

Member Feedback

Cllr K Taylor (Holgate)

Herewith feedback on the weed pilot (or indeed, “pilots”) from a Holgate Ward perspective:

Pilot for manual strimming around street furniture by frontline CYC staff (replacing the normal single spray that is carried out by the Council’s teams in April/May).

No complaints raised here which I can only read as a positive step forward.

One less externally contracted weed spray on the highway network; due to contractual constraints this will be the final spray

As you know Holgate had a more nuanced approach with this where we entered all of the Ward into the pilot for two (down from three) sprays apart from:

- The whole of the Leeman Road area
- The Lindsey Avenue/Sowerby Road area and the terraced areas around Poppleton Road school.
- A small section of terraced housing off Carr Lane

This was due to how these are the areas which the current contractor and primary method, even at three sprays, struggled to provide a reliable service of weed control. While we want CYC to stop using glyphosate as its primary control method we were not willing to compromise already poor control in these areas even more. While the vast majority of residents would support more environmentally friendly methods - and while we should push for more tolerance for growth wherever possible and without compromising footpaths/roads access - many still want the job done.

In summary for this pilot:

We received zero complaints from residents about any of the areas that have been reduced to two sprays.

However, having added up emails and recollections of conversations at our drop-in sessions, we have received at least twenty-five complaints from residents living in the three-spray areas about the lack of weed control and/or the nature of the contractor's activity on the quadbike.

Holgate Ward also had a neighbourhood, the St Pauls Square area, whose Residents' Association asked for, and were given, total opt out of any spraying at all. No complaints have come through from this area. Some residents here have in this case undertaken their own manual weed control but clearly this isn't a sustainable long-term option. I did check in with one of their residents about it, who led their request for this pilot, and they said:

"The honest feedback from St. Paul's would be that they would like weeding done but without spraying (or a non-chemical alternative, twice a year) - about a third of the households have older residents, some with health problems, who can't weed themselves."

I hope this is helpful Ben and that, regardless of whoever might run the Council from May onwards, this can help get the city to a place where we're not having the same annual arguments. On both environmental and reliability grounds, the penny's got to drop sooner or later than we've can do much better than what we've been doing to date.

Cllr Vassie (Wheldrake)

I echo Kallum's comments.

To let you know, I am currently preparing my report on how things have gone in my ward. I will be able to give you photographic evidence re: examples of how the streets in Elvington look after a season of no glyphosate sprays, alongside evidence of how a weed brush has performed clearing vegetation growing in the soil/leaf litter nestling along some of the kerbs. I won't yet be able to provide you with the results of a survey of Elvington residents to gauge their opinion on the scheme because that is not yet completed, but I will aim to get that to you in due course.

I can already tell you that I have received no complaints on this issue from residents over the course of this year. I also have information from Wheldrake, where the survey has been completed.

Cllr D'Agorne (Fishergate)

For Fishergate ward the only negative feedback I had was from Farrar St, which for some reason got missed out on the first spray and that was then rectified. The residents piloting no spray of their back alleys did get a deep clean which seems to have worked well but communication of what is happening when to ward councillors at least, if not residents could be improved.

I've had no complaints about the missing out of the 3rd spray. If possible reduced or no spray of selected areas where residents have taken the initiative to care for alleys should be allowed to continue.

Finally the point about putting more effort into removing leaf mulch before spring wherever this can be done is critical to reducing growth. We also need to continue a rolling cycle over 3 years or so to remove all cars street by street for a deep clean of gutters and gullies. Some streets with heavy leaf fall may need it annually, depending on the weather pattern around autumn (wet and not very much wind being the worst).

Hope this helps and we are able to continue to work on reducing spray while trialling alternatives at hotspots.

Cllr Craghill (Guildhall)

I think the main feedback I have had from Guildhall is that residents would like to understand more about what alternatives to glyphosate we have been or are planning to trial.

There is also – understandably I think – confusion in people's minds between weed spraying and grass cutting and in future it would be good to look at both together e.g. in some places the frequency of grass cutting seems to have unnecessary impacts on biodiversity, whilst in other locations some grass cutting does help the appearance of an area where spraying is not taking place.

At the same time, the other feedback I have had is that, whatever you think about the negative impacts of glyphosate, the contract is in any case pretty ineffectual – spraying is done in a random way and leaves unsightly brown areas without really removing all the weeds – so a bit the worst of both worlds.

Finally, I would like to be reassured that CYC intends to continue working with Pesticides Action Network with further meetings planned to develop further glyphosate reduction plans.

Cllr Fitzpatrick (Guildhall)

The main feedback from residents to me, particularly in the Groves, is the reduced level of cutting back in the back alleys and a general lack of understanding of the options. I agree with some the other points Cllr Craghill makes.

Cllr Warters (Osbaldwick and Derwent)

My response is the same as previously stated on numerous occasions.