

**HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL****Report**

<b>Committee:</b>	Environment and Transportation Select Committee
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	5 November 2013
<b>Report Title:</b>	Control of Weeds on the Highway
<b>Reference:</b>	5350
<b>Report From:</b>	Director of Economy, Transport and Environment

**Contact name:** Peter Eade

**Tel:** 01962 794700

**Email:** peter.eade@hants.gov.uk

### **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Select Committee on the control of weeds on the Public Highway in Hampshire. It relates to the policy covered in the Highways Maintenance Management Plan (HMMP) and aims to provide the Committee with more detailed information about this aspect of this operational work.

### **1. Contextual Information**

- 2.1 Hampshire County Council has a duty to maintain the highway and this includes controlling the growth of grass and weeds through the joints between kerbing and surfacing - a common location for seed germination.
- 2.2 Weed spraying is normally carried out twice a year on urban highways in Rushmoor, Hart, Winchester, Test Valley, Fareham, Gosport and East Hants where kerbs and footways exist. The Districts of Basingstoke, Eastleigh, New Forest and Havant have taken up the opportunity to carry out their own weed spraying under agency from the County Council.
- 2.3 The County Council programme commences in late April and is due to complete at the end of October. The spraying is delivered by AMEY on behalf of the County Council, through a specialist subcontractor.
- 2.4 The work is carried out by trained operatives using backpack sprayers delivering micro droplets of glyphosate weedkiller in accordance with the Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986. This is a permitted contact or non-residual herbicide (e.g. Roundup) rather than a residual herbicide which is no longer permitted. It conforms to the Health and Safety Commission's Code of Practice and with the Environment Agency's requirements. Some application is carried out by operatives using a quad bike which is an economic approach to spraying longer lengths of footway or kerbing.

### **3. Parish Lengthsman**

- 3.1 The Parish Lengthsman scheme is essentially a rural located scheme where straightforward and low risk tasks are completed in Parished areas. Weed-killing has not been included in the task list to date. The bulk of spraying by Hampshire Highways takes place in urban locations and thus does not match well in this respect. It also requires a extra element of training and health and safety and if the operation were to be undertaken by parish lengthsman it could risk fragmenting a single managed system into many inconsistent smaller elements. However, if Parishes were to request their lengthsman to spray weeds and could provide the necessary equipment, such an approach could complement the existing programme rather than replace it.

### **4. Invasive Weeds**

- 4.1 Invasive weeds such as Japanese Knotweed, Giant Hogweed and Marestail are sprayed individually twice a year with a further cutback in late November. These sites have been notified to Hampshire Highways by the public through the area offices or recorded by Highways staff and number 460 individual sites at present. Most of these are Japanese Knotweed. Some sites have been killed off following several years of treatment but others have been added.
- 4.2 Public interest in Himalayan Balsam is increasing although no central action has been taken by Hampshire Highways to date.

### **5. Injurious Weeds**

- 5.1 The Noxious Weeds Act 1959, including the Ragwort Control Act 2003 places a responsibility on the Highway Authority to minimise and inhibit the growth and spread of injurious weeds growing on the highway.
- 5.2 Ragwort is classified as an injurious weed but not included in the above treatment approach as it has been dealt with in previous years by individual Highways teams across Hampshire rather than centrally. Small scale trials to spray Ragwort rather than pull and dispose have been carried out with encouraging results. Currently the County Council practice is in line with the DEFRA Code of Practice on How to Prevent the Spread of Ragwort (March 2007) but it is acknowledged that the widespread presence of this plant is unlikely to be significantly influenced by the level of activity by Hampshire Highways.

### **6. Finance**

- 6.1 The Contractual cost for highway weed spraying is £511,845.42.
- 6.2 The Contractual cost for controlling invasive weeds is £51,200.00.

## **7. Conclusions**

- 7.1. On-going weed spraying is important as a highways maintenance activity for Hampshire Highways in preventing the deterioration of footways and carriageways caused by grass and weeds. There is also a responsibility under the Weeds Act 1959 to prevent invasive weeds from spreading and helps to enhance the quality of place for residents. However, like all maintenance activities which are not directly related to Highway Safety, there is a limit on the service's ability to fully meet all public expectations due to budget limitations and additional activity would not necessarily meet value for money criteria.

**CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:**

**Links to the Corporate Strategy**

<b>Hampshire safer and more secure for all:</b>	no
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
<b>Maximising well-being:</b>	no
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
<b>Enhancing our quality of place:</b>	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
<b>OR</b>	
<b>This proposal does not link to the Corporate Strategy but, nevertheless, requires a decision because:</b>	

**Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents**

**The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)**

Document

Location

None

## **IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:**

### **1. Equalities Impact Assessment:**

- 1.1. This service forms part of the highways management service that has been impact assessed as part of ETE's suite of service objectives level EqlAs. It is also being reviewed more specifically with regard to the on-going consultation on the HMMP. No negative impacts on people with protected characteristics have been identified with regard to the specific operation of weed control. Overall, good maintenance of footways is beneficial to all pedestrians especially those who have visual or physical impairment.

### **2. Impact on Crime and Disorder** No impact.

### **3. Climate Change:**

- a) How does what is being proposed impact on our carbon footprint / energy consumption?

This paper describes an existing process that has taken place for a number of years and so no changes are being proposed. Most of the activity is carried out by a person walking and so has limited requirement for fossil fuel although vehicles are required for support.

- b) How does what is being proposed consider the need to adapt to climate change, and be resilient to its longer term impacts?

Climate change will possibly encourage the growth of grass and weeds and therefore place more pressure on highway weed control. With the prospect of reducing budgets, the challenge may be to modify expectation how much can be achieved in future years.