pesticide-use/

x. https://www.rfi.fr/en/business-and-tech/20230920-glyphosate-where-is-it-banned-or-restricted



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