

Green Spaces and Amenities Unit

Weed Control: Policy and Procedure

January 2022



Introduction

This document outlines the policy and procedures that the Council follows in the application of herbicides on highways and also in parks and green spaces and other land that is managed by the Council.

Reasons for weed control

Weeds are controlled for the following reasons:

- To prevent damage to pavements and roads that would result from uncontrolled weed growth.
- To ensure public safety by avoiding accidents such as trips and falls that arise when paved surfaces are affected by weeds
- To maintain a tidy appearance
- To ensure the free flow of storm water along drainage channels and kerb lines.

Approach to weed control

The Council aims to reduce chemical use to a minimum and to apply herbicides strictly in accordance with manufacturers recommendations, using trained staff and only when weather conditions are suitable.

Herbicide applications made at the times of the year when they have the best effect and for highway weed applications, we aim for a single spring treatment (April – June) and will follow up with further treatment if required later during the summer.

The Council uses only herbicides that are certified for amenity use.

Reducing herbicide use

The Council aims to minimise herbicide use by utilising equipment that is best suited for the purpose including the use of CDA applicators which apply controlled oil-based droplets of herbicide to the leaves of plants which minimises drift and run off.

Alternatives to weed control

The Council makes extensive use of mechanical alternatives such as strimming around obstacles where possible.

The Council also investigates alternative forms of weed control. During the period April 2020 to September 2020 the Foamstream system was hired and used to treat weeds in parks and playgrounds. It proved to be extremely slow and the regrowth of weeds occurred very quickly because only the leaves are killed and not the roots, which allows perennial weeds and

grasses to regrow. The system is currently not economic to use at any scale. The CO2 emissions from the gas powered steam boiler and diesel tractor needed to tow the system are very high in comparison with current methods.

In 2022 the Council undertook a trial using the naturally occurring pelargonic acid for weed control in the cemetery. The results were unsatisfactory with a limited kill of foliage of some species, but these re-grew relatively quickly and so required repeated application to control.

The Council is continuing to monitor trials of non-chemical alternatives undertaken by other authorities.

Method of weed control

Weeds are controlled using glyphosate herbicide in formulations that have been approved for amenity use and which are applied as either a water-based spray or CDA (controlled droplet applicator) using a small quad bike equipped with fixed spray nozzles and a hand-held lance or by pedestrian operatives using held CDA or water-based sprayers.

Propyzimide is applied around young woodland trees in the first season only.

Chikara is applied as a long-lasting residual herbicide around obstacles (cemetery).

For some weeds that are not controlled by Glyphosate, such as Japanese Knotweed, etc. the herbicide Icade is used.

Glyphosate is used for most of the weed control because it is the safest and most effective herbicide that is available and certified for use in amenity situations. It is immediately neutralised in contact with soil and is certified safe to use in proximity to water courses.

Glyphosate herbicide is applied at the manufacturers recommended application rates by spraying onto the leaf of the weed. The herbicide is then absorbed by the plant and kills it completely. This type of herbicide is known as a non-residual translocated herbicide.

In locations, such as formal parks and cemeteries, etc. paths are edged by hand or machine to prevent grass encroachment. Cutting back path edges is also undertaken periodically in general open spaces.

On urban street and roads, Streetscene staff remove the build-up of silt and organic matter from kerb edges, so removing the substrate in which weeds grow. Regular street sweeping also helps to remove the accumulation of silt.

The Council has undertaken an extensive trial of a foam/steam herbicide and will continue explore alternative forms of weed control and may undertake trials of different techniques from time to time

Health and safety

The Council will ensure that the work is carried out in accordance with the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, the Control of Pollution Act 1974, Environmental Protection Act 1990 and other relevant Legislation.

The Glyphosate herbicide that is used has a very low toxicity to humans, animals and insects and is licensed to be used in areas that are open to the public and their pets. On contact with soil the herbicide breaks down into harmless substances.

The application of herbicides is undertaken only by qualified staff who have been trained and assessed in the safe application of herbicides and hold a relevant NPTC spraying licences. These include; Pa1 (Foundation Certificate for the Safe Use and Handling of Pesticides), Pa2 for vehicle-mounted hydraulic sprayers and Pa6 for hand held CDA sprayers.

Definition of the areas treated

Highways

Application of herbicide is carried on behalf of Lancashire County Council on areas of the adopted highway that are affected by weeds including, pavements, road kerb edges, traffic islands, back streets, footpaths and around street furniture.

Gated back alleys that are part of the adopted highway network are treated subject to access.

Parks and Green Spaces

Herbicide is used to treat grass and weeds encroaching on the edges of footpaths, play areas and hard surface areas, including ball courts and tennis courts, car parks, etc. Herbicides are also applied to maintain the width of stone surfaced footpaths and greenways in semi-natural areas. This application is undertaken by Green Spaces gardening staff using hand-held CDA (controlled droplet applicators) sprayers.

Treatment Periods

The highway areas are treated with herbicide between the March and November with aim of ensuring effective control of highway weeds.

Normal working times are 8am - 4pm.

Treatment is weather dependent, and no spraying will take place when wind speed is above 3mph, when it is raining or when rain is expected within 2 hours.

Sensitive Areas

Areas classed as sensitive are the town centres of Burnley and Padiham, local shopping areas and in the vicinity of schools and other locations where there may be many pedestrians. Special care will be taken to ensure that spraying does not take place in these areas at busy times.

- Town centres and local shopping centres will be normally be treated between the hours of 5am and 8am.
- In the vicinity of schools and children's play areas, treatment will take place only between the hours 9.15 am 12.00pm and 1.00pm and 2.30pm.

In all other areas treatment will cease if an area becomes busy with pedestrians and the operator will return to complete it at another time.

Organisation and management of weed control operations

Client

The client for the highway weed control is:

Mr Mike Hargreaves
Public Realm Manager East
Highways Department
Burnley Area east
Willows Lane
BB5 0RT
mhargreaves@lancashire.gov.uk

The contractor is:

Mr Mark Holt
Greenspaces Manager
Green Spaces and Amenities Unit
Burnley Borough Council
93 Rossendale Road
Burnley
BB11 5DD
greenspaces@burnley.gov.uk

The highway weed control operation is directly managed by the Neighbourhood team leaders responsible to the Green Spaces Manager. The team leaders are responsible for checking 5-

day weather forecasts and planning spraying operations according to the forecasted weather conditions.

Weed control is undertaken using quad bikes fitted with tanks and fixed and hand-held spray lances.

Three operatives (one in each neighbourhood team) undertake weed control on highways throughout the period from March until November, operating from Queens Park depot and Memorial Park depot, Padiham.

Spraying of verges in parks, playgrounds, ball courts, non-highway paths and green spaces is undertaken separately by the existing park-based neighbourhood teams using CDA applicators and/or quad bikes.

Monitoring

Monitoring of weed control is carried out by Parks Officers

The weed control operatives liaise daily with the Parks Officer and at the end of each day the operatives will mark up a plan showing the streets that have been sprayed and complete the Pesticide Application Log.

When each neighbourhood area has been treated with herbicide, the operatives fill in a Neighbourhood Completion Form.

The quad bikes used for weed control is fitted with a vehicle tracking device that provides a continuous record of the route followed each day. This record will be retained.

Complaints & enquiries

Complaints and enquiries received from the public about any highway weed control issues should be directed to:

Highways
Lancashire County Council County Hall
Preston
Lancashire
PR1 8XJ

Tel: 0300 123 6780

Email: highways@lancashire.gov.uk

Complaints and enquiries about weed control on any areas of parks or green space in Burnley should be directed to:

greenspaces@burnley.gov.uk

Incident Reporting

Any incidents that occur during weed control operations is reported by the operative on a Spraying Incident Report Form (Appendix 1.) These include any issues raised by members of the public regarding spraying and any incidents such as spray drift onto a member of the public or onto private property and any accidents or 'near misses'.

The completed Incident Report Form is passed to the Green Spaces Manager to investigate and take any action necessary.

Operatives carry business cards that can be given to any member of the public making an enquiry about weed control operations.

Spray damage on private land

Any incidents of spray damage to private gardens are investigated by the Green Spaces Manager in accordance with the Council's complaints procedure. If the investigation determines that the Council is liable, The Green Spaces Manager has authority and budget provision to settle minor claims.

Operational Procedures

Operational Health and Safety

Weed control operatives are trained and hold PA1/PA2/PA6a certificates.

Operations are covered by a detailed risk assessment and safe system of work. Operatives undertaking spray application works will adhere to the following:

- Safe Systems of work and Risk Assessments are to be followed at all times
- Close fitting body protection and protective gloves are issued as requested and will be worn at all times and replaced as required.
- Eye protection and protective gloves will be used when mixing chemical and when carrying out repair work including the replacement or unblocking of blocked nozzles.
- Correct transport, storage and mixing of herbicides must be observed.
- Daily recorded checks of vehicles and spraying equipment will be completed.
- Weather forecasts will be checked in advance.

- Machinery and equipment will be operated with care and accordance with manufacturers recommendations.
- Public safety during spraying operations and when travelling between sites will be given priority at all times
- Weed control operations will cease if the operator has any concerns regarding safety of the public or him/herself
- Herbicide will be applied only at the recommended rates
- empty herbicide containers and other materials must be disposed of in the correct manner
- Any incidents, accidents or near misses will be notified promptly and reported using the Incident Report Form
- Pesticide Application Logs will be completed daily

Working Times and Meal Breaks

Operatives will work flexibly to enable work to be undertaken in sensitive areas early in the morning if required.

Operatives will take meal breaks at the nearest park depot or pavilion to reduce travel time.

Weed Spraying : Good Practice

The correct application of herbicide saves time and money. There are several measures the operator take to ensure weed control is undertaken with care.

- Check and use the right equipment
- Whether herbicides are applied with a controlled droplet applicator (cda), a knapsack spray or a Vehicle Mounted Sprayer, it is the responsibility of the operator to ensure the correct equipment is used and the spray width is minimised.
- Select the correct nozzle and ensure the sprayer is in fully working order before the start of the daily operation.
- It is a legal requirement for the operator to correctly calibrate their equipment and the operator to complete a Pesticide Application Log (appendix two) daily, which will be held in a file at Queens Park depot.
- To avoid spray drift, don't spray in windy conditions
- Where edges have been sprayed previously, if there are no weeds present - don't spray.
- Don't make edges unnecessarily wide.

These photos show exceptionally wide application, which required requiring repairs and re-turfing. The operator is responsible to ensure that drift is eliminated and for making everyone aware of their operation, to prevent risk of contamination.



Spray width too wide

The ideal width to be attained when spraying edges of grass to kerbs and paths is 75mm (3"). This strip can be maintained easily with a pedestrian rotary mower.



75mm spray width produces correct result

