

A climate and ecological emergency has been declared, yet our streets continue to be sprayed with glyphosate; a dangerous substance which destroys plants, pollinators, birds, wildlife habitats and vital food sources. Because glyphosate is water soluble its use also affects aquatic and soil life. Unsurprisingly it is also highly dangerous for human health. At low concentrations it damages liver, kidney and skin cells and long term effects include cancer, infertility, pregnancy problems, birth defects and respiratory diseases. Glyphosate products are implicated in over 50,000 cancer lawsuits in the U.S. and it has been identified as a probable carcinogen by the World Health Organisation. This toxic substance is being sprayed on our streets without residents' consent and, as we have noticed in our petition, people are rightly shocked and concerned about this.

Recent evidence suggests that insects have declined by 50% or more since the 1970s. 41% of insects are currently threatened with extinction. The use of glyphosate is playing a strong role in this rapid decline. All our pavement and wall plants (or so called weeds) in BaNES are sprayed with glyphosate. These plants are a habitat and vital food source for birds, bees, insects and many other animals. Rather than thinking of these as weeds, we must open our eyes and see them as wild plants and flowers. Not only do they play a crucial role in nature, they also look so much better than brown, dead ones.

The vast majority of pavement and wall plants are not woody and don't cause damage as their roots are too thin (they are often annual or short-lived perennials). A few plants with taproots - such as dandelions - can *appear* to cause more damage because they grow larger but they often grow in places where the pavement is already broken or damaged (for example where tree roots have lifted the pavement and created large cracks).

Of course, we must ensure that everyone can access pavements safely and without obstruction. In some areas woody plants may need removing, however, consideration should be given to the fact that many plants which grow on walls and pavements cause no damage, can have considerable ecological value and might also add to the visual aspect of the area. English Heritage recommends that before the removal of any plant, careful consideration should be given to what harm is actually being done. Vegetation should not simply be removed for no other reason than that it is there in the first place. We need to put the old fashioned ideas of "neat and tidy nature" behind us and embrace the wonderful wild plants in our streets before it is too late. Nature urgently needs our help. We should leave many of our wild plants to do their job. By stopping the annual spray of glyphosate we can begin to slow and reverse the devastating impacts of biodiversity loss and start to secure a sustainable and healthy future for wildlife and ourselves. Let's turn our streets in BaNES into a beautiful, buzzing network of insect friendly habitats.

Sources -

https://www.somersetwildlife.org/sites/default/files/2019-11/FULL%20AFI%20REPORT%20WEB1_1.pdf

<https://www.pan-uk.org>

[https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/siteassets/home/learn/conservation/gardens-and-landscapes/lan - vegetation on walls.pdf](https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/siteassets/home/learn/conservation/gardens-and-landscapes/lan_-_vegetation_on_walls.pdf)