

# Report

Report to:	<b>Climate Change and Sustainability Committee</b>
Date:	<b>25 August 2021</b>
Report by:	<b>Executive Director (Community and Enterprise Resources)</b>

Subject:	<b>Pesticide Free Council Motion - Update</b>
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## 1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to: -

- ◆ Provide an interim update on the trials carried out to date in advance of a final report due by the end of 2021

## 2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Committee is asked to approve the following recommendations: -

- (1) that report be noted, and
- (2) to note that a further report will be submitted to a future meeting of this Committee.

## 3. Background

3.1. On 16 December 2020, the Council considered a motion regarding a proposal for South Lanarkshire to become a Pesticide free Council. On 10 February 2021, the Climate Change and Sustainability Committee considered a report which outlined work undertaken which had been undertaken, in respect of the motion approved set out information in relation to a motion raised at the Council

3.2. One of the next steps set out in the report was that Grounds Services would continue to pilot and assess alternative weed control methods in conjunction with our partners in the APSE Grounds and Streets Advisory Group whilst looking at any options to further reduce the level of pesticide use. In that respect, a follow up report would be provided within 6 months detailing the outcomes associated with these trials.

3.3. The extent and time to evaluate the impact of these trials means that a full report will not be available until the end of the year. As such it was considered appropriate to provide this interim report with the purpose to provide an update on work completed to date.

## 4 Current Position

4.1. Ground Services whilst committing to a series of trials of alternative methods of weed control has in the main continued to use glyphosate on a range of surfaces in the absence of a reliable and affordable alternative. The Service has, however, reduced the application on areas such as grass verges where grass cutting maintenance is not affected. The Service has also amended the timetable for application in schools, providing this core function during school holidays.

- 4.2. The application continues to be carried out by trained operatives using a licensed and legal product through knapsacks, motorised vehicle (quad bikes), Stem injection and controlled droplet application (C.D.A.).
- 4.3. Grounds Services, identified as part of the next steps in the 10 February 2021 report, have signed up to the 'Amenity Forum'. The Council is now a member of the forum and through discussions have identified that it has a toolkit developed to evaluate pilots of this nature. An Integrated Management Form is part of the assessment tool provided by Amenity Forum and this will be completed and form part of the final report.
- 4.4. Discussion also continues with other local authorities particularly through our attendance and participation via the APSE Grounds and Streets Advisory Group within which South Lanarkshire are regularly seen as a key contributor. Grounds Services are currently discussing the outcomes of North Lanarkshire Council's decision earlier this year to ban the use of glyphosate and particularly the trials they are undertaking to assess alternative methods of weed control. Early indications would seem to suggest that this is severely affecting the effective control of weeds.
- 4.5. The Service continues to await the outcomes of the Scottish Government led Weed Control survey completed in January 2021. Timescales for this are not available at this time however the Service will continue to seek an output from this survey through the APSE Grounds and Streets Advisory Group so that it can inform the final report.

## **5. Trials**

- 5.1. A number of trials are ongoing as we are still part way through the growing season although previous experience suggests that weather conditions dictate that less weed control is carried out later in the growing season.
- 5.2. The 4 main alternative methods trialled to date include:

### Hot Foam

This method uses hot water applied directly onto the weed growth and this is complimented by adding a layer of foam which acts to keep the heat from the hot water which is designed to kill the weed at a higher temperature for a longer period thus enhancing the 'kill'. The foam is created from a natural plant-based oil and is mixed through when the water/steam as it is being applied

The unit required to heat the water/ apply the foam is currently on hire at a cost of approx. £1,000 per week (£23,000 to purchase). The level of kill achieved is not 100% and regrowth is seen to appear after 2 weeks at best. The treatment does not kill the root system which leads to this rapid regrowth. Glyphosate would normally be effective for between 8 and 12 weeks. Additional vehicle hire dedicated to supporting this operation is a further £200 per week.

The unit is using 1,000 litres of water every fill with approximately 4 fills required each day. Normal glyphosate usage would see water usage at approximately 90 litres. The hot water is generated by a diesel operated pump and heating system so increased CO2 emissions are experienced. Recent reports suggest this is 5 times the average family water usage.

This system does not kill the root of perennial weeds and grasses so repeat treatments are required. Manoeuvrability is cumbersome and, as the unit requires to be contained on a crewcab vehicle, the spraying operation is restrictive and is seen in some areas to cause issues for pedestrians safely accessing footpaths/pavements. The nozzle

used to apply the hot water/ foam is attached to the heating unit by way of a 50-metre hose and therefore the vehicle requires to be moved on a regular basis and in effect after 50 metres in each direction has been treated. This results in the treatment becoming a 2-person job. In addition, there are issues with vehicle movement, pedestrian safety and noise from the generator in built up areas for a period of time which would suggest that this alternative would not be appropriate for use in all areas requiring weed control.

### Hot Steam

The use of this process was carried out as a demonstration at no cost to the Service. However, the purchase of the heating unit would be around £23,000 and similar to the hot foam treatment would also require a dedicated vehicle at approximately £200 per week and is likely to be a 2-person operation for similar reasons as the Hot Foam process.

Although similar to the Hot Foam system, this method does not incorporate the foam resulting in the hot water losing its heat more quickly and therefore not killing the weed as efficiently as the hot foam system. It is anticipated that regrowth will be rapid as this system does not affect the root system.

Whilst the unit has a smaller water tank it is expected that this will use in the region of 4,000 litres per day. Normal glyphosate usage would see water usage at approximately 90 litres. The hot water is generated by a diesel operated pump and heating system so increased CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are experienced. Recent reports suggest this is 5 times the average family water usage.

This system does not kill the root of perennial weeds and grasses so repeat treatments are required. Manoeuvrability is cumbersome and as the unit requires to be contained on a crewcab vehicle the spraying operation is restrictive and is seen in some areas to cause issues for pedestrians safely accessing footpaths/ pavements.

### New Way Spray

New Way Spray is a form of non-selective herbicide and promoted as an alternative to Glyphosate. It mainly contains acetic acid which will control most weeds, grasses and moss for use on hard surfaces. This product is approved for use on hard surfaces to control moss, but not weeds. It is applied by way of a conventional knapsack but not via a motorised vehicle thus increasing operational time.

The product is new to the market and does identify a number of hazards which Glyphosate based products do not currently have. It is highlighted as being particularly dangerous if it gets into the eyes or is inhaled and therefore requires a higher level of PPE.

The product can effectively be described as a strong version of 'vinegar' with application rates at a high level. 5 litres of New Way will treat 200m<sup>2</sup> of land whilst 5 litres of glyphosate based weedkiller will treat 10,000m<sup>2</sup> of similar land. This would result in material costs per 10,000m<sup>2</sup> at £30 for glyphosate and £1,940 for New Way.

The effectiveness of the product is poor with rapid regrowth and in some instances no effect at all.

### Mankar Ultra Low Volume Lance

Whilst this method continues to use glyphosate it is applied through a low volume lance which is very similar to a controlled droplet applicator (CDA). A 500ml bottle is

filled with undiluted Glyphosate and this is then fed by gravity through a lance to a high spinning head which produces a fine droplet applied to the surface of weeds.

The benefit of using this method is you still have the positive effectiveness associated with glyphosate however only half the product is required to cover an equivalent area.

Chemical cost would be reduced, on the basis that the current 2 applications are found to be sufficient, however. this will be a manual operation and not one that can be carried on some areas by use of quad therefore labour costs would increase substantially.

## **6. Summary and Next Steps**

- 6.1. Whilst officers continue to review alternative methods nothing to date has suggested that any alternative method is more efficient, effective and they tend to result in varying degrees of additional costs or additional pressures on the environment through excess water use or increased carbon emissions.
- 6.2. In addition, officers continue to discuss with other local authorities through the APSE Grounds and Streets Advisory Group in relation to other methods which could be considered as a viable alternative.
- 6.3. Officers will complete existing trials in advance of the final report to be provided in late 2021.
- 6.4. Continue to source other alternative methods and where suitable and available test these fully in advance of any future decision on service provision.
- 6.5. Highlight to elected members when alternative methods are being used in their areas to see first-hand their use and effect.

## **7. Employee Implications**

- 7.1. The extent of the trials and the failure of any to show a more efficient or effective process has resulted in employees being diverted from their current duties to support these and in particular the ongoing Hot Foam trial.

## **8. Financial Implications**

- 8.1. Anticipated costs for the hire of the Hot Foam system are expected to be in the region of £15,000 over the course of the trial period. With an additional cost of approximately £5,000 for vehicles hire/ fuel this will result in additional overall costs of £20,000. This is a direct on cost as the Service has continued to deliver our core glyphosate operations.
- 8.2. These costs do not include additional staff time to undertake the trials and the increased requirement for retreatment. However, it should be noted that although there are no direct additional costs, the labour has been sourced from existing staff and therefore has reduced work done in other areas.

## **9. Climate Change, Sustainability and Environmental Implications**

- 9.1. The implications identified through the trial of alternative methods are mainly around the extensive use of water in both the Hot Foam and Hot Water treatments and also the use of diesel-powered generators to heat the water.

## **10 Other Implications**

- 10.1. There are no implications for risk in terms of the information contained within this report.

## **11. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements**

- 11.1. This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a change to an existing policy, function or strategy and therefore, no impact assessment is required.
- 11.2. There is no requirement to undertake any consultation at this time in terms of the information contained in this report. However, as detailed proposals are developed, these will be subject to appropriate consultation arrangements.

**Michael McGlynn**

**Executive Director (Community and Enterprise Resources)**

4 August 2021

### **Link(s) to Council Values/Ambitions/Objectives**

- ◆ Improve the quality of life of everyone in South Lanarkshire.
- ◆ Work with communities and partners to promote high quality thriving and sustainable communities

### **Previous References**

- ◆ South Lanarkshire Council - 16 December 2020 – Pesticide Free Council
- ◆ Climate Change and Sustainability Committee 10 February 2021 – Pesticide Free Council Update

### **List of Background Papers**

- ◆ None

### **Contact for Further Information**

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

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