

Communities Scrutiny Panel

DATE	26 th February 2026
REPORT OF	Kath Jickells – Assistant Director Environment
SUBJECT	Weed Control update
STATUS	Open

CONTRIBUTION TO OUR AIMS

North East Lincolnshire's Council Plan 2025-28 sets out our vision to create stronger economies and stronger communities.

To support this we want to keep community benefit at the heart of our plans for green spaces. Our vision is to ensure we're providing a clean, green and safe environment for residents and visitors to enjoy.

Connecting places and people. We want the parks to be used to regularly meet friends and participate in events at various locations. We want people across the whole borough to visit and enjoy all areas of the borough and for it to be appreciated by residents.

We will value and maintain green spaces to increase biodiversity across our borough.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At Cabinet on 16th July 2025, it was agreed to implement the following decision.

1. That 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 be approved.
2. That the Director of Economy, Environment and Infrastructure in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Net Zero be delegated authority to consult with all ward members to identify any suitable area 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.

This report provides an update on the progress to identify suitable locations for weed control trials and our consultation with Ward Councillors. Based on the outcome of this initial work it is proposed that changes to the current program of weed control are paused with no further action taking place at this moment in time.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION

Following Cabinet decision on 16th July 2025, officers reached out via email to all Ward Councillors in the borough of North East Lincolnshire. The email asked Ward Councillors to engage with their residents to identify areas within their wards suitable to trial alternative solutions for weed control. The email asked Ward Councillors to identify four areas and suggest the option proposed for each of the areas identified. This email was communicated to Ward Councillors on 8th October with a deadline for responses by 5th January 2026.

The extremely low response was communicated to the Communities Scrutiny Panel on 20th November 2025 with an action to publicise the call for sites through an external communication.

By the 5th January 2026 insufficient responses had been received from Ward Councillors to progress any trial areas. It was also apparent that engagement with residents and agreement on proposed areas has presented a challenge.

Considering the importance of community engagement and support required to deliver a successful programme of change to current weed controls it is recommended that any proposed trials are paused. This will enable the Council to await further confirmation from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) in December 2026 on the future control and use of Glyphosate. However, the service will continue to look at areas which can be re-wilded, to reduce the use of Glyphosate where this is both financially and environmentally sustainable.

1. BACKGROUND AND ISSUES

1.1 At Full Council on the 26th September 2024 a petition was received by the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Net Zero. 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”*. The petition requested that North East Lincolnshire consider a number of alternatives e.g.

- Join the growing list of pesticide-free towns and phase-out the use of glyphosate.
- Work with “Pesticide Action Network UK”.
- Start to progress its commitment in its Carbon Road Map.
- Agree Action Plan.

1.2 The petition contained a total of 21,268 signatures suggesting significant public opinion against the use of Glyphosate for weed control. Further analysis of the 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.

- 1.3 According to their website Pesticide Action Network UK don't recommend that pesticide use is stopped overnight, suggesting that such an approach can be counterproductive. They believe the journey towards becoming pesticide-free requires a well-planned phased approach. Whilst the time frame can vary from case to case, a three-year phase out period is considered realistic for most councils, PAN UK were contacted, and provided advice and support on the earlier work and data collated by officers.
- 1.4 Many other councils have already trialled a range of different solutions during their investigations to phase out Glyphosate. Research conducted in December 2024 by officers showed that of the 49 Council's, previously pledging to ban or phase out glyphosate.
 - 45% have not kept the pledge
 - 22% have kept the pledge
 - 14% have partially kept the pledge
 - 18% no further updates have been provided
- 1.5 Glyphosate was previously only authorised for use in the EU until 15 December 2023, following an extension to the renewal assessment process in 2022. In the UK, the current expiry date is December 2026,
- 1.6 The council currently uses a chemical herbicide containing Glyphosate, which has been subject to extensive testing and regulatory assessment in the EU. Glyphosate is approved for use by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and is marked as safe to its users and the public.
- 1.7 It remains essential that any potential future options for phasing out Glyphosate recognise the reasons why councils carry out weed control. A review of financial and environmental implications alongside a review of the quality of weed control, regrowth and public perception of the different approaches is essential. 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.
- 1.8 The council treats approximately 1200km of the highway network each year and numerous public open spaces. Public open spaces include a mix of green space and include paths and paved areas. The council currently, administers 2 to 3 applications per year across the highway network and some open spaces. We consider that our current approach is successful with only 61 customer

requests/complaints received for weed spraying to be carried out in the last year.

- 1.9 Further analysis of the operational and financial implications of conducting the trials was carried out alongside the call for sites. We undertook further engagement with PAN UK who advised that a programme of enhanced sweeping would be required as part of any strategy to reduce Glyphosate. The indicative cost of this enhanced programme and additional repair and maintenance of mechanical sweepers is estimated at £30K per year.
- 1.10 Our weed control programme already seeks to minimise the areas we actively manage with Glyphosate and we will continue to investigate in conjunction with colleagues within the Sustainability Team, new areas that can be re-wilded.
- 1.11 The Council will await further confirmation from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) in December 2026 on the future control and use of Glyphosate.

2. RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

There is a risk of some dissatisfaction from petitioners passionate about reducing the use of Glyphosate. However, this is likely to be relatively small when balanced against the potential wider public dissatisfaction associated with increased weed growth within our borough.

3. REPUTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATIONS

Ward Councillors have communicated with residents, it is clear from the extremely low response to the proposed trials that there is little or no public support for this change programme and this is likely to impact on our reputation.

4. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The existing programme of weed control can be delivered within the current budget envelope. Any proposed trials or changes are likely to require additional budget to deliver. Indicative costs indicate an additional £30k will be needed to carry out more sweeping in trial areas.

5. 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.

6. CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

The proposed pause presents no change to the current environmental implications. However, work continues to look at alternatives and re-wild areas of the borough.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

No financial implications.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

No legal implications.

9. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

No Human Resources implications.

10. WARD IMPLICATIONS

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

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

12. CONTACT OFFICER(S)

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