

The cessation of the use of glyphosate and other known harmful agricultural chemicals on MTC land and by MTC staff.

1. Purpose of the report

1.1 To propose and agree to ceasing the use of known harmful agricultural chemicals on MTC land and/or by MTC staff, to be replaced by sustainable practice and/or less toxic agricultural compounds.

2. Background

2.1 MTC has been striving to move towards sustainable practices over a number of years and yet we are still using the herbicide Glyphosate as a weed killer on MTC land – this has been confirmed by our Groundsman Shaun.

2.2 The WHO has recognised Glyphosate as a chemical of concern and a likely carcinogen. Its use has been prohibited or is being phased out in many countries however it is still used in the UK for farming, and it is commonly used in towns and cities in the UK as a weedkiller.

2.3 Replacing a current herbicide with other products and practices may not be as straightforward as swapping to the use of another chemical if the other chemical is proven to be harmful to the environment as well. For example, another much older (yet still common) herbicide is 2,4-D, which research shows is an endocrine disruptor¹ and which has links to certain cancers. (It was one of the main ingredients in the notorious Agent Orange used in the Vietnam war.)

2.4 The list of most worrying agricultural chemicals that we should avoid are:

Glyphosate (herbicide)

2,4 -D (herbicide)

Neonicotinoids (insecticides)

Chlorpyrifos (insecticide)

2.5 MTC use of herbicides could be replaced by a combination of practices depending on the area/plot in question. For example, in children's play parks where mowing is undertaken at regular intervals, but mowing can't be done close enough to the fence to prevent weed growth (as in White Lion Park) the creation of a wildflower border will support biodiversity and offer food for pollinator populations across a range of seasons (depending on the wildflower mix). The border will look lovely at the same time as providing competition for new weeds (old weeds are removed in the process preparing for the wildflower border) and the need to use weedkiller or mow at the edge of the playing field is removed. On other surfaces like the edges or cracks in pavements, other technologies have been developed to kill weeds with steaming foam. The bubbles are not toxic, it's the heat that kills the plants and this can be targeted directly at the individual weeds.

2.6 More information about alternatives to herbicides, including other technology, can be acquired from the following websites:

¹ The endocrine system controls hormonal functions in humans, affecting the production of insulin, testosterone and growth hormones.

<https://www.pan-uk.org/> and <https://www.weedingtech.com/> That said, we should note that changes to mowing schedules in certain areas might be enough to control some weed growth.

3. Proposal

- 3.1 That the Town Hall and Facilities Committee agree to the cessation of the use of harmful chemicals by its groundskeeping team and work to produce a more tailored approach to weed control for the specific areas of need on MTC property.
- 3.2 That MTC seek further advice and support, as necessary, to create a weed control plan for its properties.
- 3.3 That if the reduction in costs resulting from not buying glyphosate and reducing some of the mowing and treatment times is insufficient to cover any new costs, TH&F request new budget for the various elements of the weed control programme.

4. Costs

- 4.1 The costs have yet to be researched and calculated during the planning of how MTC might undertake weed control on its property in the future. The costs in terms of biodiversity loss and environmental degradation as a result of not taking action are difficult to calculate, but there are real environmental costs to the use of chemicals. These costs would be paid in a myriad of ways in the future.

5. Risks

- 5.1 There is a risk that if we don't manage weeds well using alternative methods, we will see more weeds around Malmesbury.

6. Recommendation

- 6.1 That the committee agree to work on using glyphosate free, sustainable weed and pest control methods on MTC property, and if possible increase wildflower borders to create bee corridors while doing so.

Cllr Fran Vandelli