

## **Scottish councils' comments on glyphosate usage**

**An Aberdeen City Council spokeswoman said:** “We are decreasing use of glyphosate through using other means of weed-clearing such as removing by hand, hoe, mechanical sweeping, and strimming. Staff are trained in the correct usage of glyphosate and also must use the appropriate clothing and equipment.”

**An Aberdeenshire Council spokesperson said:** “Glyphosate-based products are approved for use in the UK, EU and many other locations around the world and are considered safe for use by our Health and Safety service.

“Aberdeenshire Council employees spot treat weeds ensuring most efficient and safe use of chemicals, ensuring none are used unnecessarily and blanket spraying isn't carried out on paved areas.

“All our operatives are appropriately trained, certificated and provided with the necessary PPE to deploy glyphosate in a safe and controlled manner, with records being retained for all usage. In recent years we have trialled alternative methods of weed control and this is likely to continue in the future.”

**An Angus Council spokesman said:** “We have no immediate plans to discontinue the use of Glyphosate based products for weed control. It remains the safest most cost effective method of controlling invasive weeds. Should the chemical be removed from the approved list this would of course be reviewed and alternative chemicals/means of control examined.

“All our operators are highly trained in the handling and application of chemicals. To ensure we apply chemicals responsibly we have reduced our Glyphosate application rates to the very minimum through low volume application. Our aim is to ensure all chemicals are correctly and professionally applied and their controlled use in our parks and streets help create clean and tidy public spaces.”

**A spokesperson for Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar said:** “Cleansing Services use herbicides for street / pavement cleansing. The following products are used:

Rosate 360 – Knapsack sprayer  
Nomix – Mechanical Sweeper

Both of these products are covered by data sheets and their use controlled by a Safe System of Work and Risk Assessment. All operators are fully trained in the application of the product (knapsack or sweeper).

We have been referring to guidance from the HSE on glyphosate. Cleansing Services continued with the use of this product type following an announcement that glyphosate was approved for another 5 years on 12 December 2017. We are currently considering alternative / sustainable control measures moving forward.

**A Dundee City Council spokesperson said:** “The use of glyphosate in the council is undertaken by fully trained and certificated operatives, using PPE and with safe systems of work in place.

“Over the last few years, the council has continued to reduce the amount of herbicide used to control vegetation, through the management and design of street scape and greenspace environments.

“The use of glyphosate remains under continuous review with the aim to further reduce the reliance on this herbicide and to consider the introduction of alternative weed control options, where possible.

**In response to an enquiry from The Ferret, Nick Kelly, Service Manager, East Ayrshire Council said:** "Glyphosate is currently approved for use in UK and approval has been extended by the UK government until December 2025.

"Therefore, glyphosate can be used as an active substance in Plant Protection Products until this time

"There are fixed periods for initial approval (generally 10 years) and these are regularly reviewed and in this case glyphosate has an extension until 2025

"There is also an ongoing review being carried out by 5 EU member states which commenced in May 2019 and once this has been completed we will get better guidance on the way forward for this product. As an authority we regularly review this guidance and make decisions based on information provided.

"We tend to follow the view that there are rigorous tests in place that protect the health of people, creatures and plants and also safeguard the environment and we would tend to agree with these views at present.

"Herbicide treatment with glyphosate is safe as there are strict conditions imposed as to how this should be stored and applied via a concise product label and legislation ensuring we protect employees and the environment.

"We limit this product as far as we practically can which is a statutory requirement, and following the current UK and EU guidance and recommendations."

"All our employees are required to complete a 2 stage pesticide application course before they can apply these chemicals and are also required by law to complete in depth chemical application sheets to ensure that they apply at the correct dose rates, employees wear the required PPE for product being applied and apply in correct weather conditions, they also need to account for each amount they withdraw from our chemical stores.

"We supply updated guidance and training on an annual basis or if any changes to legislation which ensures staff are competent and kept up to date with current legislation and industry standards.

"We have an officer who is basis registered and they attend seminars to look at current market products and guidance on legislation and also look at new non herbicide treatments.

"We continue to look at ways to reduce glyphosate use and were possible we will reduce usage and look at other effective solutions."

**East Lothian Council said:** "The council receive regular updates from the Amenity Forum which is the leading organisation within the UK amenity sector for promoting safe and environmentally friendly use of pesticides.

All chemicals are required to go through stringent EU testing prior to being approved for use. This EU approval process was undertaken by the German regulatory authority who gathered information, consulted experts, and commissioned research before deciding that Glyphosate continued to be safe for use. The European Food Safety Authority also arrived at the same conclusion.

On that basis, the Amenity Forum have stated that the chemical is 'able to be used without unacceptable risks to people or the environment'. Should this position change we could explore alternative solutions to meet our operational need.

Amenity Services generally have two applications per year to all shrub beds, grass channels/edges, road/footpath edges and other hard landscaped areas within public open space.

These applications are applied as a "spot treatment" to control any weeds present at the time of the visit.

All staff that are required to apply any chemicals have been trained for this purpose and hold the relevant Certificate of Competence (PA1 PA6).

It is important to balance operational need with our environmental responsibilities. The following alternative working methods have been trialled by West Lothian Council

- Thermal Treatment (hot water)
- Acetic acid (vinegar)
- Flame

The trials identified thermal treatment as the most effective of the alternative methods, however this method is significantly more labour intensive and costly.

None of the alternative methods of weed control provided any sustained results, although Acetic Acid has been identified as a potential alternative for use in preventing prostate grass growth over path edges. The trials confirmed that currently Glyphosate is the most cost effective method of weed control currently available."

**Edinburgh Council Transport and Environment Convener Scott Arthur said:**

"Weed removal is essential on many footpaths and other areas not just because they can be unsightly, but also because they can be trip hazards. Funding pressures mean the Council is

not always able to meet aspirations of residents where weed control is concerned, and the anticipated Scottish Government cuts to Edinburgh will only exacerbate this issue.”

**Ann Davie, Depute Chief Executive of East Dunbartonshire Council, said:** "The Council uses glyphosate as part of its maintenance service. It is a non-residual herbicide which primarily affects plant growth and is used to control weeds.

"The use of this herbicide is done in compliance with the manufacturer's recommendations, guidelines and applied by trained staff using appropriate equipment, and we continue to monitor the information being provided by the relevant industry advisory groups on the safe use of chemicals.

"No policy decision has been taken on the continued use of glyphosate products by the Council, but we are looking to decrease the amount of glyphosate used through a Horticultural Framework that will soon go out to tender. In this, we are asking contractors to demonstrate alternative methods and technology that will limit the spraying of herbicides."

**A Falkirk Council spokesperson said:** "All Grounds Maintenance operatives who apply glyphosate are fully qualified in the safe application of pesticides ensuring that they are able to apply glyphosate in a safe effective manner and in accordance with current legislation.

"All operatives are aware of the COSHH assessment which applies to each product, and all will wear the correct standard of PPE when carrying out this task."

**A spokesman for Glasgow City Council said:** "We have significantly curtailed our use of glyphosate with consumption reducing by 60% over the past ten years and we continue to look for viable alternatives wherever possible.

"Glyphosate will only be used in specific situations such as the control of Japanese Knotweed or giant hogweed, on weeds at the base of headstones or around bollards and fence posts or on roads or kerbstones where weeds can damage tarmac or block drains. "When the use of glyphosate is necessary, it is applied in a responsible manner by fully qualified operatives who are equipped with the required protective clothing."

**An Inverclyde Council spokesperson said:** "The products we use comply with all relevant guidelines, are licensed and deemed safe to use by UK and European Union health and safety authorities.

"We have procedures and risk assessments in place for the safe usage of such products, including training for staff who are required to use them, provision of personal protective equipment when doing so and we have invested in direct stem injection equipment to reduce the requirement for spraying where possible.

"We have also met with trade unions and agreed a number of procedures and continue to work with them to review those.

“Attempts are made to limit usage in the interests of the environment but also in terms of value for taxpayers’ money by specifically targeting only the weeds that need to be removed. “Products containing glyphosate are particularly effective in and recommended for, among other things, the removal of harmful Japanese Knotweed which can spread rapidly and have a detrimental impact on buildings and other structures if left untreated.

“It is an offence to spread – intentionally or unintentionally – Japanese Knotweed and the council is duty-bound to eradicate it from our land, especially where it could encroach onto someone else’s land and in high profile public areas.

“Our policy is to treat Japanese Knotweed by repeated application of a suitable herbicide in these circumstances.”

**Comment from a Midlothian Council spokesperson:**

“The council is reducing the use of glyphosate annually in line with our Biodiversity Action Plan and following Scottish Government guidance. We only use it for restricted spot application, except with invasive species like giant hogweed and Japanese knotweed. The council is also continuing to trial alternative weed control methods and products.

“All staff who apply weed killers are suitably trained and certificated and provided with protective clothing and equipment. Information on areas for treatment are also posted on our website, giving details of locations which have recently been sprayed, and ones we will treat in the next 10 days.

“We have also introduced a system to create new pollinator habitats in our larger open spaces, encouraging local groups to adopt these.”

**A North Lanarkshire Council spokesperson said:** “A full risk assessment for safe use to protect both staff and members of the public is in place where it is necessary to use glyphosate products to deal with weeds in public areas.”

**A Moray Council spokesperson said:** “We aim to minimise usage of herbicides by using other forms of weed and vegetation control, such as strimming and mulching of shrubberies. However, where it is required, all use of herbicides is risk assessed. All products are COSHH assessed and approved for use in the UK and Europe. All operatives take part in training briefings for new products; possess a valid pesticide certificate; chemical application log books and are provided with appropriate Personal Protective Equipment.

“There are a number of alternatives to glyphosate, however they all come with their own environmental factors, financial implications and disruption potential that must be considered when making a decision on what control measures to use, including the efficacy of alternatives. We remain open minded to suitable, cost-effective alternatives.”

**Orkney Council said:** “Glyphosate remains the most effective treatment for weeds, killing them right to the root.

“However we minimise its use and follow guidance carefully. Where practicably possible we use non chemical methods, such as path sweeping and clearing to remove debris so roots can’t take a hold.

“We follow the relevant Scottish Government ACOP – (Pesticides: Code of Practice) for using plant protection products in Scotland. This covers all aspects of treatment, including operative competency, training, avoiding waterways and drains etc.

“Staff and contractors must carry out a COSHH – Control of Substances Hazardous to Health - and risk assessments prior to use. Practical measures include PPE including full spray suit, boots and gloves. Careful attention is given to timing as well, with still weather required for application.

“We use the Nomix spot treatment system which creates negligible overspray, protecting the operatives and public, and reducing chemical release into the environment.

“We would look to phase out its use as more suitable products become available.”

**A spokesperson for Perth & Kinross Council said:** “We continue to review all our working practices and have considered all alternative options available on the professional market. We have piloted alternative weed control methods but these have been found to be ineffective and inefficient.

The UK and European Governments are scheduled to review the permissions for glyphosate use towards the end of this year and we will be following developments closely to ensure we remain compliant with all prevailing legislation. We also follow all recommended precautions to minimise risk to staff using weedkillers including full training, certification, PPE and monitoring. Our use of glyphosate is at an all-time low as we seek to proactively minimise its use.

Additionally, we have an ongoing trial scheme at present where we are changing the way we manage natural plant and grass growth across Perth and Kinross to reduce the use of weedkillers and improve conditions to support native flowers, bees, butterflies and other wildlife. Our feedback survey on this trial is running throughout October and we are encouraging members of the public to tell us what they think of the difference this makes to their local area. More details of this are available from <https://consult.pkc.gov.uk/communities/managed-for-wildlife/>. It is our objective ultimately to stop using glyphosate as soon as practically possible.”

**A Renfrewshire Council spokesperson said:** "We have significantly reduced our glyphosate usage and are in the process of phasing out its use in Renfrewshire over a two to three period, as agreed by Councillors last year.

"It is not used in our schools or public parks to minimise the risk of inadvertent contact and reduce any impact on the environment.

"All members of our teams who use glyphosate are provided with all the appropriate PPE required, have undergone full training and have undertaken risk assessments in advance.

"We are continuing to explore alternatives that minimise the impact on our environment, as we continue to do all we can to address climate change in Renfrewshire, as well as offer best value to the Council."

**A Scottish Borders Council spokesperson said:** "The use of glyphosate is licensed in the UK and our usage is in line with that. Only trained staff using the appropriate PPE use this product, and only where required.

"As a Council we have made a commitment to supporting and increasing biodiversity across the Scottish Borders, which includes adjusting our management of green and public spaces to support pollinators whilst also meeting public expectations about managing weeds in key areas."

**Kevin Carr, Head of Facilities, Waste and Grounds Services at South Lanarkshire Council said:** "South Lanarkshire Council is committed to investigating new methods of weed control and, thanks to a review of where we apply herbicides, has reduced the amounts applied for the last two years.

"At the same time, the council is actively trialling a variety of alternatives to glyphosate-based herbicides. To date these have included hot foam and steam, new way spray and pedestrian hot air machines and wire mechanical sweepers.

"We also now use wire brushes on our fleet and small mechanical sweepers for use on roads channels, in line with our duties under the new COPLAR regulations.

"Our workforce is equipped with appropriate PPE when using herbicides, and those who carry out this type of work are fully trained in effective and safe use."

**A Highland Council spokesperson said:** "Highland Council is actively looking at alternative products and methods of weed control. The Council has also successfully established five wildflower roundabouts in the Inverness area in order to provide safe havens where bees, butterflies, birds and other pollinators can thrive. Techniques are being used to maintain the roundabouts, including the restriction of the use of weedkiller, chemical sprays or other pesticides."

**A West Dunbartonshire Council spokesperson said:** “To ensure the safety of our employees and the environment, use of glyphosate is only undertaken by fully qualified and trained staff, and strictly in line with manufacturer guidance.”

**A West Lothian Council spokesperson said:** “The council is committed to minimising the use of glyphosate. This approach was taken after trialling a number of other options over the summer months in 2017, and subsequent EU Approval for the continued use of glyphosate in 2018. The trial clearly showed glyphosate to be the most efficient method of managing weed growth. Our staff are trained in the use of weed control products and suitable Risk Assessments and Safe Working Practices are in place.”