

Report on the issue of Weeds around the Corfe Castle village

Pre-survey Investigations

The following are some of the alternatives to spraying with herbicide chemicals:

- a. Prevention
- b. Hand weeding
- c. Non-toxic household chemicals – vinegar, salt and soap mix or baking soda
- d. Thermal heat lance / torching

Weed Survey

On Thursday 3rd March 2022, Cllr Helen Sumbler and Cllr Melanie Roberts surveyed a sample of the village roads, see Appendix A.

The following areas of the roadside were considered:

1. The junctions between the road and the kerb / verge;
2. The junction between the road and the adjoining house / wall / fence / hedge / verge where there is no pavement;
3. The pavement itself;
4. The junction between the pavement and the adjoining house / wall / fence / hedge.

Generally, the majority of the areas surveyed were clear of weeds, although it is recognised it is early in the year. However, there was a considerable accumulation of soil / organic matter / debris in the majority of areas, which provides a suitable environment for weeds.

There were small annual weeds growing in some areas, with some perennial weeds, e.g. dandelions and thistles, also starting to grow. In a few spots, there was dead growth from last year's larger weeds.

It was obvious that a lot of residents maintain the area of pavement / verge directly outside of their property.

Recommendations

- a. Prevention is selected by Council as the preferred option, by preventing, as far as practicable, the accumulation of soil / organic matter on the roadside. This could be achieved for areas 1 and 2 by road sweeping and / or gulley clearance, and for areas 3 and 4 by the caretaker or residents undertaking manual clearance of areas 3 and 4, loosening using shovel / trowel / brush and removing debris from the roadside.
- b. Hand weeding is selected by Council as the second option, with the caretaker and parishioners clearing the annual and young perennial weeds from areas 3 and 4. This could include clearance of weeds from reserved parking places in West Street car park.

- c. For any areas where hand weeding is unsafe, impractical or ineffective, the use of non-toxic household chemicals is selected as Council's third option, for use by both the caretaker and parishioners.
- d. The use of a thermal heat lance / torching by the caretaker or a competent contractor is selected by Council as the final resort for the most pernicious / inaccessible weeds.
- e. Chemical herbicides are not used by Council unless a significant weed problem develops as a result of the use of the alternatives above.

Actions

1. Contact Dorset Highways to ask what their road sweeping and / or gulley clearance regime is, in terms of roads swept and frequency of sweeping.
2. Review the response from Dorset Highways for actions to address any roads where areas 1 and 2 are not covered by their road sweeping and / or gulley clearance regime.
3. Schedule a weekend in April for a voluntary village working party to carry out weed clearance of areas 3 and 4, possibly combined with litter picking too, to tidy up the village ahead of the Jubilee celebrations. (Note – need to understand what is required in terms of insurance, risk assessments, etc).
4. The caretaker is to target over the next month or so any places where areas 3 and 4 will not be covered by parishioners or which are clearly the Parish Council's responsibility, e.g. by the West Street notice board, West Street Car Park public areas, the pavement outside the library, following the recommendations above to address weeds.
5. Advertise in CVN following:
 - The recommendations from this completion of this task, in terms of how to deal with weeds in Corfe Castle village.
 - Suggested instructions about how to use non-toxic household chemicals and the source of those instructions (website links);
 - Details of the scheduled working party and a request for volunteers;
 - A request that village residents clear and weed the area of pavement / verge directly outside of their property ahead of the working party;
 - A request that village residents let the Clerk know if they are unable to clear and weed the area outside their property, so volunteers can be allocated to help with this for them on an ongoing basis;
 - Any areas in the parish that parishioners suggest are left wild, to provide homes and food for wildlife.
6. Council considers whether we create, or ask Dorset Council to provide, signs for the wild areas in the village, so it is clear these have been deliberately left wild.
7. Ask Synergy Housing to weed the junction between West Street and Springwell Close.
8. Carry out repeat survey, probably in May, to monitor the state of weed growth in the village.

Appendix A – Survey area

