

Becoming pesticide-free: Guidance for Town & Parish Councils

As concerns about the environmental and health implications of pesticides increase, the following step-by-step guidance is for Town and Parish Councils interested in becoming pesticide-free.

STEP 1 - FIND OUT ABOUT EXISTING PESTICIDE USE ON COUNCIL ASSETS

- For example, what products are being used, where, how often and why?
- Who uses them? Is it a contractor, a sub-contractor or in-house staff?
- Look at the existing maintenance arrangement/contract; what does it specify in terms of pesticide use?
- Talk to your current maintenance staff/contractors; are they receptive to using pesticide free alternatives? The more forward thinking operators will already be moving in this direction!

STEP 2 - GET SUPPORT FROM YOUR COMMUNITY

- Do your research! Access resources, such as webinars and toolkits, which help individuals and groups to garner the support of others.
- Use your parish newsletter/website to raise awareness about the benefits of going pesticide free. And remember, it is not just about chemical free alternatives. Increasing understanding of the value of 'weeds' such as nettles, ragwort and brambles is fundamental to halting the decline of bees, birds and other wildlife.
- Promote existing good work being undertaken to reduce pesticide use, including publicising any areas that are already pesticide-free.
- A simple on-line poll publicised in your parish newsletter/FB page, or a face-to-face questionnaire outside the local school, shop or surgery can be useful in gauging community support of a pesticide free approach. Remember to make clear why it is important.
- Learn from others - talk to other T&PCs who have already made the move (see the Wadebridge Q & A document).
- Organise a full council debate on the subject of making your parish or town pesticide-free. You could develop a Motion, put before the council, calling for an end to the use of pesticides on all areas of land under council control.

STEP 3 – DEVELOP CLEAR PESTICIDE POLICY

- Your policy should contain a roadmap of how the council intends to go pesticide free.
It should include
 - ✓ When and where your council has used pesticides to date
 - ✓ The times, location and circumstances of any ongoing pesticide application
 - ✓ The benefits of going pesticide free
 - ✓ Any information about reductions in pesticide use to date or alternatives already in use
 - ✓ Plans for trialling pesticide free approaches – e.g. methods, locations and how success will be evaluated
 - ✓ Communications plan for engaging local community and stakeholders
- Work with in-house staff and contractors to ensure contracts reflect the policy
- Be mindful of potential exceptions to a pesticide-free approach - such as the treatment of Japanese Knotweed, one off infestations, or the management of potentially challenging assets such as sports pitches.
- Develop specific pesticide-use policy alongside wider environmental policy for your Town/Parish Council (link to template here).

STEP 4 – IMPLEMENTING THE POLICY

- Consider a phased approach. There is no one technique which will control weeds (or other pests) across the range of assets. You'll need to find out what techniques are appropriate in what places – it may mean you have to use one contractor to manage some aspects (such as maintaining pavements), and another for other jobs (e.g. on playing fields). Be prepared to be flexible in your approach. You may wish to stop pesticide use in public open spaces areas first and then implement it on other assets over time.
- Ensure all relevant staff, contractors and sub-contractors understand and support the policy.
- Consider pooling resources (or sharing contractors) with like-minded Towns or Parishes. Some pieces of kit (e.g. hot foam or cut and collect equipment) which may be prohibitively expensive for an individual Council, may be justifiable when costs and usage can be shared with others.
- Enlist the support of community volunteers/groups for pesticide-free tasks such as hand weeding, or for pollinator friendly activities such as creating wildflower areas.



- Keep your community informed. Make sure your staff and contractors are able to respond positively to enquiries from the public. Temporary signage is a useful way of making sure your local community understands and supports the changes taking place.

USEFUL RESOURCES

A guide for campaigners

https://issuu.com/pan-uk/docs/pft_public_briefing?e=28041656/43992897

A guide for local authorities

https://issuu.com/pan-uk/docs/pft_a_toolkit_for_local_authorities