

CABINET

DATE	16th July 2025
REPORT OF	Councillor Henry Hudson, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Net Zero
SUBJECT	Weed Control
STATUS	Open
FORWARD PLAN REF NO.	CB 07/25/04

CONTRIBUTION TO OUR AIMS

North East Lincolnshire's Council Plan 2024-25 sets out our vision to create stronger economies and stronger communities.

To support this, we want to manage our land to ensure all residents have access to inspiring green and open spaces to protect health and enhance lives. Clean up and maintenance work will be targeted to areas of need and complemented by working with the community, local volunteers, local businesses, and partners. We will ensure we have the capacity to keep our streets clean and maintain our parks and open spaces for everyone to enjoy.

The Council's contribution to the Place Based Outcomes Framework and the wider development of North East Lincolnshire relevant to this report are:

All people live in a safe environment, can have their say about things that are important to them and participate fully in their communities.

All people benefit from a green economy and high quality environment.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A petition was received by the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Net Zero regarding the use of Glyphosate as a treatment for weed control. Full Council debated and the following resolution was agreed by Council *"That officers investigate the possibility of the Council phasing out the use of Glyphosate with possible alternatives and report back to Scrutiny"*.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 1) Agrees the principle of carrying out a range of low cost or no cost trials, including the cessation of spraying altogether in identified locations in wards across North East Lincolnshire.

- 2) Delegates authority to the Director of Economy, Environment and Infrastructure in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Net Zero to consult with all ward members to identify a suitable area within their ward to conduct a trial, thereafter implement such trial and carry out appropriate levels of monitoring.
- 3) That the outcome of the trial be reported back to scrutiny by the Director of Economy, Environment and Infrastructure with an invitation that scrutiny makes recommendations to Cabinet in a further report.

REASON FOR DECISION

To respond to the recent petition regarding the future use of Glyphosate for weed control in North East Lincolnshire and agree a way forward in the short to medium term following the recent confirmation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) that Glyphosate can continue to be used for weed management until 15th December 2026.

1. BACKGROUND AND ISSUES

- 1.1 The petition considered by Full Council on the 26th September 2024 requested that North East Lincolnshire consider the following.
 - *Join the growing list of pesticide-free towns and phase-out the use of glyphosate in favour of non-chemical alternatives that put nature and our health first.*
 - *Work with “Pesticide Action Network UK” who are a leading organisation supporting Local Authorities on their pesticide free journey.*
 - *Start to progress its commitment in its Carbon Road Map to “work with local community groups and provide increased access and connection to nature and encourage a healthy, sustainable lifestyle”*
 - *Agree Action Plan for Change with Annual Reviews of progress, publicising and promoting solutions.*
- 1.2 The petition contained a total of 21,268 signatures suggesting significant public opinion against the use of Glyphosate for weed control. The petition was presented to a Communities Scrutiny panel meeting on 27th February 2025..
- 1.3 At the time of the Communities Scrutiny meeting Glyphosate was only authorised for use in the EU until 15 December 2025. Since the meeting the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has extended the approval of glyphosate until 15th December 2026. [Active substance renewal: glyphosate - HSE](#) The HSE have stated *“Following assessment and consideration of comments received, if glyphosate is expected to meet the legislative approval criteria, then the approval will be eligible to be renewed. This would be for a period of up to 15 years. It would also trigger a programme of work to reassess all authorised pesticide products that contain glyphosate to determine whether they continue to meet authorisation criteria.*

If the renewal assessment determines that glyphosate is no longer expected to meet the legislative approval criteria, then we will determine whether a more restricted approval would meet the criteria. If no such restrictions are possible, then glyphosate will not be eligible for renewal. This would result in the phasing out of products containing glyphosate from use in GB.”

- 1.4 Further analysis of the 21,268 petition signatories identified that only 372 were confirmed as living within Cleethorpes, Grimsby or Immingham. Based on the population of North East Lincolnshire (157,200) this indicates that the petition represents only 0.24% of our local population and impacts on the potential strength of feeling on this issue locally. However it is acknowledged that our Petition Scheme is open to those who work, study in, or visit, the area.
- 1.5 In considering potential future options for phasing out Glyphosate it is important to understand the reasons for weed control and review the financial and environmental implications alongside the quality of weed control, regrowth and public perception of the different approaches.
- 1.6 Weeds are controlled for the following reasons: -
 - **Appearance** – weeds can detract from the overall appearance of an area.
 - **Safety** – weed growth can interfere with visibility for road users and obscure traffic.
 - **Drainage** – weeds in kerbs or around drains can prevent or slow down surface water drainage.
 - **Damage** – weed growth can affect paved surfaces and force kerbs apart increasing maintenance costs and impacting on pedestrian safety.
- 1.7 In relation to item 4 of the petition the Council currently provides an Annual Progress Report for both the Carbon Roadmap and the Natural Assets Plan, which incorporates a dedicated workstream on work with local community groups, access and connection to nature and encouraging a healthy and sustainable lifestyle.

2. RISKS OPPORTUNITIES AND EQUALITY ISSUES

- 2.1 The Communities Scrutiny Panel Report set out the potential risks and opportunities associated with phasing out Glyphosate and it is important to note that since that time its use has been formally extended.
- 2.2 It remains the case that Pesticide Action Network UK believe that the greatest risk to successfully phasing out Glyphosate is the need for effective planning and the need for greater acceptance of weeds by residents. If there is not strong local public support to adopt a new approach, there may be a risk of dissatisfaction within our local communities about the extent of weed growth and the impact this is having on our infrastructure and aesthetically.

- 2.3 At the current time, a change from the methodology for weed control is likely to significantly increase costs or reduce the impact of weed control methods. In preparing a future plan for phasing out Glyphosate the council may consider no cost or low cost approaches on a trial basis, leading to a future comprehensive assessment of the risks and opportunities associated with any alternative approach.
- 2.4 This is an emerging area of work, with many councils exploring new and innovative approaches to weed control individually. It is possible that if a future extension to the use of Glyphosate is not agreed there will be greater support to Councils in the transition to alternative methods. We have contacted Pesticide Action Network UK as part of the initial scrutiny work and will continue to use their expertise in implementing and assessing trials which will be reported back to Scrutiny.

3. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

3.1 Do nothing

Now that the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has extended the approval of glyphosate until 15th December 2026 there is an opportunity to continue with the current application methods until informed that alternative arrangements are legally required to be put in place.

3.2 Expand the open spaces where Glyphosate is phased out

There are currently lots of areas where the Council does not use Glyphosate. The Council could identify further areas where this is appropriate and would cease spraying around trees, fence lines and other obstacles. The use of glyphosate would still continue on paths, car parks, hard standings and play areas in these locations.

3.3 Accept recommendation from Communities Scrutiny Panel.

The panel recommended that the Council ***Fully phase out glyphosate in parks and open spaces but retain use on highways and paths until a cost-effective option is available and instigate a trial to phase out in a specific area for highway and report back to scrutiny.***

- 3.4 The phasing out of Glyphosate in parks and open spaces including paths, car parks, hard standings and play areas in advance of any trials or public engagement may result in community dissatisfaction and therefore whilst this was the recommendation of Scrutiny it is considered important that the second element of their recommendation regarding trials is initiated first.

4. REPUTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATIONS

The use or cessation of Glyphosate has both positive and negative reputational implications for the Council depending upon an individual's view. The Council recognises that any change will need to be effectively communicated, and this underpins the recommendation to engage with all ward members to identify locations in their respective wards to conduct a trial.

5. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1 The transition to alternative methods of weed control or no weed control is likely to have either significant financial capital and revenue consequences depending upon the options chosen. Indicative costs associated with options presented in the Communities Scrutiny panel report provided some context to the significance of this decision. It is envisaged that strimming would require an additional 30 staff at a revenue cost of £1.3M per year. The capital cost of additional mechanised sweeper vehicles is estimated at £950K, with additional annual revenue costs of £260K. Foamstream, which may be suitable for play areas only will require equipment at an annual cost of £17K per piece of equipment. Implementation of any change will therefore need to be supported by a comprehensive business case, including detailed cost information.
- 5.2 A reduction in the effectiveness of weed control may present other financial challenges either through detrimental impacts on infrastructure or increased insurance costs or claims.

6. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IMPLICATIONS

Our environmental strategies aim to improve the environment for the benefit of current and future generations. Children and young people are especially concerned about our environment, and it is essential to engage with them on environmental matters. This will feed into the workstreams in our Natural Assets Plan, which promote opportunities to engage with children and young people.

7. CONSULTATION WITH SCRUTINY

- 7.1 A report was taken to Communities Scrutiny Panel on 27th February 2025 recommendations from Community Scrutiny to Cabinet are detailed below.

Fully phase out glyphosate in parks and open spaces but retain use on highways and paths until a cost-effective option is available and instigate a trial to phase out in a specific area for highway and report back to scrutiny.

- 7.2 The phasing out of Glyphosate without ward councillor and public engagement may result in some community dissatisfaction.

8. CLIMATE CHANGE, NATURE RECOVERY AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

The petition is seeking to encourage operational change which will have a positive impact on the environment, increase biodiversity and support wildlife.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Whilst the figures included within the financial consideration section are estimates, implementation of alternative options in relation to methods of weed control are expected to result in costs being incurred above the current approved revenue budget envelope and the current approved capital programme. This would therefore result in a budget pressure. Following the completion of the recommended trials, any future changes would need to be considered and approved alongside a full business case via the Business Development Group.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The future legal position regarding the use of Glyphosate is unclear as it is not known at this stage whether the legal obligations regarding glyphosate under EU Law will be incorporated into UK domestic law.
- 10.2 Glyphosate is approved for use in the UK until December 2026.
- 10.3 Guidance on the use of Glyphosate is widely available and should be adhered to.
- 10.4 Constitutionally, the scrutiny function is able to make recommendations to Cabinet but it is a matter for Cabinet as to what (if any) weight is attached to such recommendations.

11. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct HR implications arising from the contents of this report.

12. WARD IMPLICATIONS

The Council carries out weed control throughout the Borough and this will impact all wards.

13. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Communities Scrutiny Panel | NELC

7.-Petition-for-Debate.pdf

14. CONTACT OFFICER(S)

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PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND NET ZERO