

## **Information regarding Weeds/Glyphosate from the London Borough of Hounslow**

The Council has recently approved a budget to support the 2025/26 Weed Removal Programme, which includes the use of Glyphosate to treat areas of the highway where weeds are damaging the highway or are causing a nuisance or hazard to pedestrians. Spraying treatment has begun as of the beginning of July 2025 in the central areas of the Borough and we will be covering two wards per week over the next 10 weeks across the Borough.

As much as possible, since 2019, the Authority has been removing weeds using manual removal with operatives supported by mechanical sweepers, however this is a very labour-intensive process and manually removed weeds re-grow faster and more aggressively. Unmanaged weeds on adopted footways/ carriageways also pose safety risks by obstructing the footway and hiding defects, potentially causing trips and falls. They also damage infrastructure over time by breaking down asphalt and displacing slabs and kerbstones. Removing mature weeds manually can further harm the surface, leading to costly repairs and increased carbon emissions.

While weeds support biodiversity, regular removal is necessary to maintain the structural integrity and safety of public footways and roads (explained above). The Council is however, promoting a Natural Summer where sections of grass in parks will be left to grow for the Summer. A number of large highway verges were also left to grow for the month of May, and approximately 30 highway wildflower sites have been planted throughout the borough to encourage biodiversity.

The Authority through our provider has trialled alternative weed treatments such as vinegar, hot water and non-Glyphosate chemicals, including methods like Foam stream, heat lances, electric lancers, mechanical weed brushes (on mechanical sweepers, edging machines and strimmers). However, these proved less effective than managed chemical treatments, mainly due to practical challenges in urban areas, particularly the difficulty of safely deploying equipment around parked cars. Our provider is however, currently trialling five other alternative treatments for weed removal, in order that we may be able to reduce future reliance on chemical herbicides.

The main benefit of a chemical treatment such as Glyphosate is that it can be deployed effectively and economically at a rate that reduces the germination and future growth of weeds and also prevents deterioration of the highways asset. Many UK councils have taken it upon themselves to go pesticide-free, but there is no national ban on using pesticides in urban areas. Glyphosate remains approved for use until at least December 2026 ([Active substance renewal: glyphosate - HSE](#)). The concentration of Glyphosate in weed sprays for the highway is very low. Weed spray is applied during calm dry weather as windy wet weather will render the spray non-effective. The spraying is also applied directly to the weeds on the affected areas so there is no risk of dispersion to other areas of the highway.

Reviews will be conducted throughout the period of usage to determine the effectiveness of the treatment before we commit to a longer period of less frequent use as we used to prior to 2019. As we have not treated weeds for five years the first year will be quite intensive, but this will revert to standard use over time in line with accepted industry standards used across the Country by many other Councils.

Although we are spraying this year, we recognise that some residents do not want their streets sprayed for various reasons. For this, the London Borough of Hounslow and Hounslow

Highways can offer an option to residents who do not wish for their street to be sprayed and for residents to manually remove weeds themselves, and this can be facilitated with the Hounslow Highways Business Management team via Fix My Street (<https://fms.hounslowhighways.org/>).