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Your Ref:

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Frank Jordan
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Dear Colleague,

Weed Spraying Policy

In April 2023, the Council changed its operational policy in relation to the removal of weeds. The purpose of the change was to achieve two goals;

1. To improve the natural environment and biodiversity by reducing the use of chemicals that can have a detrimental environmental impact.
2. To reduce the running costs of the operations as part of the overall need to reduce costs across the Council as part of its budget planning process.

The policy change moved the Council away from carrying out cyclic chemical spraying of road edges, channels and footpaths to a risk-based approach where we will remove weeds where they present a hazard to road users. We will however pre-treat weeds ahead of any works that we undertake such as resurfacing or slurry sealing.

Generally, weeds are not a safety issue for road users. They can be unsightly but do not affect their safety unless they build up significantly to become a trip or visibility hazard. When we are made aware of concerns by the public and communities, we will assess the risk the reported weeds present and then determine what action to take.

We are, however, assessing the effect of the policy change and how it was implemented. We do recognise that the County Council should have engaged with its partners in district and parish councils more effectively at the time when this policy change was being considered, and then when it was implemented, and that is something we wish to improve upon.

In addition, now we are coming to the end of the growing season we are reviewing the impact of the change in both rural and urban areas. We will be considering changes to our approach when we have the assessment results and presenting this to members so that this can be considered further as we prepare the budget for future years.

In undertaking this review, we will engage with district and parish councils to better understand the impacts of the policy and what changes we could make to improve our approach in the future. We will therefore be writing to all parish councils and districts with a survey which will ask for evidence to be provided as to what the impact has been in their areas and how this has created additional risk and safety issues on the highway.

I appreciate the time taken by our partners in highlighting this issue and I want to provide assurance that we wish to engage with you as we undertake the review of this policy change.

In the meantime, where there are locations reported to the Council where weed growth is seen to be a problem, these will be inspected and, if required, action will be taken to remove them.

Yours sincerely,



Frank Jordan.
Executive Director of Place and Sustainability.