



Bridgwater Town Council

Adopted by the Council at its Meeting held on 17 June 2021

Draft Pesticide Free Policy

Bridgwater Town Council aims to provide a high standard of grounds maintenance for all its green open spaces, including cemeteries.

With the ever-increasing awareness of the environmental and undesirable effects of pesticides on health and eco-systems, this Policy pledges that alternative methods will be used in place of pesticides wherever possible.

This review has been triggered by growing public concern over:

- possible health effects of exposure to pesticides (this term is used to include insecticides, herbicides, and fungicides);
- the effects that pesticide use is having on our wildlife – the serious decline of bees and pollinators, bird species and mammals such as hedgehogs have all been linked to pesticide use; and
- possible contamination of water sources. When used on hard surfaces, such as pavements, there is a possibility of run off or residues of pesticides which can contaminate water courses and contaminate aquatic wildlife.

When used on soft surfaces, such as vegetation or grass swards, there is a possibility of spray drift and contamination of adjacent areas.

This Policy identifies how we propose to use alternatives to pesticides on sites owned by Bridgwater Town Council, including cemeteries and allotments, where we will seek to influence the use of alternatives. This does not include land owned and maintained by other local authorities or privately-owned land. However, wherever possible we will encourage pesticide free practice across the town.

Below is the range of non-chemical alternatives which will be trialled instead of Pesticides:

Hot foam systems, like hot water systems, kill plants using heat, but can be used in all weather conditions. This gives them a major advantage over chemical herbicides which can only be sprayed under ideal weather conditions.

- Hand weeding, particularly for smaller areas such as playgrounds and on paths running through parks;
- Acetic acid dilutions can be effective in controlling weeds on hard surfaces in a variety of situations. Acetic acid is biodegradable and poses no risk of bioaccumulation;
- Differing types of mulching. This is a particularly useful approach in ornamental beds and in parks;
- Flame treatment;
- Steel brushing for large scale areas such as pavements and roads and in combination with the use of acetic acid spraying;
- High pressure hot water treatments; and
- Electronic control systems that kill stems and roots instantly and are particularly suited to dealing with invasive species.

Bridgwater Town Council pledges to encourage biodiversity wherever we can, and therefore will seek to identify areas within the ownership of the Council where mowing can be minimised at key times of the year (i.e. 'No Mow May') and increase perennial wildflower areas to help provide additional food sources for butterflies and bees.

There are some areas where alternative weed control methods are not yet fully developed, such as the control of Knotweed, so a phased approach to pesticide reduction is required in line with the Environmental Protection Act 1990, below.

Environmental Protection Act 1990

Japanese knotweed is classed as 'controlled waste' and as such must be disposed of safely at a licensed landfill site according to the Environmental Protection Act (Duty of Care) Regulations 1991.

We need to be mindful of the above legislation but will seek to avoid the use of harmful pesticides whenever possible in dealing with 'controlled waste' under the above Act.

Where it is necessary for pesticides to be applied on Council land, these will be applied in such a way that it conforms fully with the latest Health and Safety Legislation (primarily the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 (HSWA)) and Pesticide Legislation (The Plant Protection Products (Sustainable Use) Regulations 2012 & Control of Pesticides (Amended) Regulations 1997).

Climate Emergency Impact: This Motion contributes to our commitment to respond to the Climate Emergency, in our Climate Change Motion dated March 2019, whereby Bridgwater Town Council recognised the scale of the emergency and would

produce a strategy to deal with it on a local level and to work with partners to face the challenge.