

# A proposal for a pesticide free Rochdale

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## Introduction

*“It is ironic to think that man might determine his own future by something so seemingly trivial as the choice of an insect spray.” Rachel Carson, **Silent Spring**, 1962.*

In the past 12 months there has been research and articles that have built up a case against the use of pesticides due to its effects on human health and the health of the living planet. This proposal will argue that based on this evidence the use of pesticides should now cease in Rochdale.

Due to this growing evidence Labour members Ana Kozomara and Adam Williams (Environment Officer for Heywood & Middleton) present this proposal to Rochdale council, which covers all aspects of the threat of the continued use of pesticides as well as information, contacts, and advice on how Rochdale can transition away from pesticides into a healthy and environmentally sustainable future.

Despite the potential costs involved, this proposal will show that if we do not transition now the cost to insects, wildlife, and human health will be far greater in the future, and will negatively impact the health & wellbeing of generations of Rochdale constituents to come.

Everything in this proposal will be referenced and there will also be the contact details of experts, and those that have already helped councils transition, all of whom have given their permission to be contacted by Rochdale council at any time.

Please note that all information on Monsanto has come from external sources that have been documented. Neither Adam or Ana have investigated Monsanto independently and only use the material for contextual reasons.

For the record, Monsanto are currently appealing any convictions and continue to deny that glyphosate causes cancer.

## Effects on Biodiversity decline

As Heywood and Middleton Environment officer, I first became aware of the alarming death rate of bees when I was contacted by a number of residents who lived in Alkrington, Middleton, around 12 months ago. This shocking revelation told me three things. 1) Insect decline is as local as looking out of your window 2) People care about this 3) I have no idea what is causing this.

Therefore, for the past 12 months I have gone on a shocking journey of discovery, which has been bolstered by events that have not only made national news, but has also culminated in parliamentary debates. Please see our very own Liz McInnes, who put forward my concern on this in Parliament. <sup>1</sup> Thankfully these many developments have meant that rather than this being a marginal concern of those who would consider themselves to be 'environmental', it has now become an issue of our very survival.

First of all, I just want to be clear that insect decline is due to a number of factors, of which pesticides is just one. If we were to list them they would roughly be:

1. Habitat loss as a result of human development, deforestation, and the expansion of agriculture
2. Pollution, particularly via pesticides, fertilizers, and industrial wastes
3. Parasites and pathogens — like the viruses that attack honeybees — and invasive species
4. Climate change (though this also relates to number three as increased temperatures can increase parasite and pathogen numbers)

Though some may argue against the positioning of each of these factors, none can argue that whatever order we put this list in, all of these factors need to be tackled as a matter of urgency if we are serious about the future we want for our children. Therefore, we need to look at what Rochdale can achieve and the transition away from pesticides is certainly one thing that can be done.

'We have a new global tally of the insect apocalypse. It's alarming.'

Insects play a foundational role in food webs and ecosystems and they are vanishing at a rate faster than mammals, fish, amphibians, and reptiles. Research now indicates that as much as 40 percent of all insect species may be endangered over the next several decades, and around 41 percent of all insect species on record have seen population declines in the past decade.<sup>2</sup>

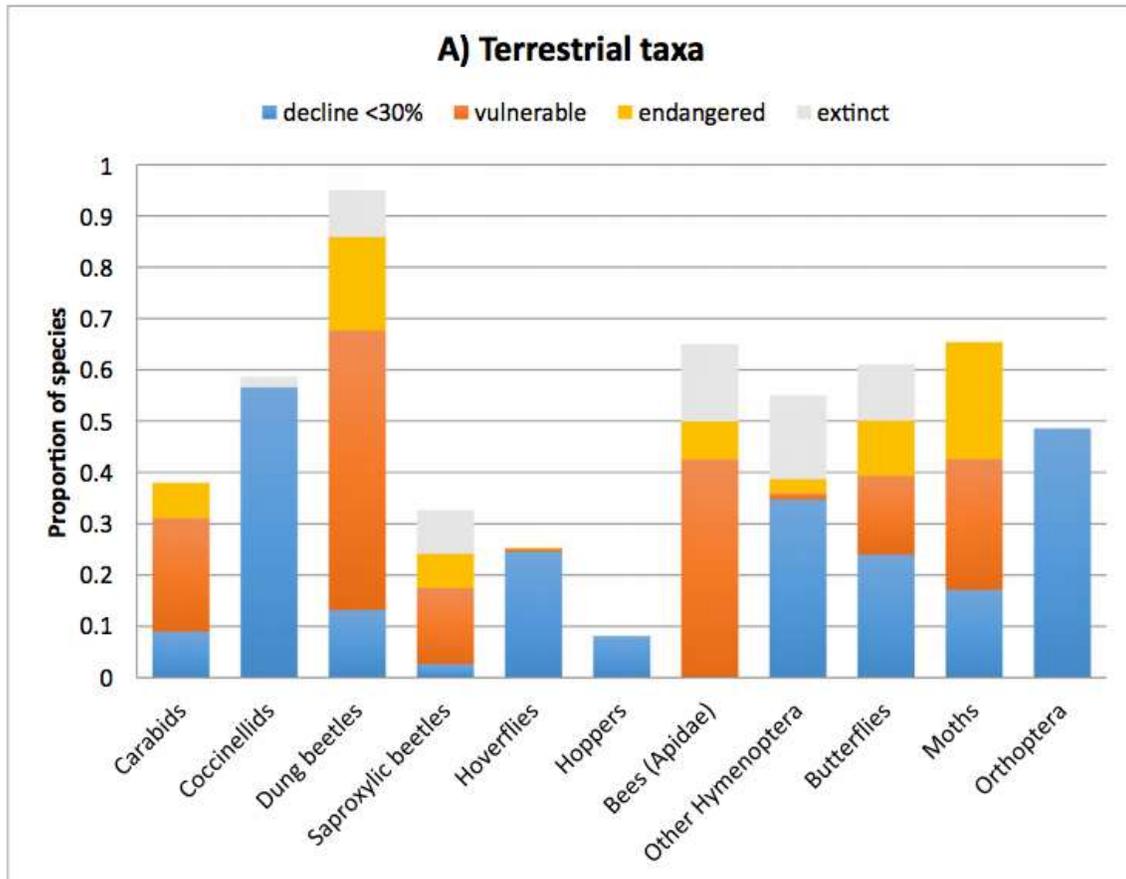
Butterflies and moths, known as the Lepidoptera order, are some of the hardest hit: 53 percent of Lepidoptera have seen declining population numbers. This is especially concerning as butterflies,

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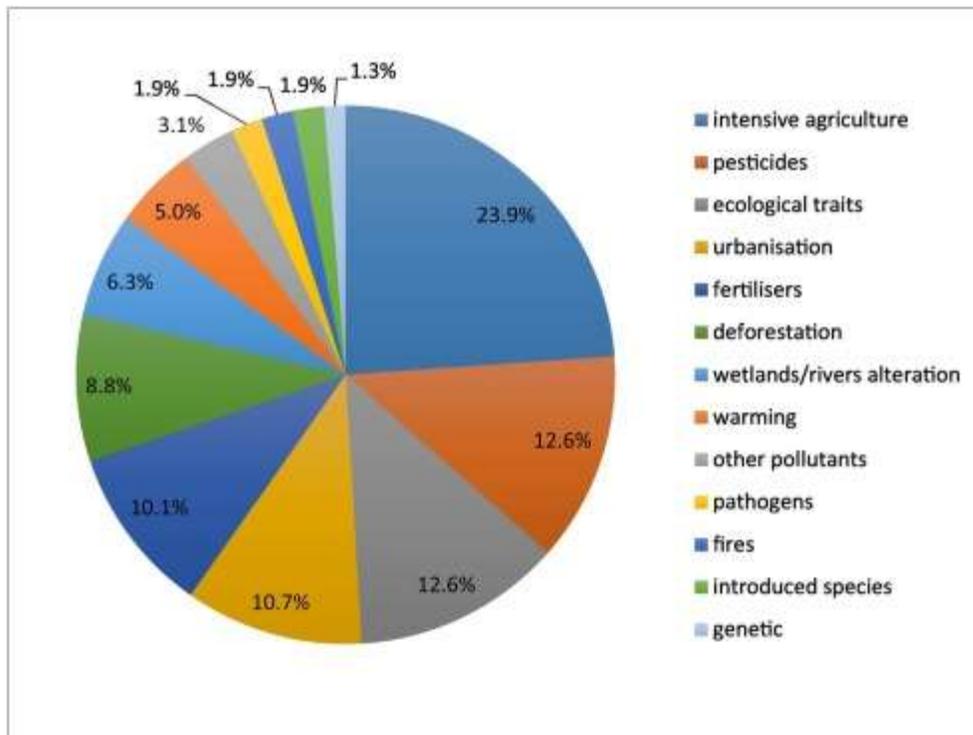
<sup>1</sup> <https://www.theyworkforyou.com/debates/?id=2019-02-21a.1586.0&s=>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/feb/10/plummeting-insect-numbers-threaten-collapse-of-nature>

which are very sensitive to changes in landscape and food sources, are often a bellwether of environmental health. Some 50 percent of Orthoptera species (grasshoppers and crickets, another important source of food for an enormous array of animals) are also in decline, and forty percent of bee species are listed as vulnerable for extinction.



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Though pesticides may be shown here in second place, intensive agriculture actually implies the systematic and widespread use of pesticides for controlling crop pests (insecticides), competing weeds (herbicides) and fungal infections (fungicides) among others.<sup>4</sup> In terms of toxicity, insecticides are by far the most toxic to all insects and other arthropods, followed by fungicides.<sup>5</sup>

Pesticides have caused the decline of moths in rural areas of the U.K<sup>6</sup> with broad-spectrum insecticides reducing the abundance and diversity of beneficial ground-dwelling and foliage-foraging insects<sup>7</sup>; systemic insecticides reduce populations of ladybirds and butterflies in gardens and nurseries<sup>8</sup>, and inflict multiple lethal and sub-lethal effects on bees<sup>9</sup> and other arthropods.

<sup>4</sup> N. Dudley, S. Alexander. Agriculture and biodiversity: a review. *Biodiversity*, 18 (2017), pp. 45-49.

<sup>5</sup> R. Mulé, G. Sabella, L. Robba, B. Manachini. Systematic review of the effects of chemical insecticides on four common butterfly families. *Front. Environ. Sci.*, 5 (2017), p. 32.

<sup>6</sup> L.P. Wickramasinghe, S. Harris, G. Jones, N. Vaughan. Abundance and species richness of nocturnal insects on organic and conventional farms: effects of agricultural intensification on bat foraging. *Conserv. Biol.*, 18 (2004), pp. 1283

<sup>7</sup> J.G. Lundgren, L.S. Hesler, S.A. Clay, S.F. Fausti. Insect communities in soybeans of eastern South Dakota: the effects of vegetation management and pesticides on soybean aphids, bean leaf beetles, and their natural enemies. *Crop Prot.*, 43 (2013), pp. 104

<sup>8</sup> V. Krischik, M. Rogers, G. Gupta, A. Varshney. Soil-applied imidacloprid translocates to ornamental flowers and reduces survival of adult *Coleomegilla maculata*, *Harmonia axyridis*, and *Hippodamia convergens* lady beetles, and larval *Danaus plexippus* and *Vanessa cardui* butterflies. *PLoS One*, 10 (2015), Article e0119133

<sup>9</sup> J.D. Ellis, J.D. Evans, J. Pettis. Colony losses, managed colony population decline, and Colony Collapse Disorder in the United States. *J. Apic. Res.*, 49 (2010), pp.

Fungicides are not less damaging to insects, and synergism of a particular group of compounds (i.e., azoles) with insecticide toxicity is certainly involved in honey bee collapses.<sup>10</sup>

The analysis of 353 wild bee and hoverfly species found the insects have been lost from a quarter of the places they were found in 1980. A third of the species now occupy smaller ranges, with just one in 10 expanding their extent, and the average number of species found in a square kilometre fell by 11. A small group of 22 bee species known to be important in pollinating crops such as oilseed rape saw a rise in range, potentially due to farmers increasingly planting wild flowers around fields. However, the scientists found “severe” declines in other bee species from 2007,<sup>11</sup> coinciding with the introduction of a widely used neonicotinoid insecticide, which have since been banned in the E.U.

According to a respected study published in 2017<sup>12</sup> The biggest factor in the decline in pollinators is due to the destruction of wild habitats and the use of pesticides as farming has intensified. But the analysis also revealed a particularly big drop of 55% in the range of upland bee and hoverfly species, and significant falls in northern Britain, which may result from climate change making conditions too warm.

This is why insect declines are so alarming – not because they could disappear altogether, but because they perform fundamental roles that enable the rest of the ecosystem – including us – to function. Pollination is often the first function to spring to mind. Indeed, according to the most up-to-date analysis of the dependency of our global food system on insect and animal pollination suggests that around three quarters of global food crops rely on them to some degree.<sup>13</sup> Ants for example help in the dispersal of around 11,000 species of plants.<sup>14</sup> These make up about a third of our food, including most of the food from which we get our vitamins and minerals.

But bugs perform other functions too: spiders, ladybirds and wasps – to name a few – act as pest controllers, preventing the populations of insects such as aphids or mites from destroying crops. In fact, studies argue that the job these tiny predators do protect at least 10% of all food production.<sup>15</sup> And that’s not all. Insects are fundamental to the food web, providing food for birds and animals, who also play an essential role in recycling nutrients. For example, when a mammal dies, flies and wasps quickly arrive. They eat its flesh and feed it to their larvae or when their eggs hatch, they turn into maggots which eat the meat. The protein in the meat gets broken down and returns to the soil, where it can be taken up by plants.

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<sup>10</sup> N. Simon-Delso, G.S. Martin, E. Bruneau, L.-A. Minsart, C. Mouret, L. Hautier  
Honeybee Colony Disorder in crop areas: the role of pesticides and viruses. PLoS One, 9 (2014), Article e103073

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/press/news/180228>

<sup>12</sup> <https://science.sciencemag.org/content/356/6345/1393>

<sup>13</sup> <https://royalsocietypublishing.org/doi/10.1098/rspb.2006.3721>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/may/07/humanity-must-save-insects-to-save-ourselves-scientist-warns>

<sup>15</sup> <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/een.12247>

Everything is connected.

Habitat restoration, coupled with drastic reductions in agro-chemical inputs and pesticide decline are the best ways to stop further decline in insect populations. If we don't act immediately the repercussions this will have for the planet's ecosystems are catastrophic to say the least, as insects are at the structural and functional base of many of the world's ecosystems.

Inaction is not an option.

### **Further Reading**

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/feb/10/plummeting-insect-numbers-threaten-collapse-of-nature>

<https://www.vox.com/science-and-health/2018/10/17/17985282/insects-puerto-rico-biodiversity-mass-extinction-pnas>

<https://www.pnas.org/content/115/44/E10397>

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0006320718313636>

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/may/07/humanity-must-save-insects-to-save-ourselves-scientist-warns>

<https://science.sciencemag.org/content/356/6345/1393>

<https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/press/news/180228>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-47698294>

## Effects on human health

In this section, I will focus on the effect of glyphosate on human health. Glyphosate is the most common herbicide used in the world. This first non-selective herbicide was invented and commercialised by Monsanto in 1973. As of 2016, a formidable 9.4 million of tons have been sprayed into the fields worldwide<sup>16</sup>. Glyphosate is now ubiquitous in the environment, with it being present in soil, air, surface water, groundwater, food and our urine<sup>17</sup>.

Since the beginning of its use its effects on human health have gradually come under increased scrutiny. While Monsanto continues to deny that glyphosate is causing any health hazard to humans, there is now a growing body of evidence to refute that claim culminating in the 2015 report by the International Agency for Research on Cancer finding that glyphosate is “probably carcinogenic to humans”.

So, let’s start at the beginning. What is IARC? IARC, the International Agency for Research on Cancer, is an intergovernmental agency forming part the World Health Organisation of the United Nations<sup>18</sup>. It is the highest and the most official authority in the world conducting the research into the causes of cancer. In its monograph 112-10<sup>19</sup>, comprised of a meta-analysis of dozens of studies on humans and animal models, glyphosate has been classified as **probable cancerogene**. Since its publication in 2015, IARC has claimed to have “suffered unprecedented large-scale attacks on its reputation from the agro-chemical industry”<sup>20</sup>. These claims have been since corroborated by the revelations related to the recent lawsuits of cancer patients against Monsanto (see the part *Lawsuits*).

This is logical, if infuriating. Agro-chemical industry is a powerful lobby who will defend their financial interests, without being interested in how it is going to harm the consumers. I understand that. However, now that the research has been done, and verified, it is surely now time that governing bodies see through these interests and take action. Once more, I want to remind you that we are not talking here about some NGO, or lobbyist eco-group, we are talking about the UN body for deciding on matters of cancerogenes.

What is non-Hodgkin lymphoma?

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<sup>16</sup> <https://www.newsweek.com/glyphosate-now-most-used-agricultural-chemical-ever-422419>

<sup>17</sup> EPA (1993a). Reregistration Eligibility Decision(RED):Glyphosate. EPA738-R-93-014. Washington(DC): Office of Prevention, Pesticides And Toxic Substances, Office of Pesticide Programs, United States Environmental Protection Agency.

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.iarc.fr/>

<sup>19</sup> <https://monographs.iarc.fr/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/mono112-10.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> [https://www.iarc.fr/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/IARC\\_response\\_to\\_criticisms\\_of\\_the\\_Monographs\\_and\\_the\\_glyphosate\\_evaluation.pdf](https://www.iarc.fr/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/IARC_response_to_criticisms_of_the_Monographs_and_the_glyphosate_evaluation.pdf)

The most common cancer found to be associated to the use of glyphosate is a Non-Hodgkin Lymphoma (NHL). Lymphoma is a type of cancer that develops in lymphocytes (type of white blood cells which are a part of our immune system). The cells start developing in an anarchic manner, defying the control systems of the cell regulation and proliferation. They proliferate to the detriment of other cell types invading other tissues of the body such as bones or brain. Around 14 000 people with NHL are diagnosed in the UK every year<sup>21</sup>.

The **most common early symptoms** of Non-Hodgkin Lymphoma (*NHL*) include:

- Swollen lymph nodes
- Abdominal pain
- Chest pain
- Fatigue
- Breathing difficulty
- Night sweats
- Fever
- Virus infection
- Unexplained weight loss

Typical treatment for non-Hodgkin lymphoma includes chemotherapy, immunotherapy, radiation, targeted therapy, biological therapy and even stem cell transplant. It is a dangerous, painful, and often fatal disease.

## Lawsuits

Since we started writing this proposal there have been three consecutive trial wins for families taking on Monsanto. Obviously, they are all pyrrhic victories as all the claimants are either terminally ill or suffered debilitating consequences of the heavy treatment that had to be used to fight the cancer. Therefore, it is with great sadness and distress that I will describe two of these cases here. But it has to be done, as at least the terrible or fatal consequences that these people and their families had to suffer as a result of the usage of glyphosate can serve as lesson and experience not to be reproduced.

Only days ago, a jury in California has ordered Monsanto to pay more than \$2bn to a couple, ruling that they were liable for their non-Hodgkin lymphoma.<sup>22</sup> This is the third, unprecedentedly high, compensation that has been awarded in Monsanto glyphosate trials so far. It is significant to underline that the couple involved in the case, Alva and Alberta Pilliod, were not professional gardeners or anything of the sort. They used glyphosate simply to landscape their garden. Though I will discuss this point in detail further on, Alva & Alberta's case destroys the myth that only professional chemical workers are at risk. Alva was diagnosed in 2011 with

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<sup>21</sup> <https://lymphoma-action.org.uk>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2019/may/13/monsanto-cancer-trial-bayer-roundup-couple>

systemic non-Hodgkin lymphoma in his bones that spread to his pelvis and spine. In 2015, Alberta was diagnosed with brain cancer.

The first person to ever have won a court case against Monsanto with relation to glyphosate is Dewayne Johnson, in 2018. However, this father of three has paid the ultimate price - he is dying from non-Hodgkin lymphoma without any hope of recovery. Mr. Johnson is a former school groundskeeper and was a first man to take Monsanto to trial on accusation that the company knowingly hid the cancer risks of glyphosate use. Due to the evidence of experts as well as evidence that showed how Monsanto had known and suppressed the dangers of glyphosate for years, Johnson was paid \$289m in damages.<sup>23</sup>

In his work as a school groundskeeper, Mr. Johnson started using glyphosate (as RoundUp) in 2012. He used protective gear and read the instructions. But there were occasional leaks and his skin twice became accidentally drenched. It took 2 years of the use of this product for Mr Johnson's skin to develop rashes. Soon after marks on his face and frightening lesions appeared throughout his body. The rest is history, the doctors diagnosed him with a non-Hodgkin lymphoma.

To this date there is an estimated 13400 similar glyphosate cancer cases pending in US state and federal courts <sup>24</sup>. To my knowledge, no claimants have lost the case against Monsanto so far and the main argument for the victories was that the company knew about the dangers but chose not to make it public (including the label on the product lacking warning). One of the facts that the enquiries related to those lawsuits have uncovered is - after court ordered to unseal the internal company emails and communication - is that the company has<sup>25</sup> :

- 1) Been aware of the dangers but chose not to make them public, misleading the public as to the safety of their products.
- 2) Put pressure on scientist to "ghostwrite" the studies in favor of glyphosate by their own employees only adding scientist's name to the publication
- 3) Company had roughly \$17M dollars budget for PR related to IARC and their finding about cancerogenicity of glyphosate (IARC is International Agency for Research on Cancer and I talk about it in the previous section)

After reading this, it is surely not worth the risk to workers, who may also accidentally spray or spill glyphosate on their skin, to continue working with such a hazardous chemical. And what about the areas in which pesticides are sprayed? Alva and Alberta Pilliod case shows us that even the non-professional use can lead to life threatening and debilitating cancers. Therefore, whatever the dose, can any council guarantee that their constituents are not at risk? As a Rochdale constituent myself I cannot see how the use of pesticides can now continue and I truly believe that if other residents knew they would agree, especially as we are essentially talking

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<sup>23</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2018/aug/10/monsanto-trial-cancer-dewayne-johnson-ruling>

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2019/may/13/monsanto-cancer-trial-bayer-roundup-couple>

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2019/apr/10/edwin-hardeman-monsanto-trial-interview>

about a process to keep pavements looking neat and tidy. Surely this is now a risk too high to take?

I sincerely hope that the information that Adam and I have documented will be enough for the leaders of the council to make a decision to eradicate the use of life harming chemicals, and embrace a healthier and more sustainable way of dealing with weeds.

People have already made the parallel between the glyphosate use and the use of asbestos, and that is how I think about it today. It is my belief that several years from now, not unlike in asbestos case, it will be unthinkable that we casually used this chemical to make our green surfaces look nicer, whilst putting the lives and health of people at serious risk of horrid and incurable illness.

Let's not be among the last ones to change but among those who led the way.

## Precautionary principle and legislation across Europe and the world

The UK claims it takes a precautionary approach when it comes to protecting the health of human, animal, and plants<sup>26</sup>. However, the continued use of glyphosate seems to be evidence to the contrary.

Due to the concise nature of this proposal I will list only the core tenets of this principle

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/aboutus/meetings/>):

- Intuitively, precaution should be easy – the proverbial 'better safe than sorry'.
- Although the precautionary principle was originally framed in the context of preventing environmental harm, it is now widely accepted as applying broadly where there is threat of harm to human, animal or plant health, as well as in situations where there is a threat of environmental damage.
- The precautionary principle should be applied when, on the basis of the best scientific advice available in the the time-frame for decision-making:
  - there is good reason to believe that harmful effects may occur to human, animal or plant health, or to the environment; and
  - the level of scientific uncertainty about the consequences or likelihoods is such that risk cannot be assessed with sufficient confidence to inform decision-making.

EU regulation states on action and inaction with regards to precautionary principle:

*“Actions are interventions that are undertaken before harm occurs that seek to avoid or diminish the harm. Actions should be chosen that are proportional to the seriousness of the potential harm, with consideration of their positive and negative consequences, and with an assessment of the moral implications of both action and inaction. The choice of action should be the result of a participatory process”<sup>27</sup>.*

The use of glyphosate certainly looks like a violation of this principle in the face of the evidence that I have provided. That evidence should be sufficient to ban its use.

I also would like to stress the fact that in EU law, by which UK still abides, the application of the precautionary principle has been made a statutory requirement, meaning that not respecting it could lead to litigation.

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<sup>26</sup> <http://www.hse.gov.uk/aboutus/meetings/committees/ilgra/pppa.htm#ref3>

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.precautionaryprinciple.eu/>

## **Alternatives. Transition. Initiatives. Community groups.**

The good news is we don't need pesticides. I'll repeat.... the good news is WE DON'T NEED PESTICIDES!

This fact is actually amazing. Just imagine for a minute if we had realised the damage that pesticides were doing, but that nobody had any other ideas or alternatives and so we were forced to just continue?! Well either through luck, fluke, or design I am pleased to tell you that we are not in that place, we are in a place where alternatives do exist and all that is needed is the courage to face up to what needs to be done and the political will to put in place the infrastructure and funding to make it a reality..... easy!

So how do we achieve it?

Fundamentally, at the most basic level, there are three essential processes that need to take place:

- 1) **Consultation** - Meet the experts. Discuss the alternatives. Become informed of the benefits. Make contact with councils that have already transitioned. Discuss how to allocate the funds needed.
- 2) **Transition** - Formulate an effective plan. Become logistically astute. Respect the seasons when cutting and weeding. Respect the weeds that are actually beneficial to biodiversity. Don't fear trial and error.
- 3) **Educate** - Councillors, Rochdale constituents, schools, community groups....everyone! It is essential that everyone understands the gravity of the situation and the aspirations of the council to protect Rochdale constituents.

When it comes to the experts the best place to begin is to contact Pesticide Action Network UK (PAN UK). Their website is excellent and PAN UK have already successfully helped a number of councils to make the transition will be essential in helping to understand the issues that councils may have. From my experience Nick Mole is the person to speak too, and having spoken to Nick on a number of occasions I know that he will be thrilled to hear that Rochdale want to add their name to those councils that want to become responsible actors in the reduction of pesticides.

The most established council to have stopped using pesticides is perhaps Hammersmith & Fulham, who, led by Labour Cllr Wesley Harcourt, made the transition in 2017. Wesley is great

and eager to help spread the word, and both Wesley and his colleague Lesley Gates are happy to answer any questions regarding costs and transition.

Closer to home, Trafford council passed a motion on the 20th March of this year to become pesticide free this year, after the great work done by Green Cllr Dan Jerrome. The motion was Item 10.c on the council agenda, of which details can be viewed here:

<https://democratic.trafford.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=122&MId=2684>

Dan is very honest in that there is now a lot of work to be done and he is also consulting with Hammersmith & Fulham council, as well as PAN UK, in making sure that Trafford now transitions away from pesticides in the quickest time possible. Dan was really pleased to hear that a Labour led initiative was happening in Rochdale and is more than happy to have cross party support for the greater good.

In regards to alternatives, there are a number of technologies that are now on offer from steam to an organic based foam that concentrate on weeds without leaving harmful chemicals and which have no effect on biodiversity. Jeremy Winer, Weedtechnics, is great to contact on the different methods used.

Contractors of these alternatives are Serco, Weedfree, & Idverde, using machinery from Weedtechnics.

In regard to cost, an Idverde rep, Clive Ivil, emailed me to say that the cost of operating Foam stream will rely on the following:

- · Purchase or lease of a suitable vehicle to transport the foam stream machine. We use 3.5-ton flatbed vehicle.
- · Purchase of the foam stream machine which varies depending on how many you purchase and the quoted price from the supplier
- · Cost of the foam, again varies depending on the quantity you purchase and price quoted.
- · Cost of water used if metered supply (standpipe licence etc)
- · Cost of labour, two staff required, one driving the vehicle with the second operating the lance. Obviously costs vary depending on hourly rates being paid.

Clive has also offered to show Rochdale the foam stream working on site, if required.

I have attached the details of everyone mentioned,<sup>28</sup> as well as others who have knowledge in this area. All of them are more than happy to help in the transition and give advice on costs.

To fully embrace the challenge of the loss of biodiversity as well as empowering local communities to become a vital part of this process, I want to highlight two separate initiatives that really could enhance what Rochdale would be trying to achieve.

The first is a version of the seven-mile, wild flower, 'bee corridor', formed of 22 meadows sown through parks and green spaces in London<sup>29</sup>. This is a direct response to the loss of biodiversity in London and could be a fantastic project that involves people of all ages to get involved with.

Another initiative in which constituents could play an important role is through community weeding. Cllr Pat Dale and I were recently invited to Whalley Range by a community group, known as 'The Whalley Rangers' who have convinced their council to let them weed their own area. After the council were satisfied that the group were serious, they gave funding for the group to acquire tools and equipment needed to do a good job. The day Pat & I were there was the group's first attempt and two things really struck me. The first was just how easy it is to weed street weeds with the correct tools, and secondly, the people that we met along the way seemed really grateful for what the Whalley Rangers were doing and the reasons why they were doing it. Helene, the lady that is running the initiative, explained why certain flowers such as dandelions (French for lion's teeth, due to their leaves) needed to be left until they have fully flowered and she believes that the area will probably need weeding around 6 times a year. This is a scheme that needs committed people but must surely be offered at the very least to any residents that want to take matters into their own hands and begin re-connecting to the land on which they live. Helene is happy to give advice on how they got started, the cost of everything, and would happily accept people coming down and seeing first-hand how it is done.

When I asked Helene to give me a brief overview of the project, she replied,

*'We expect to demonstrate that weeds in urban areas can be suppressed in a way that is beneficial to the environment, improves the look of our streets and involves local people being active to improve and maintain their own neighbourhoods. We would also expect that the streets concerned will be kept cleaner, from both litter and detritus, as a result. We will encourage and support further tree base planting.'*

Helene also provided me with a breakdown of what the council funding went towards.

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<sup>28</sup> This information is on the council version of this proposal only. This is the only information that is omitted from members.

<sup>29</sup><https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/sevenmile-bee-corridor-coming-to-london-to-boost-declining-population-a4132796.html>

The Tools: -

Hand Patio Weeder  
Long handle weeding knife  
Hoe and cultivator hand  
Dutch Hoe  
Stiff broom  
Hand shovel  
Antibacterial soft warm gloves  
Children's gloves  
Street cleaning carts  
Refreshments x 4 sessions  
Large Thermos Flasks  
Printing Publicity  
Metal Storage  
Contingency

**Contact information (for councillors and council workers only)**

Contractors & equipment questions

Idverde - [Clive.Ivil@idverde.co.uk](mailto:Clive.Ivil@idverde.co.uk)

Serco - [Info.sercolocalgovernment@serco.com](mailto:Info.sercolocalgovernment@serco.com)

Weedfree - [Sharron.Phillipson@weedfree.net](mailto:Sharron.Phillipson@weedfree.net)

Weedtechnics - [jeremy@weedtechnics.com](mailto:jeremy@weedtechnics.com)

Councillors

Daniel Jerrome (Green Party Cllr for Trafford) [Daniel.Jerrome@trafford.gov.uk](mailto:Daniel.Jerrome@trafford.gov.uk)

Wesley Harcourt (Labour Cllr for Hammersmith & Fulham) [wesley.harcourt@lbhf.gov.uk](mailto:wesley.harcourt@lbhf.gov.uk)

Transition support and information

Nick Mole (PAN UK Policy Officer) [nick@pan-uk.org](mailto:nick@pan-uk.org)

Lesley Gates (waste contract manager for Hammersmith & Fulham) [Lesley.Gates@lbhf.gov.uk](mailto:Lesley.Gates@lbhf.gov.uk)

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## **Websites**

<http://www.pan-uk.org/>

<http://www.weedfree.net/>

<https://www.weedtechnics.com/>

## **Further Reading**

<http://www.weedtechnics.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Winer-J-Holistic-weed-control-The-Weeds-Network.pdf>

## Conclusions

Adam and myself have written this proposal to the best of our abilities and in good faith on the subject's importance to the constituents of both Rochdale and the U.K. Granted, we are not professional policy makers, lobbyists or lawyers, but believe we have put forward a strong case for change. Though Adam works for a homeless charity in Manchester, he has a Masters in Critical Theory and has been concerned with environmental issues for almost a decade. He is also passionate about citizens taking the lead in actions that they are passionate about as he believes that knowledge comes from all levels, not just top down. For my part, I am a researcher in life sciences (genomics, Manchester University) and am familiar with scientific method, genomics, statistics and epidemiology. Adam's and my knowledge and experience put together has allowed us to understand the underpinnings of the findings and effects of glyphosate on human health and on the drastic decline in biodiversity. We are presenting this proposal as Rochdale constituents who are seriously concerned about the effects of Pesticides on our kids, Adam has two young sons and I am currently with child. Hopefully, what we provide here will be taken seriously and will be enough for Rochdale council to begin transition to become pesticide free as soon as possible. As Adam has already let members know of this proposal in his past reports, members will also get to read our findings and who I know will be fully supportive of the transition. From this moment, Adam and myself will be fully engaging with members in discussion as we both feel so passionate about this, even more so now that we have researched it in detail. Now that you have read it I genuinely hope you feel the same.

I will conclude by telling my personal experience with glyphosate and why its widespread use got me so worried.

I have never knowingly been in direct contact with glyphosate, I eat lots of organic food and I am a vegetarian (meat is more likely to contain traces of glyphosate because of the animals being fed by GMO that have been sprayed with glyphosate). I always considered myself as someone who has very little contact with synthetic pesticides/herbicides. I found out I was pregnant earlier this year. Reading in newspapers about the high profile lawsuits from glyphosate victims and seeing it being freely sold in our local supermarket or used by the old lady next door to keep her garden herb free (without gloves!) made me uneasy. I decided to test myself for the presence of glyphosate in my own body. I sent my urine sample to a lab that does this test. The results came back a couple of weeks later and I was taken aback. I tested 0.7 mg/l. Without going into details, I will just say that this is not very low! Moreover, I realized that, shockingly, there is no research to say what is the safe level of glyphosate in the body! And finally, it has pointed to a scary fact: no matter what I do, and no matter how hard I try, my baby, before even being born, will be exposed to glyphosate and I will not be able to provide protection for him. The same goes to thousands other women that are pregnant in Rochdale and in the UK. Amidst the growing fears of early exposure to chemicals being the cause of the rise in children cancers (around 30% rise

over the last decade<sup>30</sup>), highly publicized victories of glyphosate victims, and whole countries banning its use, I can't help but wonder : what are we waiting for?

I am impatient to hear your answer and looking forward to help in constructive and creative ways we can move things forward.

21 May 2019  
Ana Kozomara

Before writing this proposal I thought long and hard about whether I had chosen the correct topic on which to focus my energies. Being concerned about the natural environment in 2019 can sometimes feel like the weight of the world is bearing down on you, as there are so many issues that need dealing with. Massively reducing carbon emissions, air pollution, plastic, expanding airports, coal mines, the role of nuclear power, retro fitting, fracking, the list goes on and on. However, the aim of any proposal was always to focus on what Rochdale can literally do to make the greatest impact on one of the biggest issues that we face today.

What made me take up the eradication of pesticides was down to a number of factors. The first was that Rochdale council had already decided to stop spraying pesticides, reduce cutting, and begin planting wildflowers on most of its grass verges. This decision, which I was told was due to concerns about declining bee populations, made me believe that we now have councillors that are ready to take the decline in biodiversity seriously. The second was that I was contacted by fellow Labour member Ana Kozomara, who began educating me on the effects that pesticides were also having on human health, information that was so shocking that I immediately asked Ana if she would help and write about what she knew.

If those two factors set this proposal on its way, halfway through writing, a report was released that confirmed to me that biodiversity was by far the most important issue that needed to be highlighted and that alternatives to pesticides must be brought in as soon as possible.

On May 6th, a 40-page summary was released by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystems Services (IPBES), regarding a study based on around 15,000 scientific and government sources and compiled by 145 expert authors from 50 countries. The global report, which was commissioned by the U.N, was the first comprehensive look in 15 years at the state of the planet's biodiversity and included, for the first time, indigenous and local knowledge as well as scientific studies. Released in full, it is a vastly detailed study containing over 1,500 pages.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/science/2016/09/03/modern-life-is-killing-our-children-cancer-rate-in-young-people/>

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.ipbes.net/assessment-reports>

What this devastating research revealed was that the very bonds that hold nature together may now be unravelling, as up to one million species are currently at risk of extinction.<sup>32</sup> Although this figure covers many levels of species, the study shows that insect decline is especially concerning as insects are the foundation of all life and the support system from which all other species grow.

When asked about the effects of a planet without insects, leading insect expert, Dr Alexandra-Maria Klein from the university of Freiburg said,

*“It’s hard to say because I don’t know what’s happening in the future and how much genome editing we have or how many other solutions we have, but at the moment I would say without insects we will not survive for a very long time.”*

Pointing to the soil crisis as a major threat, which is perhaps not surprising given that 95% of our food comes from the soil,<sup>33</sup> with the UN warning that the world’s topsoil may vanish within 60 years,<sup>34</sup> Doctor Klein added,

*“Don’t think about pollinators, think about soils organisms and all these functions that are in the soil. When we don’t have the insects or the organisms there, then the soils are not functioning anymore. And then we have a really intensive agricultural landscape, without any organisms in the soil, any organisms above soil. It will not function at one point, and then it is not possible to produce any crops.”<sup>35</sup>*

Having now read this proposal, and so understand the catastrophic consequences of what inaction on biodiversity would mean, I hope you agree that it is now time for Rochdale to put an end to the use of pesticides and in doing so take the first step on our road to recovery.

Adam Williams (Environment Officer for Heywood & Middleton CLP)

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<sup>32</sup><https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/2019/05/ipbes-un-biodiversity-report-warns-one-million-species-at-risk/>

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.fao.org/global-soil-partnership/resources/highlights/detail/en/c/1173662/>

<sup>34</sup><https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/earth/agriculture/farming/6828878/Britain-facing-food-crisis-as-worlds-soil-vanishes-in-60-years.html>

<sup>35</sup><https://energydesk.greenpeace.org/2019/05/06/nature-crisis-biodiversity-dangerous-climate-change-extinction/>