

Public speakers for Annual Meeting

1. I'm the Director of ProVeg UK, a non-profit organisation whose main aim is to increase the health and sustainability of public sector food - particularly in schools. We, at ProVeg UK, recognise plant-based foods as one of the solutions to the climate crisis and also to the public health challenges we face - and it's this that really drives our work with local authorities. Some of our local authority partners are taking similarly positive steps to what's being proposed here. For example, one of our partners offers a plant-based option daily across all of its 59 schools, as well as holding a Save The Planet day each week, which is wholly plant-based - and the feedback they've received from the children, and from the parents, has been overwhelmingly positive. We expected pushback from children and parents, but have simply not had any in all the years we've been doing this. Contrary to perception, plant-based food is also cheaper on average than animal products. In fact, almost every one of our 31 catering team partners has saved money through working with us to embrace more plant-based foods. This is crucial as the cost of living continues to spiral. The council would also be following in the footsteps of Oxfordshire County Council, who passed a motion back in March to make all of its council events fully plant-based - and became a climate leader in the process. Passing this motion would send out a very powerful message that food can be a solution to our climate crisis. I think it's likely that other local authorities would then follow suit. And that, to me, would be a fine example of climate leadership.
2. Committing to providing fully plant-based catering and requiring plant-based food options at events associated with the Council would align your actions with your declaration of a climate emergency and your net zero vision. The Paris Agreement's limit of a 2 degree increase in global temperature cannot be adhered to without reducing global meat production, so we have a responsibility to promote and facilitate a shift towards plant-based foods. Numerous studies have shown that normalising

meat-free meals by either making them the default or increasing the proportion of meat-free options available dramatically increases consumption of meat-free meals and decreases consumption of meat, and these approaches are well received by consumers. Increasing the availability of plant-based foods also increases inclusivity, as these foods are suitable for everyone. Plant-based foods must dominate menus and become the norm for everyone, in order to tackle the climate emergency. Plant-based foods have a fraction of the carbon footprint of meat and dairy. Livestock are inefficient converters of feed into food; meat yields range from just 1% to 11% of the calories provided in feed. Plant-based foods also offer significant health benefits over animal-derived foods. Red and processed meats are classified by the World Health Organisation as carcinogens. In the UK, two thirds of adults and 88% of teenagers consume fewer than 5 portions of fruit and vegetables each day, and this target falls short of current dietary recommendations. There is also a growing body of evidence supporting a diet centred around plant-based wholefoods for the prevention and treatment of many non-communicable diseases, including heart disease, diabetes and many cancers.

3. As a vegan caterer we have seen a huge uptick in demand for our services from businesses and university departments. With sustainability high on the agenda for most companies now, plant-based catering and corporate entertaining has become the only justifiable option for any business serious about meeting its net zero ambitions. And it is seen as such a simple and significant step. By way of illustration, using data by carbon labelling experts FoodSteps, as an average of the types of dish you might eat for a lunch or catering option, the meat, seafood and dairy options are like for like produce 4-7 times MORE emissions than their plant-based equivalents. For example a meat burger produces 2.35kg CO₂, whilst a vegan burger produces 0.41kg. Once you get into dining options, it becomes more extreme, with main meals containing steak, pork or

seafood up to than 30 times the emissions of a nutritious plant-based meal. The time has come to normalise plant-based foods by making them the default option for everyone at catered events. We hope that Cambridge City council will take this opportunity to set an example of climate action.

4. "Given the recent vote regarding the Electoral Commission and elections rules, will the council

1. commit to working with Citizen Card to provide free ID (this is something they have offered by the way.)

2. reassure residents that you will, to the very best of your ability, ensure that elections here are carried out in the same professional manner they always have been.

3. do what you can [though for a council this will be limited] to overturn this decision so that elections are once again entirely without any political interference. I understand proposals will need to go through both Houses but that cannot make up for the loss of the Electoral Commission's independence"

5. At its Full Meeting on 22nd July 2021, Cambridge City Council unanimously passed a motion to "stand in solidarity with Traveller and Gypsy communities in Cambridge" in response to the government's Police, Crimes, Sentencing and Courts Bill. As the Council noted, this bill "specifically targets Gypsy and Traveller communities, effectively criminalising their way of life" by criminalising trespass to land, and allowing authorities to seize property and caravans.

The council noted: "No family willingly stops somewhere they are not welcome, with no running water, waste disposal or electricity, and the way to resolve this is not by criminalising GRT families or by introducing anti-encampment landscaping in

open spaces. The existence of encampments needs to be understood not only in terms of the age-old cultural traditions of Gypsies and Travellers, but in terms of the historic failure of government to properly meet their accommodation needs. The proposals are being put forward despite the existence of a range of other eviction powers for encampments, and despite alternative solutions such as negotiated stopping agreements.”

Despite this, since the passing of this motion, the council has continued to regularly evict families who it has acknowledged have nowhere else to go. Worse still, the publishing date of the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment report which the council points to as a prerequisite for policy change continues to be delayed.

Now that the Police, Crimes, Sentencing and Courts Bill has received Royal Assent, will Cambridge City Council stand by their word and commit to immediate, urgent action by placing a moratorium on evictions of unauthorised encampments from council land for as long as the legislation is in effect?

6. At our recent Herbicide Reduction Scheme Working group meeting on 12/5/22, and on a previous meeting between Pesticide-Free Cambridge and Environmental Services on 7/4/22 (<https://www.pesticidefreecambridge.org/post/record-of-our-meetings-with-councillors-schools-and-partners-groups>), a number of commitments were made including:

- i) No council herbicide spraying to take place during school commute time (8.00-9.00, 15.00-16.00)
- ii) No council spraying to take place around trees;
- iii) No council spraying on grassy verges;
- iv) No council spraying in parks/open-spaces;
- v) No private-application of pesticides on municipal land.

However, with regards **point 1**, since then we have received reports of City Council spraying of herbicides on

two occasions in the middle of the school commute. The first at 8.01 am, 7/4/22 on Coldham's Lane roundabout, and the second at 8.17 am, 18/5/22 on Mowbray Road (around the junction with Glebe Road) and Holbrook Road. On both occasions, the surrounding roads and pavements were teeming with children and families, being as they are major commuting routes to a number of schools in the area. Children are particularly vulnerable to the neurotoxic and endocrine disrupting impacts of glyphosate, and pesticides in general. This is why we've asked that schools be informed in advance of spraying and to avoid all spraying during the time when children are walking or cycling to and from school. We took recent assurances made to us that this is now part of council policy at face value, the logical conclusion being that parents can safely assume that their children are no longer at risk of coming into direct contact with herbicides as they're being sprayed (clearly this doesn't preclude them from coming into contact with herbicides in the two weeks that it takes for visual evidence to show up, hence our having campaigned repeatedly for signage to be put up immediately after spraying). It isn't enough to avoid the roads immediately outside schools as obviously children have to get to school from all over the city. Can you confirm please that no further council spraying will take place **anywhere** in the city during the school commute period?

Regarding **point 2**, we have seen evidence of spraying around trees in several areas across the city and have sent photographic evidence to the biodiversity team. Can you please clarify why spraying is still happening around trees when it's been decided that this shouldn't be taking place?

Point 3. Verge spraying is clearly taking place all over the city. During early meetings with the previous Executive

Councillor and operatives in 2020 we were told that verges were no longer being sprayed, and that there was little reason for our pesticide-free campaign, and yet since then we've had three years of ongoing and obvious spraying on pretty much every verge. Council websites repeat the same thing, that no verges or soft surfaces are sprayed (<https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/report-weeds-or-invasive-plants>), but this clearly isn't the case. We are aware that spraying by the County Council unfortunately took place in March before the City Council had communicated to them the terms of its Herbicide Reduction Plan (<https://www.pesticidefreecambridge.org/post/herbicide-spraying-in-cambridge-s-herbicide-free-ward-pfc-press-release>). But the above-mentioned evidence clearly relates to more recent spraying. Can you please clarify what is happening here as this again seems to be a clear contravention of what's been decided?

Can you clarify please what's happening with the online reporting system for irregular herbicide use across the city, both by council operatives and members of the public? This was one of the action points at the meeting on 7.4.22 and it's crucial that residents are able to report instances of pesticide use that contravene the council's Herbicide Reduction Scheme.

Finally, what has been decided regarding signage to indicate where herbicides have been applied?

7. On the Verge Cambridge is extremely pleased to see the many stretches of unmown grass at the edges of our parks and open spaces. Long grass is a vital habitat for many invertebrates which in turn are a food source for birds and other animals. However, we are very concerned that these areas may be mown down prematurely, that is before the end of the summer and therefore before the

moths, spiders etc... have had time to successfully reproduce. This has happened to the Cow Parsley on Fen Causeway - not sprayed with herbicide this year but cut back completely unnecessarily when in full flower.

1. Can the council give assurances that where areas have been left to grow long to improve biodiversity they will be left long for the summer, so the long grass areas are a true habitat over a period of months, not weeks?

2. Specific to Jesus Green, the one-metre width long grass zone along Jesus Ditch is a fantastic contribution to our city's biodiversity. Not only is it full of flowers for pollinators, it also presents a barrier to rubbish blowing into the ditch and affords the (nationally rare) Water Vole population there more privacy. Now that the ditch is flowing again and some of the water is actually clear, the long grass also discourages dogs from swimming in the ditch. This would definitely disturb the voles and is a reason to keep the long grass zone it itself. Can the council give an assurance that the long grass along Jesus Ditch will not be cut back at least until the autumn, or even become a permanent feature?