

Appendix B – Herbicide Free, Weed Management Work, Communications Plan¹

Aim:

The aim of the campaign is to to aid, support, and communicate the weed management work; and how the public can report any streets and open spaces ground maintenance concerns, issues and service requests.

Objective:

- Increase awareness about the herbicide free approach to weed management
- Increase the number of residents that are reporting over-grown vegetation through the online forms available
- Increase awareness about how the council manages over-grown vegetation
- Encourage residents to stop using herbicides on their own land and on the public land surrounding their homes
- Increase awareness about how to safely manage vegetation and unwanted plants on private property without the use of herbicides
- Increase awareness about which local authority is responsible for managing the growth of vegetation in specific area, to reduce the number of reports that need to be redirected.
- Increase awareness about which residents can report unregulated or unsafe incidents of pesticide use to (including both council and private applications)

¹ This is a working document and will be updated throughout its lifecycle; Items may change, based on service need and where responses are required due to service pressures.

- Partner with local ecologists and conservation groups to educate residents on the role of biodiversity in urban weed management.
- Feature before-and-after examples of areas benefiting from herbicide-free approaches.
- Encourage residents to participate in biodiversity monitoring (e.g., counting pollinators or documenting wildflower species).

Communications channels:

- Social media; Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn
- Cambridge Matters
- Open Door
- Press releases
- Digital boards
- Service leaflets

Key messages:

- How is the council managing vegetation growth: highways management, methods being used, schedules, managing expectations of how the city might look, what is now allowed and what isn't.
- Reporting overgrown vegetation: how to report it, who to report it to and when to report it
- Getting residents involved: promoting the results of schemes like the Happy Bee Street scheme, managing vegetation on their own properties
- Educating residents about the impacts of herbicides

- Offering help to other institutions, businesses and Colleges wishing to pursue a herbicide free approach
- Encourage residents to plant native species that support bees, butterflies, and other pollinators, aligning with initiatives like Happy Bee Street.
- Highlight how reducing herbicide use supports soil health, encourages beneficial insects, and improves urban green spaces.
- Explain how allowing selective plant growth (e.g., clover, daisies, and other low-maintenance plants) enhances local wildlife habitats.
- Communicate the benefits of letting wildflowers grow in suitable locations and introduce the idea of wildflower-friendly verges.
- Emphasise how biodiverse plant life in urban areas helps with flood mitigation, air quality improvement, and temperature regulation.

Strategy:

This campaign will be split into the how the council is managing overgrown vegetation and educating residents about the use of herbicides and encourage them to use alternatives/move away from them.

The following will be considered:

- 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 (UCL Pesticides and Urban Nature project) and
- Responding to reactive items or new enquiries

Prior to the start of the campaign, the website will be checked to make sure that the information is up to date and that anything that might require signposting to throughout the campaign is available on the website.

Where suitable, joint communications will be undertaken with partners.

A large part of the campaign will take place online; therefore a lot of the content will be created for this purpose. Each post will aim to be or include one of the following:

- Educational
- A call to action
- Social proofing
- Value framing
- Authoritative cues
- Testimonials

The use of paid ads has also been agreed by the herbicide free working group.

Action Plan

**Spring starts 19 March*

**Pre-election period*

Date	Communications Channel	Activity description
March	Social Media/ Cambridge Matters/ Press Release Cambridge Matters	Name the weed ripper competition Encouraging residents to consider not using herbicides whilst gardening. Timing this with the start of spring when people are more likely to start thinking about gardening. Feature a local resident's success story on transitioning to a herbicide-free garden.
April - May	NONE/MINIMAL	PRE-ELECTION PERIOD
May	Social Media	Video following the team around on a day of work

Date	Communications Channel	Activity description
March	Social Media	<p>Reporting overgrown vegetation – how to do it</p> <p>Publishing schedule</p>
May	Social Media	<p>Conscious gardening tips</p> <p>Encourage resident participation in No Mow May, explaining how allowing grass and flowers to grow benefits insects and urban wildlife.</p>
June	Video	<p>Record a walk about in well performing ward, with the executive councillor to highlight the work being done.</p> <p>Video featuring local bee and butterfly populations benefiting from biodiversity-focused weed management.</p> <p>Social media challenge: Residents share photos of pollinator-friendly plants in their gardens or public spaces.</p>

Date	Communications Channel	Activity description
July	Social Media	<p>Highlight resident involvement</p> <p>Promote biodiversity-friendly community gardening events.</p> <p>Feature local schools' involvement in herbicide-free projects (e.g., wildflower planting in schools).</p>