



Author/Lead Officer of Report: *Ruth Bell, Head of Parks and Countryside*

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Report of: *Michael Crofts, Executive Director Place Portfolio*

Report to: *Cooperative Executive*

Date of Decision: *September 2021*

Subject: *Reduction in use of Glyphosate pesticide on land managed by Sheffield City Council*

Is this a Key Decision? If Yes, reason Key Decision:-	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
- Expenditure and/or savings over £500,000	<input type="checkbox"/>	
- Affects 2 or more Wards	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Which Cabinet Member Portfolio does this relate to? <i>Sustainable Neighbourhoods, Wellbeing, Parks & Leisure</i>		
Which Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee does this relate to? <i>Economic and Environmental Well Being</i>		
Has an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) been undertaken?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
If YES, what EIA reference number has it been given? <i>967</i>		
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If YES, give details as to whether the exemption applies to the full report / part of the report and/or appendices and complete below:-		
<i>"The (report/appendix) is not for publication because it contains exempt information under Paragraph (insert relevant paragraph number) of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended)."</i>		

Purpose of Report:

This report seeks the approval of the Cooperative Executive to review the use of glyphosate on land managed by Sheffield City Council and make reductions in its use in a managed and targeted way.

Recommendations:

That the Cooperative Executive:

- Agree to review and reduce the use of Glyphosate on land managed by Sheffield City Council in a managed and targeted way
- Agree that Parks and Countryside cease using Glyphosate in the new season (April 2022) and assess the impact of these changes (using this work to help guide further changes across the city)
- Agree that two cemeteries (Norton and Beighton) undertake Glyphosate free trials for 2022
- Agree that two Glyphosate free trials are undertaken on Housing land (in the Longley area and Gleadless area) – exact details to be discussed and agreed
- Agree that a Glyphosate free trial take place on land managed within the Streets Ahead contract in Brincliffe – exact details to be discussed and agreed
- Agree that communication work be undertaken across the city highlighting the importance of these changes, why they are needed and how residents can participate
- Agree that consultation work be planned and carried out as the impacts of the changes become known to allow residents to share their views
- Agree that a further report detailing the outcomes of these trials be brought to a future Cooperative Executive meeting for consideration

Lead Officer to complete:-	
1	I have consulted the relevant departments in respect of any relevant implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist, and comments have been incorporated / additional forms completed / EIA completed, where required.
	Finance: <i>Kerry Darlow</i>
	Legal: <i>Louise Bate</i>
	Equalities: <i>Annemarie Johnston</i>
<i>Legal, financial/commercial and equalities implications must be included within the report and the name of the officer consulted must be included above.</i>	
2	EMT member who approved submission: <i>Michael Crofts</i>
3	Cabinet Member consulted: <i>Alison Teal</i>
4	I confirm that all necessary approval has been obtained in respect of the implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist and that the report has been approved for submission to the Decision Maker by the EMT member indicated at 2. In addition, any additional forms have been completed and signed off as required at 1.

	Lead Officer Name: <i>Ruth Bell</i>	Job Title: <i>Head of Parks and Countryside</i>
	Date: <i>8th September 2021</i>	

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Sheffield City Council declared a Nature Emergency in June 2021 and as such it is important that the council leads initiatives that address the Nature Emergency and support and improve the biodiversity of the city.
- 1.2 Glyphosate is licenced for safe use as an herbicide in the UK until December 2022 (this may be extended to December 2025 following the UK's departure from the European Union).
- 1.3 The use of glyphosate to manage weeds and invasive species is currently undertaken responsibly in Sheffield on both soft and hard surfaces. The use of glyphosate has reduced significantly in recent years, however in 2020, 124.2 kg of Glyphosate was applied on sites directly managed within Sheffield City Council (including land managed by Parks and Countryside, Housing land, car parks and Property and Facilities Management land – this does not include Highways land).
- 1.4 Alternative (non-glyphosate based) products are available for use but do not perform as well at managing weeds. A small-scale trial in Sheffield established that these alternatives are less effective at controlling weeds and where they were effective, would have considerable cost implications. Therefore, it is considered that there are no suitable alternatives currently available for weed control, particularly on or under hard surfaces.
- 1.5 A petition was presented to Full Council in July 2021 to ask Sheffield City Council to ban the use of glyphosate on Council land. The petition triggered a debate on the plan to reduce and remove use of glyphosate where possible and received cross party support.

2. PROPOSAL

- 2.1 Sheffield City Council manages a significant amount of land across the city both directly and through strategic partners (such as Amey). The 'sections' of land management are determined as Parks and Countryside land, Bereavement Services land, Housing land and land managed within the Streets Ahead contract (largely highways land).
- 2.2 The proposal is to substantially reduce the use of Glyphosate across the estate in a managed and targeted approach. Some of this action can be taken immediately whereas in other areas, further research or negotiation is required to ensure the maintenance and access of our land and to better understand any cost implications of making this change.
- 2.3 To ensure that the complexities around some areas of land management (e.g. highways) do not prevent the Council taking any action, each 'section' of land management will be analysed individually, and decisions taken at the most appropriate level. Further formal decisions will be taken as the necessary information is available in order that decisions are

informed and transparent and further reports presented to Cooperative Executive for approval as required.

2.4 This proposal is to agree the principles of the approach and direction of travel.

2.5 **Parks and Countryside**

2.5.1 It is proposed that within all green spaces managed by Parks and Countryside, glyphosate use will cease immediately in shrub beds, floral displays, rose beds, hedgerows and planted areas. During this first phase of change, we do not propose replacing this with other herbicides or other methods of weed control. This will be reassessed throughout the growing season as the resulting changes become clear. Glyphosate would continue to be utilised in a limited capacity on hard surfaces where required to ensure that footpaths and other surfaces remain accessible and safe.

2.6 **Bereavement Services**

2.6.1 Given the sensitive nature of cemeteries and gardens of remembrance and the perceived link between visual appearance and the dignity of the deceased, it is proposed that changes in this area proceed more slowly than within Parks and Countryside. Glyphosate use will continue as required (with a view to immediately reducing its use where possible). A trial of a glyphosate free cemetery is proposed at Norton Cemetery (a cemetery that is closed to new burial plots) for 2022 and Beighton Cemetery (which remains open for new burials). Within cemeteries, to ensure access to burial plots and remembrance areas, it is likely that there will be some increase in strimming required. Glyphosate would continue to be utilised on hard surfaces where required to ensure that footpaths and other surfaces remain accessible and safe.

2.7 **Housing and Estates**

2.7.1 Accessibility and safe movement on and around housing sites is imperative and of concern when considering a reduction in the use of an effective herbicide. The implications of moving away from glyphosate need to be understood and potential alternatives need to be considered fully in order that particular groups of residents are not disadvantaged by this change. Two areas have been proposed to allow glyphosate free trials to take place – an area within Longley and an area within Gleadless. Further detail on these trial areas will follow, as will full consultation and communication with Ward Councillors and residents.

2.8 **Streets Ahead Contract**

2.8.1 Changes to the Streets Ahead contract need to be discussed, understood and agreed before changes can be made. Therefore, in order to not delay trials or progress in other areas, this element of our estate will proceed separately. A trial of a completely glyphosate free area for 2022 in Brincliffe is proposed. This trial will require support from residents to help manage weeds and we will need to understand the willingness of residents to help the council to do this. Full consultation and communication with Ward Councillors and residents will need to take

place.

2.9 Invasive Species

- 2.9.1 In all areas of land management, glyphosate will still be used following approved methods to treat invasive species (such as Japanese Knotweed and Giant Hogweed) with the use of Eco plugs for stump killing.

3. HOW DOES THIS DECISION CONTRIBUTE ?

- 3.1 The declaration of a Nature Emergency (alongside the Climate Change Emergency) is a key priority in the Council's One Year Plan.
- 3.2 The importance of biodiversity and the recovery of native species from the impact of factors including the use of chemical herbicides is recognised by both Sheffield City Council and the city's residents. A reduction in the use of glyphosate will contribute positively to the city's desired recovery from the ongoing Nature Emergency and will enable the council to respond positively to the requirements in the impending Environment Bill which will create powerful new laws to protect and enhance our environment.
- 3.3 The precise nature of any benefits resulting from a reduction in the use of Glyphosate are not known – there are many debates on the subject. It is however hoped that the positive implications for Sheffield could include a small but potentially measurable benefit to the health of soil and healthier populations of invertebrates, birds and mammals including bees (and other pollinators) which are fundamental to the health of ecosystems.

4. HAS THERE BEEN ANY CONSULTATION?

- 4.1 The proposal forms part of the Council's response to the declaration on a Nature Emergency.
- 4.2 Consultation on the proposal to reduce the use of glyphosate has not been undertaken at this stage.
- 4.3 The proposal to undertake the changes in stages and with trial areas in a number of 'sections' allows for a significant piece of both communication and consultation work to take place. The consultation will need to be undertaken in the proposed trial areas but also city-wide and will need to be designed to ensure it is able to gather views and feedback that reflects the population.

5. RISK ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

- 5.1 Equality of Opportunity Implications

- 5.1.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out as part of developing this proposal.
- 5.1.2 The EIA concluded that there are potential impacts for disabled and older people. The impacts of making these changes are not entirely known at this stage of the decision-making process however the trials of glyphosate free areas on Bereavement, Housing and Highways land alongside the proposed changes within Parks and Countryside green spaces will allow any implications to be understood and mitigated where necessary and possible. The EIA will be reviewed and updated following the trials and consultation analysis.

5.2 Financial and Commercial Implications

- 5.2.1 The financial impacts of these changes are not currently known however the trials of glyphosate free areas on Bereavement, Housing and Highways land alongside the proposed changes within Parks and Countryside green spaces will enable the Council to calculate the costs of any alternative actions or products that are required to maintain our land to the appropriate safe standard.
- 5.2.2 Any costs associated with the trials will be met from existing service budgets.
- 5.2.3 Wider changes made as a result of the trials have the potential to increase the Council's cost base on an ongoing basis and would have no funding attached to them. No savings are proposed elsewhere in the Council to cover any increased costs. This would worsen the Council's overall financial position and make it harder for the Council to achieve medium term financial sustainability. Therefore the cost implications of any proposed changes as a result of these trials would need to be understood and brought back to the Cooperative Executive for consideration and approval.

5.3 Legal Implications

- 5.3.1 All products containing glyphosate have to be registered and approved by the European Pesticides Commission.
- 5.3.2 Glyphosate is currently approved in the EU until 15 December 2022 (Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2017/2324).
- 5.3.3 As part of this approval extension, the Commission also presented some recommendations to be considered by member states.
- 5.3.4 One of these recommendations was, having due regard for the necessary hygiene and public health requirements and biodiversity, to ensure that the use of pesticides is minimised in public parks and gardens, sports and recreation grounds, school grounds and children's

playgrounds, and in the close vicinity of healthcare facilities” (Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning the placing of plant protection products on the market).

- 5.3.5 There is the possibility that further restrictions or a total ban on glyphosate may be brought in when the registration is reconsidered at the end of 2022. By reducing the reliance on the chemical now, we will be better prepared for any future changes.
- 5.3.6 Following Brexit, Regulations (EU) 2017/2324 and (EC) No 1107/2009 are incorporated into UK law by virtue of section 3 of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018.
- 5.3.7 In relation to any changes that impact the Streets Ahead contract, these changes must be made in accordance with the terms of the contract and any variation to the contract must meet the requirements of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

6. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 6.1 The option to ‘do nothing’ was considered and discounted considering both the declaration of a Nature Emergency and the support received for the petition against the use of glyphosate.
- 6.2 The option to cease use of glyphosate on all land immediately was considered and discounted due to both the unknown financial implications and the necessity to ensure that our land can continue to be maintained to safe standards ensuring continued access for residents in the city.

7. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 Approval of the recommendations will allow:
- An immediate reduction in the use of glyphosate on Sheffield City Council land
 - Trials in the reduction of use of glyphosate to assess the implications for Bereavement, Housing and Highways land
 - The opportunity to work with residents in the city to promote the need for this action and the part everyone can play in responding to the Nature Emergency

This will achieve an important step in the city’s response to the declared Nature Emergency.

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