

Thank you

I would like to make a short statement about the council's approach to managing weeds, both in our parks and green spaces and on our pavements and roadsides.

There is a growing movement to change the perception of pavement plants as being 'more than weeds' – recognising that all plants are important to biodiversity and wildlife. Meanwhile, others see street weeds as a sign of neglect in their local area, and I know we receive complaints from residents if these are not dealt with.

**I would like to ask today that we revisit the way we manage weeds in BNES in two ways.**

Firstly, in terms of our approach to the use of weed killer. I welcome the steps that this council has already made to reduce the use of the herbicide glyphosate, including phasing it out in the regular maintenance of parks and green spaces. The council has also reduced its use in street cleansing to one annual spray.

However, many of our residents, and some parish councils, continue to have concerns about any use of glyphosate and its direct and indirect effects on the local environment. By killing all weed and wildflowers, it destroys habitats and food supplies for insects and butterflies. It is also water soluble and potentially harmful to aquatic environments as well as soil health.

Many other local authorities are acting. The Pesticides Action Network says at least 40 UK local authorities have so far stopped its use altogether or in part. Please can revisit this issue and commit to a timetable for phasing out the use of glyphosate in our operations?

I recognise that many people feel strongly about a clean urban environment with no weeds and grass and that weeds on the pavement and highway can cause damage. There probably isn't a magic alternative around the corner, and so this will mean manual and mechanical clearance.

The second issue I would like to address is when we cut our grass verges and green spaces. I welcome the steps that the council has made to publicise our grass mowing regime, and to reduce mowing as part of the let's get buzzing initiative which is aimed at encouraging pollinators. Today I visited the river banks at Saltford, which from this year, will not be mown at all, allowing long grasses and wildflowers to thrive.

Can we also go further and look at delaying when we mow, taking inspiration from Plantlife's **No Mow May** campaign. Leaving some areas to grow for longer will give more plants the chance to flower and spread, supporting greater diversity of plants and flowers, and the insects, butterflies and birds that rely on them for food.

I appreciate these asks will come with a financial cost, as well as a change in how our streets and green spaces look. I am encouraged by several emails from residents this Spring, who all want to see us do more to support local biodiversity. I believe that these are important steps that we can take in our operational role to act on the ecological emergency in BNES.