



Weed Management Policy

Bristol City Council Growth and Regeneration

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Version 1.000

Version control table

Date	Author	Version	Change Summary
3 rd August 2026	Kit Beaumont	V1.000	Policy first approved and published

Table 1 Version control table

Policy overview

Policy title: Weed Management Policy

Summary: Sets out the councils approach to managing weeds on council owned land including the use of pesticides such as glyphosate for this purpose

Drafted by: Kit Beaumont, Ecological Emergency Coordinator, Sustainable City Team – Growth and Regeneration

Authorising Head of Service/Director: John Smith, Executive Director – Growth and Regeneration

This policy is for use by: all BCC officers and their sub-contractors

Any other BCC teams or partners consulted on development of this policy
Parks and Green Space, Street Scene, Highways

Has an Equality Impact Assessment form been:
completed for this policy? Yes

Was an Equality Impact Assessment required? Yes

Date of review by the Equality and Inclusion Team Oct 2025

Publication date: 03 August 2026

Date by which this policy must be reviewed: 30 November 2030

1. Introduction

This policy has been developed in direct alignment with the [UK Pesticides National Action Plan 2025: Working for a more sustainable future](#) (a strategy developed in partnership by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), the Scottish Government, the Welsh Government, and the Northern Ireland Executive), the [Bristol One City Ecological Emergency Strategy](#) and [Bristol City Council Ecological Emergency Action Plan](#).

Pesticides, also known as plant protection products (PPPs), play an important role in managing weed growth in public spaces for amenity value and controlling the risk of damage to infrastructure. However, their overuse or incorrect application can contribute to biodiversity loss, unacceptable human exposure levels, and the development of pesticide resistance.

2. Aims and objectives

Purpose

This policy promotes the integrated management of weeds and reduction of glyphosate-based pesticides for the management of weeds and invasive species (hereafter referred to as problem plants) on council land in order to minimise Bristol City Council's operational impact on the environment and public health. The use of other pesticides is informed by the councils [Pest Management Arrangement \(2014\)](#).

Aims

- Bristol City Council to reduce its use of pesticide **by 50%**, from the 2020 baseline, by 2030 as set out in [Bristol City Council Ecological Emergency Action Plan](#).
- To deliver on the [BCC Corporate Plan 2025 – 30](#) objective 5.3: *'to improve the management of natural green spaces, create new wildlife friendly habitats and improve wildlife friendly practices to boost the amount of council land managed for nature'*
- To contribute to the global target set at the 15th meeting of the Conference of Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (COP 15) in December 2022, which is to reduce the overall risk from pesticides and highly hazardous chemicals by at least half by 2030.

Objectives

Through this policy Bristol City Council's approach aligns with these four core objectives set out in the UK Pesticides National Action Plan 2025 to guide the management of problem plants on council owned and managed land:

1. **Adopt an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Approach:** To reduce

dependency on chemical pesticides by promoting IPM as the primary approach to the management of problem plants. For clarity we will refer to this as 'Problem Plant Management' from hereon.

2. **Set Clear Targets and Monitor Use of Pesticides:** To establish quantifiable targets for pesticide reduction based on potential environmental pressures and to robustly monitor progress.
3. **Strengthen Compliance to Ensure Safety and Better Environmental Outcomes:** To ensure full adherence to existing legislation and best practices governing the use of pesticides, thereby safeguarding human health and the environment
4. **Gather and make available information on the pesticides used by Council:** To inform trials for alternatives to glyphosate as well as improving decision making and communication with stakeholders.

3. Legal and regulatory requirements, if applicable

This policy mandates strict adherence to all relevant legislation governing the use of pesticides, specifically the [Directive on the Sustainable Use of Pesticides \(SUD\) 2009/128/EC](#), the [Plant Protection Products Regulations 2011](#) and the [Plant Protection Products \(Sustainable Use\) Regulations 2012](#).

Key legal and regulatory aspects include:

- [Codes of Practice for Using Plant Protection Products](#): All staff and contractors must adhere to the Codes of Practice for using pesticides, published by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). These CoPs provide practical advice on safe use and fulfilling legal

obligations, including preventing water contamination.

- **Equipment Requirements:** All professional pesticide application equipment used on local authority land must be regularly inspected, calibrated, and technically checked in accordance with legal requirements.
- **Training and Certification:** All professional users of pesticides on local authority land must hold an accredited certificate, unless working under direct supervision as part of training.
- **Safe Operations:** All staff and contractors must take all reasonable precautions to ensure that storage, handling, dilution, mixing, cleaning, and disposal operations do not endanger human health or the environment. Applications must be confined to target areas, using the minimum frequency and amount.

Additional laws impacting pesticide use and environmental protection:

- [Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 \(NERC Act\), Section 40](#) – Requires public bodies to consider biodiversity conservation in their actions.
- [Control of Substances Hazardous to Health \(COSHH\) 2020](#) – Sets guidelines for pesticide storage and handling.
- [Official Controls \(Plant Protection Products\) Regulations 2020](#) – Requires businesses using professional pesticides to register their activities.
- [Environmental Protection Act 1990](#) – Obligates local authorities to keep roads clean, including the removal of weed-promoting detritus.
- [Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse](#) – Highlights the importance of preventing weed growth from accumulated debris.

Legislation concerning weed control:

- [Weeds Act 1959](#) – Aims to prevent the spread of harmful or injurious weeds.
- [Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981](#) – Focuses on controlling non-native invasive species, such as Japanese knotweed.

[DEFRA's 25-year Environment Plan](#) priorities:

- Sustainable land management
- Soil health improvement
- Biodiversity conservation
- Encouraging public engagement with nature
- Advising local authorities on nature restoration through practices such as:
 - Growing more flowers, shrubs, and trees
 - Allowing land to grow wild
 - Reducing grass-cutting frequency
 - Protecting insect nests and hibernation sites
 - Thoughtfully assessing pesticide use

[West of England Local Nature Recover Strategy](#):

- Theme 4: Nature-friendly, sustainable farming and living:
 - Reduce the use of pesticides through integrated pest management, including use of companion crops; and leave areas unsprayed to support arable wildflowers.
- Theme 5 'Connecting people to nature' contains the following priorities and measures:
 - Avoid using pesticides or compost containing peat when gardening or managing green spaces.

4. Roles and responsibilities

The following Directors and Heads of Service are responsible for the implementation of this policy:

- Director - Management of Place
 - Head of Parks and Green Spaces
 - Head of Service Bristol Harbour Authority
 - Head of Traffic & Highways Maintenance
- Director - Property, Assets and Infrastructure
 - Head of Waste, Neighbourhood Enforcement & Street Scene Services
 - Head of Corporate Landlord
- Director – Economy of Place
 - Sustainable City & Climate Change Manager
- Director – Housing and Landlord Services
 - Head of Strategic Asset Management

Other teams and services have responsibilities as below:

- **The Policy Team:** Responsibility for the oversight, and periodic review of this policy.
- **All BCC officers and contractors involved in the use of pesticides:** Responsible for understanding and adhering to the principles, practices, and legal requirements outlined in this policy and the relevant Codes of Practice. This includes participating in required training and holding necessary certifications. Furthermore
- **Operational Teams are** responsible for implementing Integrated Pest Management (IPM) strategies, carrying out preventative and non-chemical pest control methods, and ensuring that any chemical applications are targeted, proportionate, and comply with safety and environmental standards. Operational teams are also responsible for monitoring their use of pesticides in line with the requirements of this policy.
- **Procurement Teams:** Responsible for ensuring that any procurement of professional pesticides is done through appropriate channels and that legal restrictions on their purchase are fully understood and adhered to.
- **Sustainable City and Environmental Performance Teams:** Responsible for the development of this policy, coordinating the collecting, analysing, and reporting data on pesticide use, IPM

uptake, progress against reduction target

- **Community Engagement Leads:** Where appropriate, responsible for fostering local involvement in maintaining herbicide-free areas and increasing public awareness of sustainable pest management practices.

5. Scope

This policy applies to all BCC staff and their contractors who manage weeds on council owned and managed land such as parks, streets and pavements and around BCC owned housing.

6. The policy

1. Problem Plant Management

Bristol City Council will adopt a holistic approach to managing Problem Plant as its primary strategy for managing problem plants and invasive species as part of its operations.

The practical application of Problem Plant Management will include:

- **Prevention Methods:** Prioritising measures that reduce the risk of problem plants becoming established or reaching damaging levels. Examples include:
 - **Designing** surfaces to minimise opportunities for weed growth
 - **Sweeping hard surfaces** to remove weeds.
 - Using **mulches** to suppress weed growth.
 - Implementing **hygiene measures**, such as regular cleansing of machinery and equipment.
- **Monitoring and Thresholds:** Implementing effective monitoring systems, including inspection, pest identification, and forecasting, to ensure that pesticides are only used when truly necessary and that the correct control is applied at the right time.
- **Prioritisation of Non-Chemical Intervention:** Mandating a clear preference for sustainable physical, biological, and other non-chemical methods over chemical ones, if they are practical, economic and provide satisfactory control. Examples include:
 - **Hand weeding.**
 - **Mechanical weeding** (e.g., strimming, mowing, weed brushing, ripping).
 - The use of **physical barriers**.
 - **Biological control** methods, including the use of biopesticides,

where they are effective and economically viable.

- **Innovation Adoption:** Exploring and potentially adopting new technologies or precision application techniques to reduce or target chemical control and improve efficiency and safety.
- Creating opportunities for **community involvement** in maintaining herbicide-free areas through an opt-out and community weeding scheme.
- **Targeted Chemical Use (As a Last Resort):** If chemical pesticides are deemed necessary (e.g. where alternatives are ineffective or unavailable, to protect infrastructure or for public safety):
 - They will be applied at minimum effective doses and frequencies.
 - Where possible targeted application will be employed through precision technology, spot treatments or weed wipers to minimise negative impacts.
- **Managing Resistance:** Incorporating anti-resistance strategies where there is a known risk of resistance against a plant protection measure due to repeated pesticide applications e.g. non-native bindweed

Problem Plant Management Approach:

Where	What*	How frequently
Playgrounds	Manual removal (power wash)	As required
Docks estate	Manual removal of growth in harbour walls	As required
Hard surfaces (paths) in parks	Sweeping and manual removal	Throughout the year
Shrub beds in parks and open spaces	Manual removal	Throughout the year
Cemeteries and Crematoriums	Manual and mechanical removal of weeds	Through out year where resource allows
	Spray glyphosate-based pesticides	Twice per year
Pavements and road gullies	Spray glyphosate-based pesticides	Twice per year
	Manual sweeping and removal of plant material	Throughout the year
Hard surfaces around communal housing land	Spray glyphosate-based pesticides	Twice per year
Woodland management	Ecoplugs to kill stumps of	When trees are felled

	felled trees	
Blaise nursery	Glyphosate-based pesticides applied by Controlled droplet application	Once a year with follow up treatment as required
	Insecticides, fungicides and growth regulators	As and when required to address any plant production issues
Park and Ride	Spray glyphosate-based pesticides to manage hard surfaces	Twice per year
Public Rights of Way	Spot treatment of glyphosate-based pesticide by a knapsack sprayer	Twice per year
Invasive Species: Japanese Knotweed	Spray glyphosate-based pesticides or if by watercourse stem injection	twice a year until no sign for a period of 3 years
Invasive Species: Giant Hogweed	Spray glyphosate-based pesticides	One-off
Invasive Species: Himalayan balsam	Manual removal: lift and drop	during growing season
Invasive species: Three cornered garlic	glyphosate hand painted on during growing season	One-off treatment but monitored and retreated as necessary

* In exceptional circumstances pesticides will be used where the principal method of control cannot be implemented, for example where physical access to manual control is not possible or not safe.

2.Targets and Measures to Monitor Use of Pesticides

- Bristol City Council is committed to **reducing the potential environmental impact of pesticides used on local authority land**. For the purpose of this policy the quantifiable target set by Bristol is **to reduce pesticide by 50% by 2030 from the 2020 baseline**.
- **Monitoring and Reporting:** Bristol City Council will implement a system to monitor progress against its reduction goals. This will involve tracking:
 - The volume and type of pesticides used on local authority land.
 - The area treated with pesticides (where it is feasible to gather this data).
 - The trial and adoption rates of successful, non-chemical alternatives and Problem Plant Management practices.

- Relevant outcome-based indicators, such as biodiversity improvements, where feasible.
- **Data Improvement:** Bristol City Council will actively work towards improving data collection on pesticide use on its land to enable more robust local monitoring and future target setting.
- **Review and Evaluation:** Establishing a process for regularly reviewing the success of all problem plant control measures to assess effectiveness and adjust approaches.
- **Review and Adjustment:** This policy will be reviewed every 5 years (or earlier if an alternative approach is approved), considering whether it needs to be adjusted to maintain ambition.

3. Strengthen Compliance to Ensure Safety and Better Environmental Outcomes

Bristol City Council will ensure full compliance with existing legislation governing the sale and use of pesticides, as well as adherence to best practices to protect human health and the environment.

- **Adherence to Legislation and Codes of Practice:** All staff and contractors must strictly adhere to the Codes of Practice (CoP) for using pesticides, which provide practical advice on safe use, legal obligations, and preventing water contamination. These CoPs will be regularly updated to reflect current regulatory standards and embed IPM.
- **Operational Safety and Best Practice:**
 - **Storage, Handling, and Disposal:** All staff and contractors must adhere to legal requirements for safe storage, handling, dilution, mixing, cleaning, and disposal of pesticides to prevent endangerment to human health or the environment. Applications must be confined to target areas, using the minimum frequency and amount.
 - **Equipment Requirements:** All professional pesticide application equipment used on local authority land must be regularly inspected, calibrated, and technically checked by a competent person.
 - **Training and Certification:** All professional users of pesticides working on local authority land must hold an accredited certificate (unless working under direct supervision as part of training). Access to approved training and ongoing Continuing Professional Development (CPD) will be encouraged for relevant staff.

- **Training and Awareness:** Increasing awareness and knowledge of IPM strategies among staff and contractors through training, and encouraging operators to regularly update their training and certification to include IPM elements.
- **Procurement Awareness:** Any procurement of professional pesticides will be done through appropriate channels, with full awareness of legal restrictions to prevent purchase by unqualified individuals.
- **Official Controls:** Bristol City Council will ensure cooperation with HSE's Pesticide Enforcement Officers who conduct risk-based inspection visits to check compliance with label conditions, record-keeping, and safe use requirements. Staff will be registered with the relevant Competent Authority as required.

7. Equalities and Diversity statement

[The Public Sector Equality Duty \(PSED\) | EHRC](#) requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities. This helps to inform our work at Bristol City Council and aligns with our vision and values. Additionally, our [Equity and Inclusion Strategic Framework](#) sets out how we will tackle inequality and promote diversity and inclusion. This policy strives to ensure that our approach to weed management by the council and its contractors considers the needs of all residents, promoting a safe and healthy environment for everyone.

8. Monitoring and evaluation

Bristol City Council is committed to regularly monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of this policy and its reduction in the use of pesticides.

Pesticide use has been monitored by the council since 2020 and will continue to be done so as part of the council's response to the Ecological Emergency. Annual figures are posted on the council's This will include:

- **Reporting Progress:** An annual report will be produced, detailing progress against the council's pesticide reduction target as well as trials of alternative products or processes; this will be presented to the relevant Policy Committee. Annual usage figures will also be made available on the council's website.
- **Data-Driven:** Evidence gathered from monitoring, and wider intelligence from trials or sector developments will inform a targeted approach to intervention and allow for the adjustment of targets to maintain ambition.

9. Related policies and information sources

Actions related to the delivery of this policy or the reduction of glyphosate use can be found in the [BCC Ecological Emergency Action Plan 2026 - 2028](#)