

Agenda Item 12 – Weed Spraying

As agreed at September Council views were sought from residents on whether to continue weed spraying from 2026.

Views were sought via the website, Facebook and the magazine.

Details of responses set out below.

- Clear yes, continue with weed spraying – 29
- Clear no to weed spraying – 9

In addition there were also a number of comments, see below. Some of which did not specify a clear definitive answer one way or the other.

Comments received are set out below:

- Would it be possible to just spray where weeds could cause tripping hazards and footpath damage. Other places could then be left for wildlife to prosper.
- I'd like to know if a non harmful to insect spray can be used to kill the weeds along the pavement edges? It would be nice to keep the kerbs tidy and prevent future damage, but my concern is to the cost of the insects.
- a) I had formed the impression that weed-spraying was not carried out at all this year as the weeds growing along pavement edges, both road-side and property side, have been so much more prolific this year - one only has to walk along Meadow Park to see the evidence of this, look opposite the junction with Chestnut Drive for instance. Of more convenience to the Chairman perhaps, he could examine the pedestrian crossing over Silver Street at the end of Cherry Close. If weed-spraying HAS been carried out this year, it has not been done very assiduously nor frequently enough.

b) It is my strongly-held opinion that the sight of weeds being allowed to grow anywhere they like to take root is the most telling sign for passers-by or visitors to the area that the residents just don't care how scruffy their village becomes. Would residents allow their own garden patios to look like our pavements do?

c) Any suggestion that the weeds should be left to grow on pavements in order to "allow more scope for wildlife to feed" is totally spurious in a rural village such as ours. If wildlife cannot find sufficient weeds on which to feed, growing in unmanaged verges, hedgerows and all of the land surrounding our village, there is something seriously wrong with it - not a food shortage.

For all these reasons, it is my belief that not only should we continue weed-spraying our pavements but actually increase its frequency to 3 or even 4 times a year. We have 125 new properties in Fox Mill Gardens now, compared with last year, so the PC income from them should be more than sufficient to cover the increased costs without having to increase the precept. I should be pleased if you would kindly present my above comments to the PC at the appropriate Meeting.

- I think all kerbside should be done However I see people's concern regarding too much weed killing around the village.
- What are you spraying it with? Is it the stuff that kills bees?
- I understand the wildlife concerns but weeds in pavements etc are not only an eyesore but also damaging which will incur additional expense in the long-term for repairs. Please continue spraying in these places only, but also please avoid chemicals that are harmful to bees.
- Several comments saying yes, please keep spraying, keep the highways tidy , keep spraying the weeds on pavements and kerbs, do other maintenance as well as spraying.
- No spraying thank you. Poisonous to domestic pets and wildlife and it could end up in the water course when it rains.
- Pesticides, herbicides damage wildlife and the environment. No to spraying.
- Glyphosate, the most common pesticide used, is toxic to wildlife, pets and humans. Best not to spray.
- Nothing wrong with weed spraying they've don't it for years so why stop.
- We need some sort of control otherwise there will be no paths to walk on eventually!
- In my opinion, the footpaths, edges of the roads etc. should be sprayed to keep the village looking tidy. I've noticed this summer, where/when weeding has not been done, the village looks scruffy, untidy and unwelcoming. I believe the larger, wider verges, can be used for wildlife and 'natural' wildflower areas. I've seen this done in other towns and it can look quite attractive. Maybe a handful of wild seeds that have colourful flowers in them would give a helping hand to nature? It's lovely to see the bright red poppies, contrast with the blue cornflowers, thistles and yellow and white daisy like flowers, among other coloured flowers. Thank you for what you and all the Councillors do for the Parish.
- In my view the weed spraying should continue as I do like it to be kept tidy and for residents and families walking around the village, they should be able to do this without walking over overgrown weeds and in some cases then walking in dog excrement that they've not noticed.
- I think the positive impact of such weeds on local wildlife is minimal compared to the negative effects on our environment. In particular there seems to be a real problem with littering around the village and if weeds are allowed to flourish in pavements and roadsides I feel this is almost giving the signal that we are giving

up on taking care of our locality and that littering is just another aspect of that and therefore ok. So, keep spraying please!

- Personally I am in favour of spraying kerb edges and wall bases where the roots of these sometimes fast growing plants can damage the concrete and tarmac in a very short time. I am very wildlife aware, but we are lucky to live in quite a country area, with plenty of food nearby for our wildlife in our hedges and fields.
- The Parish Councillors must remember their responsibility towards biodiversity and the environment when making their decision and also to be aware that they would not be breaking the mould if they decided to stop weed-spraying as the movement by local authorities and councils is progressively away from weed spraying and there's plenty of justification for doing so which easily outweighs any "complaints" which may arise.
- roadside weeds.... we feel they should be sprayed and fall into the “try to keep things looking nice” camp. I am struggling to see much of a benefit to wildlife given the obvious pollution from motor vehicles not to mention the run off from adjoining land. Besides, there is plenty of vegetation throughout the village, particularly given the lack of mowing in some areas, not to mention overgrown banks and hedges. Weeds growing out of the roadside and the pavements just look so unsightly and suggest that no one can be bothered, what does it say about our village..... not really much of a “welcome to Willand”! Maybe, those who are able, could do their little bit, if it is possible and the health and safety police don't stick their beak in.....

Of the village population only a relatively small number of people responded and of those the majority wish to see weed spraying continue.

Cost of Weed Spraying

A draft specification accompanies this paper.

The estimated cost based on weeds being sprayed twice a year is £1,600 plus VAT per annum. If a different specification is required costs will differ, quotes to be obtained if it is decided to continue with weed spraying in accordance with any specification agreed.

Devon County Council will no longer contribute to the cost. In recent years a contribution of £700 has been made annually from the County Councillor Locality Budget.

Decision and Other Considerations

The Parish Council must now decide on whether to continue with weed spraying from 2026.

As well as resident's views, the Council should consider the following in making its decision:

1. It is Devon County Council not the Parish Council who has the statutory duties relating to public highways, footpaths and pavements.
2. The Parish Council has a legal duty under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 and the Environment Act 2021 to consider what it can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity in relation to the land and property it is responsible for, the services it provides and the decisions it makes.
3. A balance will be required between competing concerns to achieve an appropriate outcome.

Debbie Bird
Willand Parish Clerk
November 2025