



Wild Maidenhead submission to Town Forum 5 September 2022

Becoming a pesticide-free town

- 1.1 This document sets out the case for going pesticide-free so that an informed decision can be taken by the council. This is in line with the council's commitment to environmental improvement and improving public health, as set out in the RBWM Corporate Plan 2021-2026 and the Environment and Climate Strategy 2020-2025.
- 1.2 Pesticides (herbicides, insecticides and fungicides) are used in our borough to control a range of perceived problems including weeds and vermin. They are used in schools, parks, playgrounds, allotments and on our streets. These are all areas used daily by our residents.
- 1.3 Pesticide use can have serious human health impacts, harm biodiversity and contaminate water supplies. There is growing evidence that glyphosate, the most commonly used weedkiller, is a higher health risk than previously assumed, with growing understanding of the damages caused by other chemical weed killers and pesticides to health and the environment. Childhood health problems and diseases including childhood leukemia, allergies, and endocrine and immune system disruption have been linked to increases in pesticide use.¹ In April 2015, the International Agency for Research on Cancer, part of the World Health Organization, concluded that glyphosate is "probably carcinogenic to humans".²
- 1.4 Pesticide use has a negative effect on urban wildlife and has been identified as a contributory factor in the decline of hedgehogs.
- 1.5 Pesticides sprayed onto the hard surfaces rapidly run off into drains and sewers and can find their way into water supplies, incurring the additional cost of removing pesticides from our water supplies.
- 1.6 Ending the use of pesticides in urban areas is becoming common. In France the use of all non-agricultural pesticides has been banned in public green spaces since January 2017. Large cities like Copenhagen, Paris, Rotterdam, Seattle and Tokyo all restrict or ban pesticide use in public spaces. Many local authorities have already gone pesticide-free e.g., Dartford, Lewes, Hammersmith & Fulham, Glastonbury, Trowbridge with a total of 46 town or boroughs having pesticides and/or glyphosate bans or phase-out commitments around the UK e.g., Chichester, Folkestone and Hythe.³
- 1.7 We request that RBWM consider going pesticide-free for almost all uses, but to retain very limited use of an injectable systemic pesticide for Japanese Knotweed, a highly invasive plant which the authority is bound to control effectively by law on any sites where it occurs.
- 1.8 The pesticide-free approach is broadly cost-neutral if a combination of alternatives is adopted. We recommend that an audit of current Council spending on pesticides, including

¹ See PAN Asia Pacific study: Poisoning our Future - Children and Pesticides study

<http://www.panap.net/sites/default/files/Poisoning-Our-Future-Children-and-Pesticides.pdf>

² See IARC Monograph on Glyphosate <https://www.iarc.who.int/featured-news/media-centre-iarc-news-glyphosate/>

³ See PAN Pesticides and/or glyphosate bans or phase-out commitments around the UK <https://www.pan-uk.org/pesticide-free-towns-success-stories/>

herbicides, fungicides and insecticides is undertaken. We further recommend that contact is made with councils that have recently converted to pesticide free in order to assess their experiences and knowledge of costs.

- 1.9 There is evidence to suggest that the negative public health impacts of using pesticides has a disproportionate effect on some groups within our population (older people, children) and therefore going pesticide-free has positive implications for equalities in the borough.
- 1.10 There are positive sustainability implications arising from the report: improved public health and happiness; a reduction in environmental harm to wildlife; and an improvement in run-off pollution, reducing the energy-intensive need to strip pesticides out of water.
- 1.11 In conclusion, the Council has a duty to safeguard the well-being of the borough's residents, as well as to its own staff. So, it needs to take due regard of changes in risk and consider a precautionary approach wherever possible. We urge the Town Forum to make recommendations to Cabinet that Maidenhead becomes a pesticide free town.

Written on behalf of Wild Maidenhead

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Angela Alexander, FRPharmS, MBE
Professor Emerita, University of Reading
Secretary to Wild Maidenhead