

CHIPPING NORTON TOWN COUNCIL

Pesticide Free – three year plan

Overall objectives

- To reduce and ultimately end the use of all pesticides (for the most part herbicides) by the council, its officers and contractors on all land that is directly or indirectly under its control.
- Bring in other key stakeholders to follow suit in ending the use of pesticides on land under their control.
- Encourage the general public to stop the use of pesticides in gardens, allotments and other areas.
- To make your area a Pesticide-Free Town to add to its green sustainability credentials.

The pathway to Pesticide-Free

It is not envisaged that pesticide use can be stopped overnight – in fact that notion is, in many cases, a hindrance to achieving that goal.

The journey towards becoming pesticide-free requires a phased approach under which pesticide use is gradually but steadily reduced until it is eventually stopped entirely. The time frame can vary according to circumstances but, in general, a three-year phase out period is realistic for most councils. Some of course will wish to deliver the objectives in less time which would be welcomed and encouraged. As increasing numbers of councils in the UK go pesticide-free, timescales may well become shorter as local authorities are able to share experiences and best practice. In addition, non-chemical technologies are constantly evolving and improving, making the transition to being pesticide-free increasingly easier. PAN UK has produced a comprehensive guide for local authorities that looks at some of the key issues related to going pesticide-free. It covers areas such as designing trials of non-chemical alternatives and bespoke pesticide policies, and dealing with contentious issues such as invasive species and cost implications. 'Going Pesticide-Free: A Guide for Local Authorities' can be found at the PAN UK website at pan-uk.org/pesticide-free.

This outline below provides an overview of a three year plan that a town or city may follow to reduce, and ultimately end, pesticide use:

Throughout the entire duration of the plan, communication with the public about what you are trying to achieve and why, progress made, problems and successes is vital. There are useful guidelines for achieving good public communication in the PAN UK Toolkit for Local Authorities - <http://www.pan-uk.org/pesticide-free-workshop-resources/>

Year 1

It's vital that councils have in place a clear strategy for going pesticide-free that sets a clear direction of travel and allows all actors (concerned citizens, local businesses, other land managers) to play their part. It will help not only those involved in reducing the use of pesticide but also assist residents and the wider public to understand the benefits of going pesticide-free.

Devising, and ideally publishing a strategy, is a vital first step and something that PAN UK can help with. Other measures to be implemented in year 1 are as follows:

- Undertake an audit of current pesticide / herbicide use across all sectors including, but not limited to, parks and cemeteries, streets, housing and schools.
- Devise a bespoke pesticide policy which sets out a clearly the conditions under which pesticides are being used in its area – how, where, when and why, and what measures are being taken to end or reduce pesticide use.
- Publicise the initiative through local media and other channels so the public are aware of what is planned for the coming three years
- End the use of herbicides in public parks and green spaces by the end of year one. **NB.** Our contractors are happy to work with us on this, but have stressed that at present the only way of efficiently dealing with moss/weeds on rubber mulch pathways (the safety surfacing) is with herbicides as hoes and other methods damage the surface.
- Begin at least one trial of alternatives , and ideally more, for hard surface areas such as streets and pavements
- Initiate a stakeholder forum for land managers from across the town. These can be from hospitals and other medical facilities, schools and universities, retail and shopping areas etc (see below for more detail)

Stakeholder Forum

The stakeholder forum is an important part of the process that will help the council meet its pesticide-free objective in a number of ways;

- Draw in other land managers in the area so that the council will not be operating in isolation;
- An opportunity to share experiences and learnings with others who might already be successfully implementing pesticide reduction strategies
- An opportunity to come together to understand and overcome opportunities and obstacles around going pesticide-free
- It presents the possibility of cost sharing– this could be particularly useful in terms of initial capital outlay for non-chemical alternative technologies

The Forum should meet regularly and have a clear agenda for discussions.

Year 2

This is the time to consolidate the work of year one and take things further.

- Working in partnership with members of the stakeholder forum, ensure that other land managers are working to reduce and ultimately stop the use of pesticides / herbicides in areas outside council control
- Ensure there is an ongoing dialogue with the public about progress of the project
- Organise a pesticide amnesty for the public to return unused, unwanted or obsolete pesticide products

Year 3

The final year and time to deliver the final objective

- Continue to encourage other key stakeholders to follow suit on land and areas under their control
- Organise a public event to announce your success
- Write up your experiences including problems overcome, successes, involvement of stakeholders and anything else that is pertinent. This will be a valuable resource for other areas wanting to adopt a similar approach
- On the back of your work launch a public campaign to encourage home owners, amateur gardeners and allotment holders to follow suit in reducing and stopping their use of pesticides / herbicides.