

Annex C: Weed treatment opt out process

The Council is committed to addressing the climate crisis and ensure the protection and enhancement of the City's biodiversity.

Recognising more than 4,000 species of insects in the UK that pollinate native wild plants and food crops, are under threat, and in decline, due to habitat loss and pesticide use, and in line with the Council's pollinator strategy, the Council are promoting opportunities to manage local area in a more sustainable way.

Part of this is offering the opportunity to local communities to take management of local natural land and opting out of the Council's weed treatment service.

Weed treatment at the Council is undertaken by an in house service.

Note i) at the end of this Annex provides detail on how the service works.

Opting out from Weed treatment will mean the community will take responsibility treatment of weeds in their defined geography (street or streets). This will become a no spray zone.

The following is the proposed process for Weed treatment opt out, taking into account the Council's current capacity to provide support to Communities.

Stage 1

Residents on a street make a representation to the Council supported by neighbourhood teams

- This stage will open from March for the following year, e.g. representations from March 2026 will be for the 2027 season. This stage will close in October
- A street (or streets) identifies themselves with a lead or leads (including contact details).
- The street identifies the geographical scope of the representation. This will need to be at least a street and can be many.

- The street or streets will also need to evidence that the representation has local support.
- The street makes the representation to the Public Realm service, who will acknowledge the proposal.

Stage 2

Neighbourhood teams review and engagement with the street through the identified street lead

- This stage will take place in November once the representations have been received in **Stage 1**
- Officers will review the geographic scope of representation and assess the evidence in terms of local support. This should be an identified street or more and the local support should be representative of the community.
- Initial feedback is given to the street or streets lead.
- The street will have until January to address any outstanding issues.

Potential issues

- The street has previously opted out, but the Council has taken back control as the community has not had the capacity to do the work. This will be managed on a case by case basis.
- Weeding is done in the highway and support is required to support communities doing the work. This may be remedied through [verge adoption], see **Annex E**.

Stage 3

Decision on opt out

- This will take place in February in a management meeting to enable the Public realm service to optimise weed treatment for that season.
- It will be assumed that the geography will be opted out unless (i) the street decide to opt back in or (ii) the Council take back control of treatment in that geography due to lack of community capacity.

Stage 4

Review of opted out areas by neighbourhood teams

- This will take place between June and October.
- The Council will visually assess opted out areas. Resident feedback will also to be taken into account.
- If there has been little or no activity in terms of week treatment in the opted out areas, the Council will contact the street and may take back control of weed treatment in that geography.

Note i): Weed treatment process

How weeds are treated

All areas of the city will be treated as part of the scheduled programme.

The Council may not respond to weed spraying requests if treatment of the area is part of our planned schedule.

Where accessible, the Council carry out mechanical sweeping after the vegetation has died back, normally around 4 weeks after spraying. This removes dead growth from pavements and channels, helping to improve street cleanliness and prevent new seeds from establishing.

Where and how weeds are treated

Different teams work on different surfaces across the city. We use a combination of:

- Ride-on quadbike sprayers for most pavements and roadside channels
- Pedestrian teams using handheld or backpack sprayers for narrow, obstructed or difficult to reach hard surfaces
- Pedestrian teams treating soft or porous surfaces, such as verges
- Estate workers, who treat council housing land separately
- City centre teams, who treat the city centre on foot and with specialist equipment
- Mechanical street sweeping, carried out after vegetation has died back, normally at least 4 weeks after spraying

This combined approach ensures all areas are appropriately treated and improves cleanliness by removing decaying vegetation that would otherwise encourage new growth.

There are some “no spray zones” across the city where residents have opted out of weed spraying and are expected to manually remove weeds in their areas.

Products used

A range of products are used suitable for different surfaces and weed types, including biological alternatives.

The aim is to minimise our use of glyphosate wherever possible, and the new integrated approach places greater emphasis on using non-glyphosate and biological alternatives on suitable surfaces.

However, glyphosate remains the most effective and reliable weed-control option available to the Council on certain hard surfaces and for tackling more resilient species. For this reason, it will still be used where no other product provides the required level of control.

By combining reduced-glyphosate use with a wider range of alternative treatments, the Council are working to balance environmental responsibility with effective citywide vegetation management.

Examples of products the Council use include:

- Glyphosate based products for hard surfaces only
- Mixed products, such as glyphosate and Chikara, for soft surfaces
- Specialist treatments, such as Icade for Japanese knotweed, Katoun Gold for mareetail
- Nonchemical de-greening products, such as Enclean or Katoun Gold, for certain hard surfaces

All products are approved for use in the United Kingdom and are used in line with legislation and manufacturer guidance, and staff are fully trained and certified.

What to expect after treatment

Because of how weed treatments work:

- Only weeds that are actively growing at the time are affected
- Weeds begin to die back within around 10 days, but may take longer depending on weather
- New weeds emerging after treatment will not be affected until the next cycle
- Weeds may still be visible while they die back or before mechanical sweeping takes place
- Injurious or harmful weeds

The Council maintain a live list of locations where injurious weeds such as Japanese knotweed or giant hogweed are present. These are treated through targeted spot treatment, using specialist products