

Questions from Members of the Public

Community and Environment Committee - 3rd February 2022

Jackie Kay from Congleton's Climate Emergency Action Group

- 1) 'What professional advice has Congleton Town Council (CTC) sought regarding the change of weed killer to 'New Way herbicide'?
- 2) 'Does CTC have any plans to be trialing non-chemical methods of weed control in the future?'
- 3) 'How is the use of New Way compatible with CTC's previously stated aims of tackling the climate emergency through improving habitat for wildlife and bees and not using unnecessary chemicals?'
- 4) 'Will CTC have to notify local beekeepers of New Way Weedkiller use? As the chemical safety data sheet states 'Dangerous to bees'. To protect bees and pollinating insects do not apply to crop plants when in flower. Do not use where bees are actively foraging. Do not apply when flowering weeds are present.'

Response: To put a bit of context to these questions, Jackie Kay had previously asked questions about the Town Council's use of Glyphosate. The Congleton Town Council stopped using glyphosate around official children's play areas managed by the Council in July 2020 and is committed to minimising its use in more places to protect wildlife and the local community. Since June 2021 we have not used glyphosate around grassy areas which are unofficial play areas used by children, near schools, around trees or around street furniture. The Town Council is about to trial a new product which contains zero glyphosates called New Way.

The advice to move to New Way was taken after the Streetscape Manager liaised with

- Cheshire East Borough Council
- Specialist Horticultural business in the area
- and RHS

The Town Council already hand pulls and strims over 75% of our areas, where we do not use any weed spray, this has been done since we declared a climate emergency in 2019. We are now going to trial using New Way which is a "naturally occurring and bio-degradable product which is safe for the environment - breaks down naturally to water"

We do not apply any spray to anything in flower, or where there are any bee habitats, the remaining 25% of areas which we still need to spray is hard standing sites without grass or flowers/plants.

Finally, Streetscape staff are currently attending training courses and talks on biodiversity and are fully on board with the new way of working and putting lots of good ideas forward and helping to boost many of our open spaces. You will also see a paper later in this agenda recommending that the Town Council uses a well-respected consultant to help prepare site-specific biodiversity plans for 30 areas in Congleton over which the Town Council has some influence.

Olga Whitmore was present for the meeting and requested that her questions were read out:

- 1. In view of new guidelines from RHS, and considering climate emergency declaration by CTC in 2019, will the Environment Committee give us the information about how many bedding plants are going to be bought, where will they be planted and the reasons for using them.**

We have been following advice closely from RHS and as a Town Council are working hard to reduce our Carbon Footprint whilst still working towards the vision of making Congleton a vibrant, inclusive, enterprising, active and sustainable town, which remains an attractive place to live, visit, invest and work

Our plant order so far is for 19,660 plants, which is less than half of last year's figure of 45,147. The majority of our bedding plants, after use, are recycled by local groups, organisations and residents with those remaining made into compost.

- 2. Will all roundabouts be planted with sustainable planting? If not are there any plans to do so?**

3 of the 5 roundabouts in Congleton town are fully sustainable, one is a mix 50% sustainable and 50% bedding plants and which is being phased over this year to be fully sustainable and we still have one roundabout that is planted with bedding plants. All five roundabouts on the link road will be sustainable.