

Agenda Item 6

For decision – Using herbicides containing glyphosate to treat Japanese knotweed on Council land

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As mentioned in the parks and green spaces update, we have identified Japanese knotweed growing in two places near the town centre:

- On the riverbank near Welshmill woods (close to the railway bridge)
- On the riverbank off Henley Way (near the start of the canoe club's gates)



Japanese knotweed is an invasive and non-native plant. It is fast growing and spreads rapidly; suppressing all other plants when it shoots from early summer.

Like all other landowners, we have a legal duty to manage and control Japanese knotweed to prevent its spread:

- Under the provisions made within Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, it is an offence to cause Japanese knotweed to grow in the wild
- Japanese knotweed is also included in the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, which means that landowners failing to control knotweed on their land can be prosecuted because of the impact that knotweed can have on neighbouring properties and land

Failure to manage the knotweed discovered would also result in the knotweed spreading along the riverbank and downriver - with significant ecological implications.

Having spoken to the Environment Agency; and met with and spoken to a number of companies that specialise in the management of Japanese knotweed; we are in a position that the only viable and effective way of managing our knotweed looks to be treating it with herbicides that contain glyphosate as an active ingredient.

Glyphosate is a non-selective chemical; and one that has been linked to various health and environmental concerns in recent years. And in July 2016, the Council voted unanimously to take the precautionary step of banning the use of glyphosate-based products on FTC land.

However, we do not appear to have a choice in this instance:

- Legally - and for the good of the river and the riverbanks - we have to manage the knotweed that we've identified
- Attempting to dig out the knotweed this close to the river is not feasible
- And glyphosate is the only chemical approved by the Chemicals Regulation Division for aquatic use so close to the river

*The Chemicals Regulation Division (CRD) is the national body responsible for the regulation of chemicals including biocides, pesticides, and detergents.

As such – reluctantly – this report recommends an exception to this ban for managing and controlling the spread of Japanese knotweed on Council land.



NB. We are still having conversations to explore whether there is an alternative to using glyphosate. However, it is looking incredibly unlikely. And since we want to begin managing the knotweed as soon as possible; this report is recommending that the exception to the Council's ban is in place so a specialist contractor can be appointed in good time.

It's also worth noting that glyphosate will only be used to treat the Japanese knotweed; will only be applied by experienced and accredited technicians; and will only be applied in line with Environment Agency permissions and guidance.

Recommendations

1. Approve the use of herbicides containing glyphosate for the management and chemical control of Japanese knotweed identified on Council land in the future; including the knotweed already found on the riverbanks at Welshmill and Henley Way
2. Record that that this use is an exception to the Council's continuing policy of not using products containing glyphosate on FTC land
3. Delegate responsibility to the Environment Manager and the Lead Ranger to oversee contracts with companies to manage the knotweed
4. Delegate responsibility to the Environment Manager and the Lead Ranger to ensure that safe working practices are adopted at all times when managing knotweed