

**WEED CONTROL TRIAL**

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**Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide the Committee with the outcome of the weed control trial that was undertaken in response to a Scrutiny recommendation to Cabinet from the Environmental Scrutiny Committee's Inquiry into 'Managing Biodiversity and Natural Environment in Cardiff'.

**Scope of Scrutiny**

2. At their meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2023, the Cabinet will consider a report that updates Cabinet following the completion of the Weed Control Trial undertaken in 2021.
3. During this scrutiny, Members can explore:
  - i. The final Weed Control Trail report and appendices
  - ii. The recommendations to Cabinet

**Structure of the Papers**

4. Attached to this report are the following appendices:
  - **Appendix 1** – Draft Cabinet Report
    - **Appendix A** – Weed Control Trial 2021, Final Project Report
    - **Appendix B** – Welsh Government Information not, August 2018
    - **Appendix C** – Amenity Forum Glyphosate Update, August 2022
    - **Appendix D** – Association of Public Service Excellence (APSE) Briefing, Glyphosate, Where do Local Authorities stand? 2019  
Cabinet Report background papers
  - **Appendix 2** – Managing Biodiversity & Natural Environment in Cardiff, Inquiry Summary, 2019
  - **Appendix 3** – Cabinet response to the inquiry, November 2020
    - **Appendix 3.1** – cabinet response to Inquiry recommendations

Information requested following Scrutiny Committee Meeting in January 2022

- **Appendix 4** – APSE, Innovative ways of treating and controlling weeds on the highway

## Background

5. Uncontrolled weed growth can make areas look untidy and uncared for, which can impact negatively in a various ways including potential litigation if unmanaged growth causes trip hazards or impairs visibility.
6. Currently weed growth is managed using a variety of methods including hand weeding, hoeing, forking, mulching, hand and mechanical sweeping and the application of approved herbicides.
7. Targeted use of glyphosate-based products are mainly used to control weeds on hard surfaces and they are applied three times a year, by Complete Weed Control (South & Central Wales) Ltd, the Council's weed control partner.
8. **Point 6** notes how the herbicide kills the whole weed and states that:

*Glyphosate is approved for use in the public realm in the United Kingdom, by the Chemicals Regulations Division of the Health and Safety Executive. The licence for the use of glyphosate in the United Kingdom extends to the 15<sup>th</sup> December 2025. No hazard warnings are contained on the product label.*
9. At their meeting held on 19th March 2019, the Environmental Scrutiny Committee agreed to undertake an inquiry into 'Managing Biodiversity and Natural Environment in Cardiff' and established a Task and Finish Group to take this forward.
10. The final report, findings and recommendations was presented to Cabinet on the 23 January 2020.<sup>1</sup> A full response was then agreed by Cabinet on the 19 November 2020<sup>2</sup> and presented to the Scrutiny Committee for consideration at their meeting held on 2 March 2021.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [Agenda for Cabinet on Thursday, 23rd January, 2020, 2.00 pm : City of Cardiff Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Agenda for Cabinet on Thursday, 19th November, 2020, 1.30 pm : City of Cardiff Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Agenda for Environmental Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday, 2nd March, 2021, 4.30 pm : City of Cardiff Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

11. The scrutiny report made a series of key findings recommendations which were subsequently presented to Cabinet.
12. One of these recommendations was related to the use of Herbicides and Pesticides and stated the following:

*Herbicides & Pesticides – Glyphosate*

*Where practically possible, the Council should limit the use of pesticides such as glyphosate across its estate. Local authorities such as the Vale of Glamorgan have managed to become herbicide free in a number of parks by using alternative weed control and management practices. The Council should look to learn from this and publish details of how, where and why herbicides and pesticides will be applied across the Council estate.*

13. At their meeting on the 19th of November 2020, Cabinet partially accepted this recommendation stating:

*The Council implements a range of cultural and biological methods of control methods across its estate as an alternative to the use of pesticides. Where there are no economically viable alternatives, the use of pesticides is limited to those approved by the regulatory bodies for use in the public realm. The benefits of alternative products will be further explored, including the potential for an initial and affordable financial outlay to support a small pilot. Findings will inform more detailed exploration of options and their potential costs.*

14. The Cabinet subsequently committed to undertaking a review of weed control products available as an alternative to the glyphosate-based herbicide that is currently used to control weeds in the public realm. During 2021 a trial to investigate the viability of two alternative weed control applications, which are currently licenced for use to control weeds on hard surfaces, was undertaken in partnership with the Council's Specialist Weed Control Contractor. A number of data sets were collected through the year which have been made available to an independent consultant to allow them to undertake an independent assessment of each application against key factors.
15. In January 2022 the Committee received a presentation reporting the interim results of the trial. Following the meeting the Committee requested further

information on how other Local Authorities in Wales and England are managing the use of Glyphosate, reducing its usage and successfully utilising other alternative products. In response to this query an APSE Network query response was provided which can be found at **Appendix 4**.

### Issues Identified in the Cabinet Report

16. The weed control trial concentrated on pavements, over 2,000 kilometres in Cardiff.
17. Advanced Invasives Ltd, were commissioned to undertake an independent evaluation of the process and outcomes of the trial.
18. Two other products were used as comparators in the trial, acetic acid in Riverside and hot foam in Pontprennau and Old St Mellons. Penylan was used as the control area where the usual routine was maintained.
19. The criterion used to evaluate each method were:
  - Cost. Manpower/labour cost to apply the product
  - Environmental, i.e., product, water and fuel use
  - Customer satisfaction, complaints received
  - Quality, efficacy of the control method
20. **Point 15** provides a summary of the results

Control Method	Cost	Environmental	Customer	Quality
<b>Glyphosate</b>	Low	Low	High	High
<b>Acetic Acid</b>	Medium	Medium	Low	Low
<b>Hot Foam</b>	High	High	High	High

21. In this table low cost and low environmental and high customer and high quality are 'positive/good' and the opposite 'negative/bad'
22. In conclusion **point 16** notes glyphosate is the most effective and sustainable method of weed control. Hot foam was effective but unsustainable and acetic acid ineffective and unsustainable.
23. In terms of cost alone **point 17**, notes the estimated increase in cost if acetic acid were used as 667% and 1,000% if hot foam was used.

24. The draft trial report was amended following comments were received from two of the product producers following an invitation to comment to all three manufacturers.
25. The report also contains information from other trials that have taken place, however, none are directly comparable to the Cardiff trial, as they were on a smaller scaler or over a shorter time period.
26. **Point 23**, notes the ongoing monitoring and information sharing in relation to weed control systems with Greenspace Wales, the Parks Core Cities Group, the APSE and Amenity Forum.
27. An overview of the information contained in appendices B,C and D, from the Welsh Government, Amenity Forum and APSE respectively, is provided in **points 24 – 26**
28. Local ward members, where alternative solutions were tested, were briefed both pre and post trial.
29. There are no financial,(**point 29**) or HR implications (**point 31**) if the existing weed control methods are continued.
30. **Point 30** states that there are no legal implications arising from the report itself, however, Appendix D provides more detail regarding the position of the authority in using weed control products and that legal advice should be sought on a case by case basis if necessary.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET**

31. The proposed recommendations to Cabinet are to:
  - a. Note the content of this report and the content of the Weed Control Trial 2021 - Final Project Report.
  - b. Continue with the current approach of integrated weed control management and use of glyphosate based products.
  - c. Continue to take measures to reduce the use of the glyphosate based products on all Council landholdings, employing alternative control measures as appropriate.

- d. Continue to monitor product development for the purposes of weed control within the public realm and consider for future use based on environmental, quality, cost and criteria.
- e. Continue to support the role and work of Friends of Groups and volunteers in the management of weeds throughout the city.

### **Way Forward**

- 32. Councillor Jennifer Burke Davies, Cabinet Member for Culture, Parks and Events and Councillor Dan De'Ath, Cabinet Member for Transport and Strategic Planning have been invited to make statements. Jon Maidment, Operational Manager, Parks, Sports and Harbour Authority, Gary Brown, Head of Highways and Dr Dan Jones of Advanced Invasives have also been invited to answer questions and assist the Committee in its consideration of the item.

### **Legal Implications**

- 33. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters, there are no direct legal implications. However, legal implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet/Council will set out any legal implications arising from those recommendations. All decisions taken by or on behalf of the Council must (a) be within the legal powers of the Council; (b) comply with any procedural requirement imposed by law; (c) be within the powers of the body or person exercising powers on behalf of the Council; (d) be undertaken in accordance with the procedural requirements imposed by the Council e.g. Scrutiny Procedure Rules; (e) be fully and properly informed; (f) be properly motivated; (g) be taken having regard to the Council's fiduciary duty to its taxpayers; and (h) be reasonable and proper in all the circumstances.

### **Financial Implications**

- 34. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters, there are no direct financial

implications at this stage in relation to any of the work programme. However, financial implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet/Council will set out any financial implications arising from those recommendations.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Committee is recommended to:

- i. Consider the information in this report, its appendix and the information presented at the meeting;
- ii. Determine whether they would like to make any comments, observations or recommendations to the Cabinet on this matter; and
- iii. Decide the way forward for any future scrutiny of the issues discussed.

**DAVINA FIORE**

**Director of Governance & Legal Services**

**6 January 2023**