



Information and Data Protection Team
Chief Executive's Department
Glasgow City Council
City Chambers
George Square
Glasgow G2 1DU

Phone: 0141 287 1055
Email: FOI_CCT@glasgow.gov.uk

Our Ref: **EIR 7136427**

13 January 2020

Send by e-mail to: [REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

**REQUEST UNDER THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION (SCOTLAND) ACT 2002 /
THE ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION (SCOTLAND) REGULATIONS 2004**

We refer to your e-mail correspondence of 11 November 2019, in which you submitted a request under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 for information relating to the use of glyphosate and glyphosate based products by Glasgow City Council. |

As intimated in our e-mail of 10 December 2019, Glasgow City Council ("the Council") takes the view that, because of its subject matter, the information you have requested is environmental information in terms of the Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations 2004 ("the EIRs").

This means that the information you have requested is exempt from disclosure under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 ("the Act") because of the exemption contained at section 39(2) of the Act.

We believe that it is more appropriate to consider your request under the specific regulatory regime provided for environmental information, as defined in Regulation 2(1) of the EIRs. It includes measures (including administrative measures), such as policies, legislation, plans, programmes, environmental agreements, and activities affecting or likely to affect the elements of the environment, including the built environment.

Further, the Council is of the opinion that the public interest in considering your request for environmental information in accordance with the terms of the EIRs outweighs the public interest in disclosure of such information under the terms of the Act.

Regulation 8 of the EIRs allows Glasgow City Council to charge a fee for information, prior to releasing it. However, on this occasion, we are providing a response without charge.

The Council's response is set out beneath each of your questions in the Annex to this letter. Please be advised that under the terms of the EIRs a request for information can be refused where one or more of the exceptions contained within the EIRs apply. In this instance, we are of the view that exceptions apply to some of the information you have requested. We explain why certain information is not being provided in our responses to your questions.

Right to Request a Review

If you are dissatisfied with the way in which Glasgow City Council has dealt with your request for information, you can ask us to formally review this response. Please note that for a review to take place you must lodge a written request for a review within 40 working days of the date of this letter. Please include the following information:

- A correspondence address;
- The reference quoted at the top of this letter; and
- The reason(s) why you are dissatisfied with the Council's response.

Please address your request to the Director of Governance and Solicitor to the Council:

Director of Governance and Solicitor to the Council
Glasgow City Council
City Chambers
George Square
Glasgow G2 1DU

Email: FOIReviews@glasgow.gov.uk

You will receive notice of the results of the review within 20 working days of receipt of your request. The notice will state the decision reached by the reviewing officer as well as details of how to appeal to the Scottish Information Commissioner if you are still dissatisfied with the Council's response. You must request an internal review by the Council before a complaint can be directed to the Scottish Information Commissioner. For your information at this stage, if you do remain dissatisfied with the outcome of the Council's review decision, an appeal can be made to the Scottish Information Commissioner by contacting his office as follows -

Address: Kinburn Castle, Doubledykes Road, St Andrews, KY16 9DS.
Email: enquiries@itspublicknowledge.info
Telephone: 01334 464610

You can also use the Scottish Information Commissioner's online appeal service to make an application for a decision: www.itspublicknowledge.info/appeal

If you wish to submit a complaint to the Council in relation to the manner in which it has handled your request for information, you can do so by requesting that the Council reviews its response. Details of how to request a review are set out under the 'right to request a review' information.

In compliance with The General Data Protection Regulation and Data Protection Act 2018, the link below sets out how the Council handles the personal information entrusted to it. Further information is available on the Council's website, www.glasgow.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely

Information and Data Protection Team
Chief Executive's Department

Glasgow City Council's Privacy Statements: <https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/privacy>

ANNEX

“Freedom of Information Request – Glyphosate

- I would like to request all information relating to the use of glyphosate and glyphosate based products by the council. I would also like to request all correspondence, and all information relating to discussions, within the council and between the council and members of the public, regarding the use of glyphosate and glyphosate based products.*
- Please provide this information for the period January 2015 – present.”*

Records of correspondence, both internal and with members of the public, and minutes / notes from meetings relating to the use of glyphosate and glyphosate based products are not collated separately.

Regulation 10(4)(b) of the EIRs states that a public authority may refuse a request for information where that request is “manifestly unreasonable”. It is the Council’s view that complying with your request would incur unreasonable costs and would require an unreasonable diversion of our resources.

This is because we would need to identify all Officers who may hold correspondence / notes / minutes within scope of your request over the last 5 years, then ask each of these Officers to search their records and retrieve all relevant information. The contributions from each Officer would then require to be collated for this EIRs response.

In order to establish whether we could comply with this part of your request or whether it would be considered manifestly unreasonable to do so, we first carried out an exercise within the Landscape Design and Development Team to establish the volume of e-mails, notes etc falling within scope. The Team Manager alone had circa 250 e-mails, some with attachments, which were potentially within scope and would require to be checked individually.

On that basis, we are of the view that we do not have the resources to retrieve and collate the volume of information you have requested and it would place a substantial and arduous burden on the Council’s core services to respond to this part of your request.

The Council is required to have regard to the public interest in providing the requested information. Whilst Glasgow City Council acknowledges that there is a significant public interest in openness and transparency, the Council is of the view that in this case the public interest in disclosure is outweighed by the requirement to ensure the efficient and effective administration of public funds and resources. As your request would involve both significant costs and an unreasonable diversion of public resources, the Council

believes that in this particular case the public interest is best served by withholding the information.

- *Specifically, for each year (2015 – 2019), please state:*
- *The quantity of glyphosate or glyphosate based products used, in litres, and method of application*

We do not record centrally the amounts of glyphosate based products used within the past 5 years. However, we can provide you with the amounts of glyphosate based products purchased (please note this information is held by financial year):

2014/15 – 6,825 litres
2015/16 – 3,460 litres
2016/17 – 5,095 litres
2017/18 – 468 litres
2018/19 – 412 litres

Please note that we do not purchase concentrated glyphosate – the chemical glyphosate only comprises a small part of each container contents. The brand names of the products purchased in 2018/19 are Nomix and Monsanto.

The glyphosate based products that we use are applied by spraying, except when they are being used to treat knotweed, when the product is injected into the stem in addition to spraying.

- *The amount spent on glyphosate or glyphosate based products: purchase, storage and application*

The amounts we spent on purchasing glyphosate-based herbicides are as follows (please note this information is recorded by financial year):

2014/15 - £66,217.48
2015/16 - £51,632.26
2016/17 - £79,155.10
2017/18 - £36,802.40
2018/19 - £30,345.00

We have not incurred costs specific to the storage of glyphosate or glyphosate based products, as we have secure storage at all of our depots for all potentially hazardous chemical products.

We do not capture separately the staff costs for applying glyphosate or glyphosate based products. As you will be aware, the application of such products can only be carried out in dry conditions. Whilst spraying works are scheduled on daily job sheets,

works require to be re-scheduled whenever there is inclement weather or if ground conditions are particularly wet. In order to provide you with staff costs specific to the application of glyphosate based products we would require to retrieve and review the spraying files and daily job tickets held at each of our depots for every working day since January 2015, and collate all information held within scope of your request thereafter. As such, we take the view that complying with this part of your request would incur unreasonable costs and would be an unreasonable diversion of resources, and therefore, with due cognisance to the public interest, we refuse this part of your request in terms of regulation 10(4)(b) of the EIRs.

- *Where were glyphosate based herbicides used – for all weed control or only on certain surfaces / ground types / areas? If the latter, please specify where these products were used – in school grounds, parks, pavements, tree bases, flowerbeds, only on hard surfaces etc? Are there certain neighbourhoods or facilities where it was not used?*

Glasgow City Council uses glyphosate-based herbicide to control the growth of unwanted plants on:

- Grass plot edges and obstacles (around trees, bollards, fence posts, under fence lines)
 - Japanese knotweed and giant hogweed (these plants would be almost impossible to control without herbicides)
 - Road / kerb edge spraying (to prevent weed growth on road sides, since weed growth can damage tar surfaces and block drains)
 - Hard surface spraying (spot treatment to control weed growth between slabs)
 - Shrub bed spot treatment
 - The base of headstones, railings and around grass plots (* see below)
- *Number of complaints about weeds*

The numbers of complaints recorded as relating to weeds / weeding are detailed below:

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Service Requests	518	588	1553	1829	1299
Formal Complaints	28	61	49	41	77

- *Number of complaints about herbicide or pesticide use*

For the period 2015 to 2019, we hold records of 2 complaints specific to herbicide / pesticide use. In 2017 we received one complaint about a council employee spraying

pesticide and not knowing what it was. The complainant also alleged that no signs were erected to warn people that spraying was taking place.

In 2018 we received one complaint from an individual who claimed that an increase in hogweed was due to the use of weedkillers and asked “please stop using Glyphosate and other weedkillers”.

- *Additionally, please answer the following;*

Are there plans to reduce or discontinue the use of glyphosate and glyphosate based products? If so, please detail the decision making process and timescale of this, and which alternative forms of weed control are being or going to be used.

Glasgow City Council annually reviews new weed control techniques and methods, and carries out trials of new products and equipment with the aim of reducing herbicide usage where possible. Since 2012 we have reduced total annual herbicide purchase by over 50% (the quantities purchased in 2012 and 2013 were 10,626 litres and 7,000 litres). This is down to new technology in chemicals, application equipment and alterations to treatment programmes in accordance with best practice.

As part of our plan to reduce the use of glyphosate where possible, one treatment each year on Japanese Knotweed (where not growing near watercourses) is replaced by ICADE herbicide instead.

* To give you another example, we have some 40,000 linear metres of headstones, which used to be sprayed with glyphosate products. These are now routinely sprayed with non-glyphosate based products which provide a protective barrier against weeds for months at a time, reducing the requirement for glyphosate based products to spot treatment only.

We have trialled the use of Chikara herbicide, and also the use of Hot Water/Steam weed treatment system, Hot Foam weed treatment system, and Electric weed control system, so that we might better understand how they compare in relation to long-term effectiveness, and in terms of material, plant and labour costs.

At present we are not aware of any non-glyphosate-based herbicide products on the market which control a similar range of unwanted plants in a similar range of locations.

Glasgow City Council will continue to monitor the horticultural product market and will review any new products that become available.

- *What safety measures are in place to protect the worker applying the product, the public, pets, the environment, and wildlife?*

Glasgow City Council carries out the application of glyphosate based herbicides using our own trained staff.

We use COSHH (Control of Substances Hazardous to Health) assessments to inform staff on the use of Glyphosate based herbicides. All staff applying these products are qualified/trained and certified to the appropriate standard.

Copyright Notice

Please note that the information provided in response to your request is, unless otherwise indicated, copyright © Glasgow City Council 2020. It is supplied to you in terms of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002. Any further use by you of this information must comply with the terms of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 as amended and/or the Copyright and Rights in Databases Regulations 1997. In particular, any commercial use or re-use of the information provided requires the prior written consent of the Council.

Requests for such consent should be addressed to:

Colin Edgar
Head of Communication and Strategic Partnerships
Glasgow City Council
City Chambers
Glasgow G2 1DU

Email: 