

## Councillor Jess David statement – Cabinet 20<sup>th</sup> July 2021

Good evening,

I am speaking this evening to support the paper on investment in neighbourhood services, and in particular, the decision to move away from the use of weedkiller containing glyphosate in our treatment of street weeds.

The use of herbicides has a significant impact on the environment by indiscriminately destroying plants that are an important source of food and habitat for wildlife.

As well as having the support of organisations like the Soil Association, 3,000 people have signed a petition to this Council asking that we stop the use of glyphosate on our streets.

We have stated publicly that we are facing a climate and ecological emergency, and I believe that stopping the annual street-spray is an important step in changing the way we operate.

Instead, the paper proposes a move to mechanical and manual weed removal, in all but exceptional circumstances (such as invasive species).

I am also really pleased that there is also a commitment to work with residents to manage weeds, or as they might like to call them - pavement plants. This will include looking at how we can provide residents with weed removal tools, in the same way we have provided litter pickers, so that they can choose which plants to remove and when.

This is great news for local biodiversity, allowing more plants to flower and offer benefits. I know this will be welcomed by the many residents that have been in touch with us on this issue.

In my role as member advocate for biodiversity I am aware of other actions that the Council is taking to support local biodiversity through the work that we do:

- Firstly, altering our mowing regime so that we allow more grassy areas to grow for longer. Currently 20% of our grassland is managed in this way – and there is the potential to go further in the way we manage our roadside verges.

I am pleased to hear that we are working with residents to identify sites which have rare species. For example, in places like Twerton Fork, where there are wild orchids growing and we will now have a reduced cutting regime.

- Secondly, we must also plant new areas of wildflowers to encourage more biodiversity. I am pleased to hear that this Autumn we will work with residents in locations across BNES to plant new wildflower areas.

- Thirdly, we must also steer the planning system to deliver for biodiversity. I am delighted to see that our Local Plan Update includes the requirement for developers to deliver a 10% net gain in biodiversity.

Alongside this we must use developer contributions from the Community Infrastructure Levy to deliver large scale improvements to local biodiversity, through investing in open spaces and waterways such as the Bath River Line project.

The Parks Department have recently created new meadows in Innox Park and Kensington Meadows using S106 funds.

There is an appetite for more amongst our staff and communities – and I would like us to commit further resource to kickstart an action plan and take this habitat restoration forward on a larger scale – in the same way that we are doing with tree planting.