

Wadebridge Town Council

Q & A with Cornwall's first pesticide-free town

When did Wadebridge go pesticide free?

Wadebridge TC stopped spraying weeds in March 2016, following Edward Treverton's appointment as Senior Groundsman. He requested a no-spraying policy in his interview as he had a personal interest in no longer using chemicals.

What prompted Wadebridge to become pesticide-free? What local support/opposition did you have?

Edward introduced no-spraying straight away with the full support of the Town Council. Local support has always been strong, though there was some scepticism about maintaining the roads/pavements/curbs that the TC used to spray on behalf of Cornwall Council. After educating the public, they tend to understand and agree to the cause.

Does your policy cover just weed killers...or wider pesticides such as rodenticides?

Our Parks Team don't use any kind of pesticide; that includes herbicides, rodenticides or insecticides. Our policy aims to promote the importance & value of a quality environment and its contribution to the quality of life for the people of Wadebridge. We support our community in its enjoyment of our local surroundings, and carry out our work in an efficient way that minimises or eliminates adverse environmental and health impacts.

What assets do you own or manage that are affected by the policy?

We have 4 large grassed areas including 3 parks and the cemetery. Hard-standing areas include 3 car parks as well as other roads and pavements around the Town that used to be sprayed on behalf of Cornwall Council.

How did your contractors regarding the new approach?

All work related to spraying was in-house. Any future contractors would be advised of the policy – as was the case recently due to taking on a new company to clean public toilets. They mentioned using weed killer on the surrounding area for aesthetic reasons but they were advised of our policy. It was not an issue and they pull weeds by hand.

How do you go about introducing and implementing it?

The policy was developed and agreed by the Town Council at Full Council – the Parks Team then simply followed it!

What alternative methods do you use; and how effective are they?

We use a self-drive powered brush weeder, gas flame, strimmer and hand weeding. The methods are as effective as chemicals; Edward found that herbicides just lasted longer – even though spraying is still not a permanent solution. We also leave some areas to go wild which reduces need for maintenance, and is great for insects and birds.

What are the differences in cost between previous and new management techniques/regimes?

Although there was the investment in the self-drive machine brush weeder, over time this will even itself out as the sprays were purchased on a regular basis. New techniques can require more time and sometimes more staff; however certain places, such as the wildflower areas, have gained back time as weekly strims have been reduced to annual cuts.

What has been the reaction in Wadebridge to going pesticide-free?

The Town Council has not received any complaints from the public or local businesses. The occasional person does question the staff on the ground; because our staff are able to communicate the benefits of going pesticide free, people seem to be satisfied with our approach.

Are there any specific issues & benefits experienced from going pesticide-free?

The only issues are on land leased to local clubs such as the bowling, cricket & rugby clubs – there are ongoing discussions to look at management options and bring them fully on board with the TC's policy. The benefits are clear - wildlife is bouncing back, and local people love the wildflowers!

Any lessons learnt or advice to other T&PCs thinking of making the change?

Our advice is that you can do it - make the leap and don't look back! No serious problems have arisen and the pros far outweigh the cons. The parks that we maintain, if anything, look better than they did before. Spraying has not been missed at all!