

Wembdon Parish Council

Policy for Council Use of Pesticides

Wembdon Parish Council aims to provide a high standard of grounds maintenance for its green open spaces, including the Parklands and Allotments. It is the wish of Wembdon Parish Council to promote and create as wide a bio-diversity as possible for the Parish. The ever-increasing awareness of the environment and undesirable effects of pesticides on health and eco-systems, this Policy pledges that alternative methods will be used in place of pesticides, wherever possible.

This has been triggered by growing public and national concern over:

- possible health effects of exposure to pesticides (this term is used to include insecticides, herbicides, and fungicides);
- the effects that pesticide use is having on our wildlife – the serious decline of bees and pollinators, bird species and mammals, such as hedgehogs, have all been linked to pesticide use;
- the need to protect and encourage the local wildlife e.g. bats, birds, mammals, newts, lizards and invertebrates
- the effects upon children and pets within the Parklands and other areas;
- possible contamination of water sources, where the possibility of pesticides spray drift close to water courses could contaminate aquatic wildlife.

This Policy identifies how Wembdon Parish Council will use alternatives to pesticides on sites owned by the Parish Council, including the Parklands, Allotments, lanes, hedges and foot paths. This does not include land owned and maintained by other local authorities or privately-owned land but does include land leased by the Council. Wherever possible we will encourage pesticide free practice across Wembdon.

Below is the range of non-chemical alternatives to pesticides that are available within Wembdon Parish Council's economic capacity. Other methods of weed control demand the use of expensive machinery and specialist contractors which is out of the scope of the Parish Council at present.

Manual weeding and cutting back methods:

- Scorching weeds with a horticultural weed burner weakens them, and regular use kills them.
- Strimming regularly to keep grass and weeds down, particularly before weeds seeds are produced.
- Hand weeding, particularly for smaller areas around play equipment, the wooden sculptural features and signage where children climb and play.
- Digging out tap roots of perennial and pernicious weeds such as ragwort, docks and hemlock.

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Mulching

This is a particularly useful approach in ornamental beds, around trees and under hedgerows. Mulching has the added bonus of breaking down and nourishing the soil for trees, shrubs, fruit trees and vegetables. Bark and chippings must be carefully sourced from reputable producers. Caution should also be exercised with imported chippings as this can often bring in diseased wood that could kill existing vegetation. Mulching must be sustainably sourced, natural and be untreated from non-diseased trees.

Discouraging infestations

The use of soap and water sprays or Neem oil solution are suitable for many infestations. Companion planting to encourage predators who will feed on aphid infestations e.g., tagetes planted with runner beans to deter blackfly. Micro-mesh and cloches over vegetables, pertinent to the Allotments. We need to be mindful that weeds are also feeding habits for many insects and encourage biodiversity but without them becoming pervasive.

There are instances where the use of pesticides may still be required after non-chemical methods have been found to be unsuitable. These will include:-

- Control of weeds such as Knotweed, Hemlock Water Dropwort and Hogweed.
- Control of weeds where no other solution currently exists i.e., sports turf weeds.
- Control of weeds inaccessible by other solutions.
- Control of hazardous pests such as wasp nests close to play areas and footpaths, or vermin, where the public may be in danger.

Environmental Protection Act 1990

Japanese Knotweed is classed as 'controlled waste' and as such must be disposed of safely at a licensed landfill site according to the Environmental Protection Act (Duty of Care) Regulations 1991.

The Parish Council is mindful of the above legislation but will seek to avoid the use of harmful pesticides whenever possible in dealing with 'controlled waste' under the above Act.

Where it is necessary for pesticides to be applied on Parish Council land these will be applied in such a way that it conforms fully with the latest Health and Safety Legislation, (primarily the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 (HSWA) and Pesticide Legislation (The Plant Protection Products (Sustainable Use) Regulations 2012 & Control of Pesticides (Amended) Regulations 1997). The Clerk will be informed every time pesticide has been used, and the Clerk will keep a record of the time, date, location and reason.

The Parish Council and the Ground Maintenance Contractor will need to work together closely to maintain the Pesticide free policy and conform with the above regulations.

Climate Emergency Impact: This policy contributes to the Parish Council's commitment to respond to the Climate Emergency.

Introduced March 2022. Reviewed October 2025.