



## An Update on the Herbicide Reduction Plan

**To:** Councillor Sam Carling, Executive Councillor for Open Spaces and City Services.

Environment and Community Scrutiny Committee 21<sup>st</sup> March 2024

**Report by:** James Elms, Director of City Services.

Tel: 01223 458514.

Email: [alistair.wilson@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:alistair.wilson@cambridge.gov.uk)

**Wards affected:**

ALL.

### 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Council's declaration of a Biodiversity Emergency (18th July 2019) included a commitment to reducing and removing the need to use herbicides on highway verges, roads, and pavements, and to find viable and effective alternatives. This was reflected in the development and application of the Herbicide Reduction Plan (HRP).
- 1.2 The Council's passing of a Herbicide Motion (ref. 21/32/CNLc (22nd July 2021)), included a commitment to undertake a range of tasks and actions to reduce the reliance on herbicides, as a means of managing unwanted vegetation on public property asset within the city.
- 1.3 On the 27th January 2022, the Executive Councillor for Open Spaces, Sustainable Food & Community Wellbeing, after scrutiny, approved a Herbicide Reduction Plan, which included Newnham and Arbury as the two herbicide free wards, and the introduction of up to 12 herbicide free

streets outside of these wards. A further decision on the 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2023 extended the trial areas to include West Chesterton and Trumpington.

- 1.4 This report updates on the work completed on the HRP, including an evaluation of the four herbicide free wards and the herbicide free street scheme; and makes recommendations to discontinue the use of herbicides<sup>1</sup> in the city's public realm.
- 1.5 The report considers the recent decision by the County Council to review its Highway Operational Standards for Weeds and where this presents an opportunity for the City Council to champion its ambitions to be herbicide free, and for the City Council to contribute during the consultation period for the formulation of the new policy that will include non-use of herbicides and how this will be practically and financially implemented.
- 1.6 The Trial has allowed the City Council to consider a range of alternatives and the use of specialist street cleansing mechanical equipment is deemed to be the most effective and sustainable weed control method available which removes the need to use herbicides on highway verges, roads, and pavements.
- 1.7 The HRP and its Trial are now recommended for closure, and that a new methodology is approved wherein herbicide use is significantly reduced and limited to scenarios where viable alternatives are exhausted or no other alternative is available.

## **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 The Executive Councillor is recommended to:
  - a) Approve the closure of the Herbicide Free Plan and its Trials.
  - b) Approve the new weed control methodology, including the discontinuation of herbicide use in routine operations, for the City Council as outlined in this report.

---

<sup>1</sup> Except where there are justifiable business reasons where no viable alternative is available and where the use outweighs the environmental benefits of not doing so, for example noxious and invasive non-native weeds such as Japanese Knotweed, Giant Hogweed, Himalayan Balsam, and others similar in nature.

- c) Approve the continuation and further development of the 'Happy Bee Street Scheme'.
- d) Note the decision of the County Council on their use of herbicides and to assist them with developing a new approach for the city.
- e) Support the development of a collaborative communication plan as detailed in Section 5.

### **3. Background**

- 3.1 The Council unanimously voted in favour of declaring a Biodiversity Emergency on 18th July 2019; and this included a commitment to reducing and removing the need to use herbicides on highway verges<sup>2</sup>, roads, and pavements, and to find viable and effective unwanted vegetation control alternatives<sup>3</sup>.
- 3.2 On the 27<sup>th</sup> January 2022, the Executive Councillor for Open Spaces, Sustainable Food & Community Wellbeing, after scrutiny, approved a Herbicide Reduction Plan (HRP), which had been developed in partnership with the County Council, and included Newnham and Arbury as the two herbicide free wards, as well as the introduction of up to 12 herbicide free streets outside of these wards. Over the past two years, the two councils have worked together to implement the approved HRP and review and evaluate its impacts.
- 3.3 The County Council's Highways and Transport Committee on the 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2024 approved a recommendation to reintroduce planned herbicide use on public highways. This decision is disappointing for those collaborating in the city on herbicide reduction, however the decision is explained and understood, and it does provide for exceptions to be applied in areas that do not wish for planned spraying to take place if an alternative method of weed control can be agreed. This decision, however, reinforces the need for collaborative working between the Council and its Highway Authority partner, Cambridgeshire County Council. It is vital now to work together to identify and resource the

---

<sup>2</sup> The highway verges, roads and pavements in Cambridge are the responsibility of Cambridgeshire County Council, as the local Highway Authority.

<sup>3</sup> This commitment was further reinforced and developed in the Herbicide Motion, which was agreed on the 22nd July 2021.

opportunity to consider a range of options to avoid day to day herbicide use for vegetation management across the city. If this cannot be achieved and agreed, the City Council will not undertake weed control using herbicides in the city on the County Councils behalf because of the implications and ramifications of accepting this report's recommendations.

3.4 The City and County Councils' Officers support these principles.

a) that unwanted vegetation growing on hard surfaces associated with the city's streets and open spaces can compromise the structural integrity of these assets and create a public health and safety risk, including slips, trips, and falls. Weed growth can also present accessibility issues with narrowing of footpaths, wet growth overhanging pavements and injuries from thorned and stinging plants.

b) that the city's outdoor public realm, including our Council's parks and open spaces, and the County Highway estate, provide significant opportunities for biodiversity. This includes helping to buffer and connect the existing network of natural green spaces already designated and managed for their biodiversity value, for example Local Nature Reserves and County Wildlife Sites.

3.5 The evaluation of the herbicide free trials has considered these principles and has identified the use of specialist street cleansing mechanical equipment to be the most effective and sustainable weed control method available which supports the non-use herbicides on highway verges, roads, and pavements.

3.7 A capital bid (CAP5201) has been made in the Budget Setting Round for 24/25 to support the new proposed methodology for weed control and was approved by Council on 15<sup>th</sup> February 2024. The business case also considers how the new methodology helps to achieve corporate objectives around reducing carbon emissions and protecting the environment. The business case for the capital bid is set out in Appendix A.

## **The lessons learned from the HRP.**

- 3.8 In 2020<sup>4</sup>, a revised National Action Plan for the Sustainable Use of Pesticides (NAP) was drafted. The revised NAP is intended to supersede the 2013 UK National Action Plan (2013 NAP), laying out a 5-year strategy to increase the sustainability of pesticide use in the UK.
- 3.9 The high-level aim of the revised NAP is to minimise the risks and impacts of pesticides to human health and the environment, while ensuring pests and pesticide resistance are managed effectively.
- 3.10 In order to meet this aim, the draft revised NAP consulted<sup>5</sup> on five key goals, to:
- a) Ensure continued robust regulation to protect our health and environment.
  - b) Support the development and uptake of Integrated Pest Management (IPM)
  - c) Ensure those that use pesticides do so safely and sustainably.
  - d) Support in the reduction of the risks associated with pesticides by setting clear targets by the end of 2022 and improving metrics and indicators.
  - e) Ensure that we work effectively with others to deliver the NAP goals.
- 3.11 The NAP is delayed<sup>6</sup>, but during the HRP we have been able to achieve some of the anticipated NAP ambition relating to IPM, safe and sustainable use of pesticides, a reduction in use and working with others.
- 3.12 Now that a NAP is thought to be imminent, members of the Pesticide Collaboration<sup>7</sup> are gearing up to prepare a response and recently met to

---

<sup>4</sup> Defra, the Scottish Government, the Welsh Government and the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) Northern Ireland ('the four Administrations')

<sup>5</sup> The consultation ran for 12 weeks between 4 December 2020 and 26 February 2021. 1,564 responses were received through Citizen Space, and 7 email campaigns organised by NGOs with a combined total of just under 37,000 emails.

<sup>6</sup> The latest advice is that this report is to be published in February 2024.

<sup>7</sup> This large consortium of environmental and human health-related charities including RSPB, Breast Cancer UK, Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, Cure Parkinson's, WWF and The Wildlife Trusts

discuss what they are hoping for. As outlined by this coalition, there was broad agreement that the NAP new iteration should include:

- a continued commitment to the precautionary principle and a hazards-based approach to pesticide regulation.
- ambitious and unambiguous targets to reduce impacts of pesticides on the environment via reducing usage and toxicity (and not simply a promise to introduce such targets at a future date).
- a strategy to phase out pesticide use in urban areas.
- provision of support, advice, and training for farmers to adopt integrated pest management, with a clear definition of what is meant by the term.
- a commitment to breaking the link between agronomic advice and profits from pesticide sales (at present most of the agronomists who advise farmers work for pesticide companies)
- an end to emergency authorisations of banned chemicals.

3.13 The Herbicide Reduction Plan report dated 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2023, consider a range of feedback and learning from the Trial, and this feedback aligns to some the ambitions stated in 3.12.

3.14 In the report on the 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2023, Officer highlighted that

*The Summer of 2022 was exceptionally hot and arid and therefore the levels of subsequent weed growth in the HRP areas have made it difficult to determine the impact of not treating annual and perennial weeds and woody shrubs. There was a no notable or significant weed growth on most paths in Newnham, whereas some footpaths in Arbury have high levels of growth of woody species such as Buddleia. There were also notable differences in weed growth where street cleaning takes place on a more frequent schedule.*

3.15 In 2023, the non-HRP areas had weed growth in most scenarios, as no herbicide was applied on County Council Highway assets. The number of complaints received from non-trial areas is less than 5.

3.16 We received ~10 compliments in respect of weeds/weed growth/our commitment to not using herbicides in the HRP areas.

3.17 As part of the HRP and during 2023 we considered and evaluated a range of non-herbicide management options, in terms of financial and operational management implications and the vegetation management cost-effectiveness.

3.18 We also used an Integrated Pesticide Management<sup>8</sup> methodology in the research, and this is summarised as

- a) careful consideration of all available methods,
- b) ecologically and economically justified and
- c) minimises risks to human health and the environment.

Diagram 1 below summaries the key steps of an IPM.

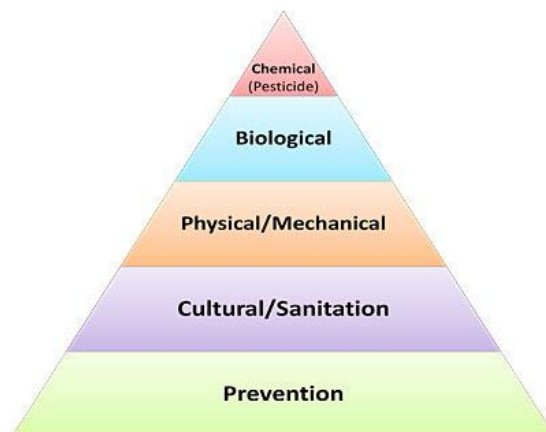


Diagram 1 – Step used in an IPM approach.

3.19 The principles of an IPM approach influence the HRP and have resulted in a reduction of applications of herbicide in the city from 3 in 2021, 2 in 2022 and none in 2023.

3.20 The HRP has also created opportunities for contributions, collaborative working and involvement and feedback and learning from a wide range of stakeholders, including Councillors, Pesticide Free Cambridge, On the Verge, residents, volunteers, and community groups.

---

<sup>8</sup> a broad-based approach that integrates both [chemical](#) and [non-chemical](#) practices for economic [control of pests](#).

- 3.21 The herbicide free street scheme, which was managed under the title '[Happy Bee Street](#)', was a good example of cultural change (diagram 1) where the HRP allowed us to introduce new approaches and create opportunities to explore new ideas and to innovate. The uptake and interest in this scheme are encouraging, however some groups still report that the sign-up process is difficult to navigate, and feedback was that it was overly complicated<sup>9</sup>. During 2023, we revised the website content, clarified the scheme criteria, and simplified the registration process<sup>10</sup>, finding for biodiversity projects in Happy Bee Streets was made available through the Environmental Improvement Programme.
- 3.22 As a consequence of the HRP and the Happy Bee Street scheme we created and managed 40 volunteers across 10 Streets through the Streets and Open Space volunteering scheme, from the 20 that expressed an interest. At the time of drafting this report we have had no further new application for 2024, however we have not actively sought new applicants whilst the HRP is reviewed.
- 3.23 The Happy Bee Street scheme shows great merit in principle, purpose, and aligns to the IPM methodology of cultural change. It is recommended that the Happy Bee Scheme is continued, developed, has its awareness increased and extended so that individuals can sign up in order to further encourage a sense of ownership over people's streets and empower them to make improvements to the general street scene (much like the [Streets and Open Spaces Volunteers](#)) We are committed to making this scheme work for residents, we have to listen to learn from their experiences and we will make changes to the scheme where we can.

## **New Methodology**

- 3.24 Throughout 2023, staff within City Services have trialed a range of mechanical sweepers with successful practical applications. The

---

<sup>9</sup> We have a legal duty to check right of work status, ensure that those carrying out tasks for us are given a health and safety briefing so that they are covered by our public liability insurance whilst they undertake their volunteering role.

<sup>10</sup> If a resident expresses an interest in their street becoming a Happy Bee Street, a Community Engagement officer will come and do a site visit and give them some guidance around how many volunteers might be needed to manage the growth on pavements by hand. They can also help with a survey to gain the support of households in the street and to help set up those who want to take part.



following pictures show before and after the use of weed ripper brushes at Barton Close, we also conducted similar trials at Cam Causeway with broadly similar results.

- 3.25 The proposed machinery is battery powered and produces no hand arm vibrations and therefore presents no long-term impact on staff health.



Barton Close before, during and after the use of the proposed new equipment

- 3.26 The City Council use a system called Land Audit Management System (LAMS) which is a quality inspection system to monitor grounds maintenance and street cleansing. We use LAMS to measure the quality of our wards, and at the same time benchmark these against other local authorities. The LAMS system grades streets from Grade A (highest) to D (lowest) at the time of inspection. The new methodology will record the site before any work. Sites deemed as A or B may not have weed control conducted, whereas sites deemed C and D will have work completed and recorded. The photograph examples above show a Grade D moved to a Grade A.

- 3.27 The proposed methodology will allow the City Council to qualify and quantify our carbon footprint relating to weed treatment. When combined with the collection of data relating to street length, time taken and equipment used we can calculate and seek to reduce cleaning time, machine use, carbon used and demonstrate where we have increased standards of street cleaning.

- 3.28 Once a deep clean has been completed, the prevention of weeds can be achieved using our existing road sweepers on a cyclical basis.

- 3.29 In scenarios where this equipment cannot be used, for example on play area safety surface, alongside private boundary walks or on poorly degraded surface where the weed brush will cause damage, the use of hot foam will be used.
- 3.30 The Foamstream<sup>11</sup> product uses hot water with a specially formulated biodegradable organic foam to kill weeds and their seeds. This machine will be procured as a battery powered model.
- 3.31 The Foamstream product has the additional benefit of being used to help with other street cleaning functions such as graffiti clearance, cleaning of street furniture and the removal of gums/ grease from surfaces. This machine could be used to clean the market stalls areas for example.
- 3.32 The proposed methodology set out from 3.24 aligns to an Integrated Pesticide Management Model, where the frequent use of mechanical brushes will help with the prevention and the establishment of weeds, the Happy Bee Street an effective tool to support cultural change and where for scenarios where weeds do establish and are having a negative impact on the streetscape we have an effective and well-resourced response.

## **4. Implications**

### **a) Financial Implications**

A capital bid (CAP5201) has been made and approved in the Budget Setting Round for 24/25 to support the new proposed methodology for weed control. The business case also considers how the new methodology helps to achieve corporate objectives to reduce carbon emissions and protecting of the environment.

The capital bid is also conditional to achieving the approval of the Executive Councillor for Open Space and City Services, after scrutiny by this Committee of the proposed methodology set out in this report.

### **b) Staffing Implications**

The proposals will require a dedicated team allocated to this work and it is expected that this can be achieved from within existing staff resource. City Services is part way through organisational change as part of the

---

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.weedingtech.com/>

Our Cambridge Transformation Programme and this proposed weed control methodology will form part of the considerations of any service reconfigurations or changes.

**c) Equality and Poverty Implications**

The EQIA has identified a potential positive impact relating to Age, Disability, Pregnancy and Maternity. An increase of weeds in pavements and footpaths does create a higher risk of slips trips and falls. This risk needs to be monitored and any webpage resource created to support reporting so that the Council can respond to concerns raised. The new methodology presents an opportunity to make positive impacts without the use of herbicides.

**d) Net Zero Carbon, Climate Change and Environmental Implications**

The proposal is currently overall rated as Low Positive. The proposed has medium positive impacts on biodiversity. It has low negative rating in respect of energy use for alternative weed control items such as hot water and foam, and a low negative rating where extensive weed growth must be cleared, collected, and processed.

**e) Procurement Implications**

The purchase of new machines will require a market test using the Contract Procedural Rules and will involve input from colleagues in the Procurement Team. It is expected to run a tendering exercise online and an award to the most favourable tenderer.

**f) Community Safety Implications**

None identified.

## **5. Consultation and communication considerations**

In the scoping and preparation of the HRP and its Trials closure a range of consultation and communication tasks have been identified.

In summary, these tasks will form an overall Project Communication Plan, to include: -

- A further review of current website content
- Preparation of new website content
- Creation of press and news articles
- Supporting social media campaigns agreed with Partners.
- Feedback from residents in communal housing areas
- Feedback on the County Councils specification changes
- Joint communications with Pesticide Free Cambridge

- Research updates and
- Responding to reactive items or new enquiries

## 6. Background papers

Background papers used in the preparation of this report:

- a) 21/32/CNLC Pesticide-free Motion
- b) Herbicide Reduction Plan
- c) Best Practice Guidance Notes for Integrated and Non-chemical Amenity Hard Surface Weed Control
- d) The County Council's Highways and Transport Committee report of Highway Standards for Weed Control 23rd January 2024
- e) EQIA for the Herbicide Reduction Plan
- f) [Mechanical Weed Removal \(kerstenuk.com\)](http://kerstenuk.com)
- g) [Home - Weedingtech](http://Home-Weedingtech)

## 7. Appendices

Appendix A – Completed Just Do It Business case template for the proposed new methodology

Appendix B – Equalities Impact Assessment

## 8. Inspection of papers

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report, please contact Mr Alistair Wilson, Strategic Delivery Manager.  
01223458514, [alistair.wilson@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:alistair.wilson@cambridge.gov.uk)

## Appendix A

# Just Do It Business Case

### 1. Project summary

<b>Project title</b>	New Equipment to Support Zero Herbicides Policy 2024 onwards.
<b>Project summary</b>	<p>Following our herbicide free trials, the use of specialist street cleansing mechanical equipment is deemed to be the most effective and sustainable weed control method available to remove the need to use herbicides on highway verges, roads, and pavements.</p> <p>Cambridge City Council has a duty of care to keep the streets and pavements free from trip-hazards.</p> <p>The project helps to achieve corporate objectives to reduce carbon emissions and protect the environment.</p> <p>The project proposed is to resource an approach using additional specialist equipment to include a new street sweeper capable of weed removal, new self-propelled weed ripper and other equipment that market research identifies.</p>
<b>Project outcomes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mechanical methodologies for weed control supported with new equipment.</li><li>• A methodology for weed control that removes the health and safety concerns relating to Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome</li><li>• A methodology that allows the Council to avoid the use of herbicides.</li><li>• A considered and evaluated financially resourced alternative to herbicide treatment of weeds.</li><li>• A methodology that addresses residents' concerns around civic pride and clean neighbourhoods</li></ul>
<b>Project manager</b>	Don Blair

<b>Project sponsor</b>	Alistair Wilson
<b>Additional sign-off</b>	Executive Councillor for City Services

## 2. Staffing

<b>Name</b>	<b>Role on project</b>	<b>Days per week working on project</b>	<b>Agreed with line manager? (Yes/No)</b>
Don Blair	Project manager	0.5	Yes
Alistair Wilson	Sponsor	0.5	Yes
Richard Woolman	Subject Matter Expert (SME)	0.5	Yes
Corporate Health and Safety	HAVS and new Risk Assessments and Method Statements	0.1	No
Streets and Open Space operatives	Machine appraisal and choice	0.1	Yes

## 3. Project plan

**Start date for project:** On approval of funding.

**Estimated end date for project:** Within 9 months of start.

### Project phases

<b>Project phases</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Start date</b>	<b>Finish date</b>
Machine trials and selections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrations</li> <li>• Trade shows</li> <li>• Trade enquires.</li> </ul>	Underway	Spring 2024

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hire/ Loan</li> <li>• Market Appraisal</li> <li>• Market Test</li> </ul>		
Equipment Shortlisting	Evaluation and selection	March '24	March '24
Executive Councillor decision	Reporting and Scrutiny Committee	March '24	March '24
Procurement	Tendering and quotations	April '24	April '24
Contract Award	Evaluation and tender appraisals	May '24	May '24
Lead in time	Contract award and delivery scheduling	June '24	June '24
Delivery	Receipt of new equipment	June '2024	August '24

### Milestones

Milestone	Date
Equipment Delivery	August '24 or sooner
Equipment to be used agreed	March '24
Procurement methodology (framework or standalone)	March/ April '24

## Project plan

### 4. Budget, resource and capital costs

Where are you getting the funds for this project? Capital Bid item.

What is the budget for this project?

Overall budget £180,000	Revenue budget £0	Capital budget £180,000
-------------------------	-------------------	-------------------------

### Revenue costs

Financial quarter	Project phase	Role/resource	Day rate	No. of days needed	Total cost
Q4/2023	Procurement	Corporate/ Procurement advice	£	3	£ internal
Q1/2024	Contract Award	3C Legal/ Contractual advice	£	4	£ internal
Q2/2024	On Boarding and registration	City Services/ Garage Services	£	2	£ internal
				<b>Total</b>	<b>£0</b>
				<b>Contingency</b>	



**Capital costs.**

<b>Financial quarter</b>	<b>Project phase</b>	<b>Capital cost description</b>	<b>Total cost</b>
Q1 2024	Contract Award	Mechanical sweepers	£105,000
		Attachments and optional extras	£75,000
		<b>Total</b>	<b>£180,000</b>
		<b>Contingency</b>	<b>£0</b>

	<b>2023/24 £s</b>	<b>2024/25 £s</b>	<b>2025/26 £s</b>	<b>2026/27 £s</b>	<b>Annual ongoing</b>	<b>Source of funding [add cost centres]</b>
Costs (revenue)	-£5000	-£5000	-£5000	-£5000	-£5000	Cost of herbicide products
Costs (capital)	0	£180,000	0	0	0	
General Fund Savings	0	0	0	0	0	
Housing Revenue Account Savings	0	0	0	0	0	
Additional Revenue	0	0	0	0	0	
<b>Total cost</b>	<b>£0</b>	<b>£180,000</b>	<b>£0</b>	<b>£0</b>	<b>£0</b>	
<b>Total saving</b>	<b>£-5000</b>	<b>£-5000</b>	<b>£-5000</b>	<b>£-5000</b>	<b>£-5000</b>	
<b>Comments for each financial year</b>						

## Cost and Savings

### 5. Closure and success criteria

<b>Closure criteria</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New mechanical equipment secured for weed control.</li> <li>• A new methodology for weed control that removes the risks from Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome</li> <li>• A methodology that allows the Council to avoid the use of herbicides.</li> </ul>
-------------------------	---

<b>Success criteria</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A financially resourced alternative to herbicide treatment of weeds</li> <li>• A methodology that addresses residents' concerns around civic pride and clean neighbourhoods</li> </ul>
-------------------------	---

## 6. Stakeholders

Stakeholder	Internal or external?	Engagement plan
Operatives within Streets and Open Spaces	Internal	To help with the evaluation and shortlisting of equipment choice
Pesticide Free Cambridge	External	Advice on current research and development
Corporate Health and Safety	Internal	Advice on methodologies, risk assessments and method statements

## 7. Risks

Risk	Mitigation
Continued need to use herbicides	Development of mechanical methods to control weeds in most and commonly occurring circumstances
Hand Arm Vibration injury	To develop methodologies to remove manual tasks that have greatest impact on HAVS
Poor Public perception relating to civic pride and lack of care and maintenance	To develop activities and communicate these around new approaches and methodologies.

## 8. Standalone or ongoing project

Ongoing project at the later stages of the Herbicide Reduction Plan.

## 9. Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA)

Disability: The additional street sweeping and cleaning machinery requested through this budget bid will help with weed removal from streets and open spaces. On streets this will have a positive impact for accessibility, especially for people using wheelchairs or mobility scooters and who have mobility and/or sight impairments.

Maternity: The additional street sweeping and cleaning machinery requested through this budget bid will help with weed removal from streets and open spaces. On streets this will have a positive impact for accessibility, especially for people using prams and buggies.”

Age: The proposed equipment automates a manual process that has links to Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome, therefore reducing the risk of this condition within an aging workforce in City Services.

## 10. Environmental Impact (climate change rating)

The project is overall rated as low negative impact, despite having a medium positive impact on biodiversity, the project does have a low negative impact relating to energy use, waster generation and use of transport. The project does mitigate against the use of herbicides in the public domain.

## 11. Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)

No personal data will be processed.

## 12. Sign off.

Sign off	Name	Date
Sponsor	Alistair Wilson	23 <sup>rd</sup> October 2023
Project Manager	Don Blair	23 <sup>rd</sup> October 2023
Executive Councillor	Sam Carling	E&C 21 <sup>st</sup> March 2024 TBC

## Appendix B

### Cambridge City Council Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

This tool helps the Council ensure that we fulfil legal obligations of the [Public Sector Equality Duty](#) to have due regard to the need to –

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Guidance on how to complete this tool can be found on the Cambridge City Council intranet. For specific questions on the tool email Helen Crowther, Equality and Anti-Poverty Officer at [equalities@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:equalities@cambridge.gov.uk) or phone 01223 457046.

Once you have drafted the EqIA please send this to [equalities@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:equalities@cambridge.gov.uk) for checking. For advice on consulting on equality impacts, please contact Graham Saint, Strategy Officer, ([graham.saint@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:graham.saint@cambridge.gov.uk) or 01223 457044).

1. Title of strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service
Herbicide Reduction Plan  To reduce the reliance on herbicides for vegetation management across the city's public spaces.  To enhance biodiversity and habitat quality within parks, open spaces, and the highway estate.  To decrease public health and safety risks associated with unwanted vegetation growth on hard surfaces.  To improve public awareness and engagement regarding the importance of biodiversity conservation and sustainable land management practices.
2. Webpage link to full details of the strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service (if available)
<a href="#">Environment and Community Services Scrutiny Committee 27<sup>th</sup> January 2022 and Environment and Community Services Scrutiny Committee 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2023</a>

**3. What is the objective or purpose of your strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service?**

The Council, in response to the escalating Biodiversity Emergency, has unanimously voted in favour of a policy to reduce and eventually eliminate the use of herbicides on highway verges, roads, and pavements. This policy aims not only to address the pressing need for biodiversity conservation but also to enhance habitat quality and minimise public health and safety risks associated with traditional herbicide use.

On 18th July 2019, the Council declared a Biodiversity Emergency, recognising the urgent need to safeguard and restore natural ecosystems. As part of this commitment, the Council was dedicated to finding viable alternatives to herbicides for vegetation management across the city's public spaces. Collaborating with our Highway Authority partner, Cambridgeshire County Council, we have identified an opportunity to transition away from herbicide usage within the next year (2024).

The excessive use of herbicides poses significant risks to biodiversity, soil health, water quality, and human health. By transitioning away from herbicide usage and adopting alternative vegetation management strategies, we can minimise these risks while simultaneously enhancing habitat quality and biodiversity within our city. Additionally, addressing unwanted vegetation growth on hard surfaces is crucial for maintaining the structural integrity of public assets and reducing public health and safety hazards.

**4. Responsible service**

City Services

**5. Who will be affected by this strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service?**

**(Please tick all that apply)**

- Residents
- Visitors
- Staff

Please state any specific client group or groups (e.g. City Council tenants, tourists, people who work in the city but do not live here):

The presence or absence of unwanted vegetation is an important element of an accepted public realm environmental quality standard. If a public road or street has lots of unwanted vegetation, it looks rundown and uncared for, and can attract environmental crime such as littering and fly-tipping. If vegetation is left to grow unchecked, its roots can cause damage to road surfaces, pavements, and adjoining property walls. Roads/ streets that are free from unwanted vegetation, on the other hand, look cleaner, tidier, and more welcoming, all residents, visitors and staff will be impacted by this change in policy to support the trial however some groups of residents may have other priorities and wish to manage weeds in different ways and with alternative methods. This Plan aims to support these different approaches and the proposed mechanical methodology will have a positive impact.

**6. What type of strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service is this?**

- New
- Major change
- Minor change

**7. Are other departments or partners involved in delivering this strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service? (Please tick)**

- Yes
- No

If 'Yes' please provide details below:

Cambridgeshire County Council – Highways team and City Homes.

**8. Has the report on your strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service gone to Committee? If so, which one?**

Environment and Community Services Scrutiny Committee 27th January 2022 and March 2023.

**9. What research methods/ evidence have you used in order to identify equality impacts of your strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service?**

Desk based research, sharing of information with other local authorities and training courses.

Best Practice Guidance Notes for Integrated and Non-chemical Amenity Hard Surface Weed Control

<https://beta.lambeth.gov.uk/parks-sports-and-leisure/parks/integrated-pest-management-policy>

[https://www.apse.org.uk/apse/assets/File/John%20Moverley%20presentation\(1\).pdf](https://www.apse.org.uk/apse/assets/File/John%20Moverley%20presentation(1).pdf)

[https://www.apse.org.uk/apse/assets/File/Debbie%20Sutton%20-%20Glyphosate%20presentation%2030\\_10\\_19.pdf](https://www.apse.org.uk/apse/assets/File/Debbie%20Sutton%20-%20Glyphosate%20presentation%2030_10_19.pdf)

[https://www.pan-uk.org/resources/#pesticide\\_alternatives](https://www.pan-uk.org/resources/#pesticide_alternatives)

Practical demonstrations and testing of new machines.

## 10. Potential impacts

For each category below, please explain if the strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service could have a positive/ negative impact or no impact. Where an impact has been identified, please explain what it is. Consider impacts on service users, visitors and staff members separately.

### (a) Age - Please also consider any safeguarding issues for children and adults at risk

There is a potential positive impact when linked with age related to mobility. An assessment of weeds in pavements and footpaths prior to mechanical cleaning ensures the work is targeted and removes slips, trips, and falls.

### (b) Disability

There is a positive impact for disabled people with mobility or sight impairments relating to the new mechanical methodology. If rights of way are not maintained to reduce weed growth, regrowth can cause obstacles that reduces accessibility and increases risk of trips and falls. Each street or space will be assessed before work is carried out and this assessment will identify potential slips, trips and falls.

### (c) Gender reassignment

None identified

### (d) Marriage and civil partnership

None identified

### (e) Pregnancy and maternity

There is a potential positive impact especially when linked with mobility. An increase of weeds in pavements and footpaths does create a higher risk of slips trips and falls. Each street or space will be assessed before work is carried out and this assessment will identify potential slips, trips and falls.



**(f) Race – Note that the protected characteristic ‘race’ refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins.**

None identified

**(g) Religion or belief**

None identified

**(h) Sex**

None identified

**(i) Sexual orientation**

None identified

**(j) Other factors that may lead to inequality – in particular, please consider the impact of any changes on:**

- **Low-income groups or those experiencing the impacts of poverty**
- **Groups who have more than one protected characteristic that taken together create overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage. (Here you are being asked to consider intersectionality, and for more information see: [https://media.ed.ac.uk/media/1\\_I59kt25q](https://media.ed.ac.uk/media/1_I59kt25q)).**

None identified

**11. Action plan – New equality impacts will be identified in different stages throughout the planning and implementation stages of changes to your strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service. How will you monitor these going forward? Also, how will you ensure that any potential negative impacts of the changes will be mitigated? (Please include dates where possible for when you will update this EqlA accordingly.)**

The policy delivers the aims to address the Biodiversity Emergency by reducing herbicide usage and promoting alternative vegetation management strategies. By working collaboratively, engaging the public, and monitoring progress, we can achieve our goal of enhancing biodiversity, protecting public health and safety, and creating a more sustainable and resilient urban environment.

**12. Do you have any additional comments?**

None

**13. Sign off**

Name and job title of lead officer for this equality impact assessment: Alistair Wilson

Names and job titles of other assessment team members and people consulted: HRP Project Team

Date of EqlA sign off: 5th March 2024

Date of next review of the equalities impact assessment: March 2025

Date to be published on Cambridge City Council website: March 2024

**All EqlAs need to be sent to Helen Crowther, Equality and Anti-Poverty Officer at [helen.crowther@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:helen.crowther@cambridge.gov.uk).**