

# Management of Weeds in Dublin City



**Action 9:** Prepare and implement a pesticide reduction strategy within Dublin City Council (Biodiversity Action Plan)



Comhairle Cathrach  
Bhaile Átha Cliath  
Dublin City Council

# Existing Situation within DCC

Weed control is almost exclusively carried out using herbicides.

Glyphosate-based herbicides make up the majority of products currently used.

Three Departments currently undertake weed control:

- Parks & Landscape Services (Direct Labour and Contract)
  - Road maintenance (Contract)
  - Housing Maintenance (Direct Labour)



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# Glyphosate Updates

March 2015:

WHO classified glyphosate as '*probably carcinogenic to humans*'.

July 2016:

EU Member States voted to restrict the use of glyphosate in the EU.

July 2016:

Glyphosate use approved for a limited time until the European Agency for Chemical Products issues its opinion on use.

January 2017:

European Commission registered a European Citizens Initiative (ECI) inviting the Commission 'to propose to Member States a ban on glyphosate, to reform the pesticide approval procedure, and to set EU-wide mandatory reduction targets for pesticide use'



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## Potentially cancer-causing herbicide used on Dublin's streets

The World Health Organisation's International Agency on the Research of Cancer has branded glyphosate as "probably carcinogenic" to humans.

Jul 14th 2015, 6:15 AM 18,436 Views 73 Comments

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Updated 15.26

A CHEMICAL CURRENTLY being used as a herbicide in Dublin could potentially be cancer causing.

The chemical, known as glyphosate but sold under the brand name Roundup, has been classified as "probably



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Photos by Louisa McGrath

THE WOMAN WHO WANTS A ROUNDUP-FREE DUBLIN

LOUISA MCGRATH » JUNE 30, 2015

### 6130 Motion in the name of Councillor Ciaran Cuffe

That this Committee call on the Chief Executive to investigate alternatives to using Monsanto's Roundup as a weedkiller given that the World Health Organisation's International Agency for Research on Cancer has stated that the herbicide glyphosate is probably carcinogenic to humans.

### Question to the Chief Executive

Council Meeting 09<sup>th</sup> MAY 2016

### Q.90 COUNCILLOR CLAIRE BYRNE CCEES

To ask the Chief Executive what type of weed spray is currently used in the City and whether there has been any consideration made to move to a more environmentally friendly type of weed spray in light of the new Biodiversity action plan.

### CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPLY:

### Question to the Chief Executive

Council Meeting 05<sup>th</sup> SEPT 2016

### Q.52 COUNCILLOR CHRIS ANDREWS

### CCEE'S

Bearing in mind the World Health Organisations (WHO) report on Roundup weed killer saying "that it probably causes cancer" will the Chief Executive outline how much Roundup weed killer DCC uses annually how much is spends annually and has it explored other options and does DCC intend to keep using Roundup?

### CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPLY:



Comhairle Cathrach  
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Dublin City Council



**From:** EMcS [emcswney@gmail.com]  
**Sent:** 18 July 2014 16:51  
**To:** [foi@dublincity.ie](mailto:foi@dublincity.ie)  
**Subject:** AIE request

**re: Request for access to records under the European Communities (Access to Information on the Environment) Regulations 2007**

Dear Sir/Madam

In accordance with the AIE regulations, I wish to request the following records from the your County Council ("the Council") regarding the use of weed killers, insecticides, pesticides and other forms of vegetation control ("chemical sprays") by County Councils.

1. The annual cost of chemical sprays incurred by the Council from 2008 - present.
2. A list of the types of chemical sprays used by the Council from 2008 - present.
3. The quantities, types and costs of neonicotinoids used by the Council from 2008 - present.

**To:** Leslie Moore; Monica Murphy  
**Subject:** FW: FOI/4566/16

Hi Les / Monica,

The enclosed request is due for reply not later than 26 February. Please forward copy of reply to this office.

**Details:**

All correspondences, documents, emails, letters, memos received and sent by DCC, including internal documents, since January 1st 2014 in relation to weed control contracts, costs of weed control contracts.

Regards,

**From:** Michael Sheils McNamee [michaelsm@thejournal.ie]  
**Sent:** 13 April 2016 14:37  
**To:** [info@dublincity.ie](mailto:info@dublincity.ie)  
**Subject:** Glyphosate vote in Germany - deadline 17.00 today

Hello,

Michael here from TheJournal.ie.

I am writing with a query about the use of glysohphate by Dublin City Council.

- Can you tell me how widely it is currently used in the council?
- Does DCC see any issue with glysohphate being carcinogenic?
- Does DCC think its approval across the EU is a good thing?

If you could get to me as soon as possible on this it would be much appreciated.

**From:** Louisa McGrath [[lmcgrath@dublininquirer.com](mailto:lmcgrath@dublininquirer.com)]  
**Sent:** 29 June 2015 12:30  
**To:** [info@dublincity.ie](mailto:info@dublincity.ie)  
**Subject:** Media query on Roundup weedkiller

Hi there,

I would like to know how much Roundup weedkiller is used by Dublin City Council each year.

And, can the residents of different areas opt out of having their street sprayed?

I look forward to hearing from you.

All the best,  
Louisa McGrath.



Comhairle Cathrach  
Bhaile Átha Cliath  
**Dublin City Council**

# Alternative Weed Control Options

**No weed control:** This requires a change in our perspective of aesthetics and a tolerance from local communities for weeds. This approach may provide Tidy District Groups with opportunities to undertake local community-led actions, akin to litter clean-ups.



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# Alternative Weed Control Options

**Prevention:** While it's not possible to prevent 100% of weed growth, there are several measures which would suppress weed growth, including a more regular cleaning programme of footpaths and gullies to prevent a build-up of growing substrates. Hand-held and Tractor-mounted weed brushes have been successfully used in other Cities.



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# Alternative Weed Control Options

**Manual Weeding:** The majority of weed-control queries relate to tall weeds, which are typically easier to control by manual weeding than low weeds or weeds in cracks/ crevices. Employment schemes, such as Gateway, provide opportunities for manual weed control.



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# Alternative Weed Control Options

**Strimming:** Strimming grass at the base of trees, walls, or in tight corners is achievable but requires extra care by the operator. Additionally, tree guards can be put in place to prevent damage to trees.



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# Alternative Weed Control Options

**Novel techniques:** Thermal weeding (flame or hot air), foam, steam, and hot water weeding, and vinegar have been trialled in different countries with various degrees of success. Novel techniques may be appropriate in certain situations, but would need to be tested on a case-by-case basis within Dublin City.



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Dublin City Council

Dublin City Council proposes a new approach to weed control in line with current best practice, involving a combination of alternative weed control options.

However a Pesticide Free Dublin will not happen overnight.



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Dublin City Council



# What are the practical implications?

Department	Current Situation	Proposed Situation
Parks & Landscape Services	Herbicides used to prepare flower beds, along grass verges, base of walls, and base of trees. Typically sprayed from knapsack.	<p>Herbicides will not be used except for the control of Invasive Species such as Japanese Knotweed.</p> <p>Mulching and appropriate plant selection to replace herbicide use in beds.</p> <p>Strimming/ manual methods to replace herbicide use at base of walls and along grass verges OR where frequency of visitors is low, grass to be allowed to grow untended</p> <p>Tree guards to be fitted and strimming as necessary OR where there are small groves of trees or where frequency of visitors is low, grass to be allowed to grow untended at base of trees.</p>



# What are the practical implications?

Department	Current Situation	Proposed Situation
Road Maintenance	Herbicides used twice annually on all public roads, laneways, footways, and medians. Typically sprayed from quads at the beginning and end of Summer.	<p>Herbicides will not be used.</p> <p>All public roads, laneways, footways, and medians to be managed once, at the beginning of Summer, using hand-held or tractor-mounted weed brushes.</p> <p>The city centre, village centres and main roads will be managed a second time at the end of Summer using hand-held or tractor-mounted weed brushes.</p>



# What are the practical implications?

Department	Current Situation	Proposed Situation
Housing Maintenance	Herbicides used three times annually on hard surfaces within housing complexes. Typically sprayed from knapsacks.	<p>Herbicides will not be used.</p> <p>Hard surfaces will be managed twice annually, at the beginning and the end of summer, using scuffle hoes and hand-held weed brushes.</p> <p>In areas where manual techniques prove too time-consuming, alternative methods, such as power-hosing, will be trialled.</p>





# What are the practical implications?

Department	Current Situation	Proposed Situation
Public Domain Officers/ Waste Management	Provision of blue bags and equipment to dispose of litter and green waste	<p>Promote and communicate these services to Tidy District groups and community, business and voluntary groups.</p> <p>To encourage groups to control weeds as part of litter clean-up days.</p>



# What are the practical implications?

Department	Current Situation	Proposed Situation
Parks & Landscape Services	<p>Promote DCC policy with regard to weed control.</p> <p>Respond to all queries relating to weed control from councillors and those received by DCC's Press Office and Customer Services.</p>	<p>A clear policy and supporting information for weed control will be provided to all councillors, area managers, and relevant frontline staff (including relevant contractors) to enable them to respond to any queries.</p> <p>A public campaign will be undertaken, aimed at changing perceptions towards the aesthetics of weeds in the City and to achieve community buy-in for this proposal.</p>



**For further Information,  
or if you have any comments,  
please contact:**

**Shane Casey**

Biodiversity Officer

Dublin City Council

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[shane.casey@dublincity.ie](mailto:shane.casey@dublincity.ie)



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