

Amenity FORUM



Promoting Best Practice in the Sector

July 2016

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Chairman's Introduction

This newsletter, produced half yearly, aims to provide an update on some of the Forum's activities to a wider readership as well as to our members.

The Amenity Forum is the voluntary initiative for the sector and in the last six months has seen continued progress in its activity and impact. The emphasis throughout this diverse and important sector remains on gaining commitment to best practice, demonstrating the highest standards as well as understanding and applying integrated solutions. That way the sector can stay in control and ensure that we maximise the choices available for weed, pest and disease control. We also seek to communicate to the wider public how important and essential the work is and how it impacts on the safety and sustainability of our amenity spaces in whatever form. There remains more to do here and we all have a role to play. In 2016, the Forum has a special project ongoing looking to increase the profile of weed, pest and disease control under the theme of "Important and Essential". We need everyone to play a part in this.

The amenity sector is important. We need to take pride in it and ensure its impact is fully recognised and understood by all. For further information on our activities, and to access our guidance notes and other information, please visit our [website](#) or [contact us](#). Also if you know of others who would like to receive our newsletter, or indeed, if you would like to become a member of this important Forum, please let our Secretary, [Alan Spedding](#), know. The Forum seeks to demonstrate that, through voluntary action and initiative, the sector can regulate itself and drive up standards. It is vital that we have the support of all who operate in this important and diverse sector. It is far better that we achieve these objectives ourselves than have them imposed upon us. The Amenity Forum is recognised by national Government and other key stakeholders as the voice for the sector on these matters. We certainly would welcome your support in promoting best practice and ever improving standards. We are better together.

John Moverley

Professor John Moverley
Independent Chairman



Objectives of the Amenity Forum:

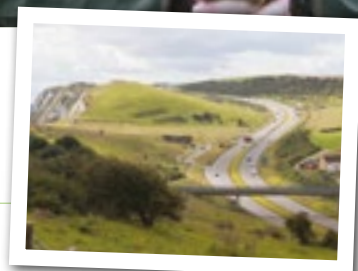
To promote and encourage proper and responsible use of pesticides and integrated methods to control pests, weeds and diseases.

To lead, coordinate and encourage achievement of "Best Practice" objectives in amenity pesticide use.

To coordinate and encourage the establishment of sustainable qualifications, training and CPD activity, specifically for the amenity sector.

To organise activities within the Amenity Forum membership and linked organisations, such that Amenity Forum objectives are developed in a coordinated way.

For further information, please visit our website: www.amenityforum.co.uk or email our Secretary alan.spedding@amenityforum.net



Conference 2016

Last year's annual conference, with its exhibition area, had a record attendance and provided much opportunity for updating, debate and networking. It has become very much a must attend event for all involved in weed, pest and disease control at whatever level.

This year's event is to be held on **Thursday, October 13th at the Pirelli Stadium, Burton on Trent**, home of newly promoted Burton Albion.

Full information on the programme, speakers and our supporters is available in our [on-line brochure](#). Due to external support and our non-profit making status, delegate rates are kept as low as possible. They are £65 but only £50 if you apply before September 1st.

Our Free Updating Events

This year we held a total of 12 events across the UK. These are half day events with a strong focus on updating and addressing current issues and challenges. The key focus of this year's programme was on policy updating and legislation change and the why, what and how of integrated control and keeping updated and fully trained. There was also information on the new requirements for sprayer testing. In all, a total of just over 450 registered for attendance and it was great to have our first event in Northern Ireland.

We are pleased to report that we will be holding such events again in early 2017 and, if you would be interested to host an event, [please let us know](#).

Say It Loud and Proud

We need to explain and be proud of our sector and what we do. How many supporters when going, say, to a rugby match comment much on the quality of the pitch, unless, of course, it is not up to scratch? By contrast, they do comment vociferously on the standard of refereeing, playing and team management! We need a strong outward facing message.

The Amenity Forum has embarked upon a special project seeking to increase the strength of communication and taking out the positive message. We seek to highlight what we do, why we do it and the professionalism of those involved. We feel that it is an essential task and we seek the support of all our sector at whatever level and from all parts of its diverse activity. An example of a public facing leaflet entitled '[Keeping the Trains Running](#)'

can be found on our website and we continue to add to these. However, in addition to our efforts, each and everyone involved, ground staff, supervisors, managers, purchasers, local authorities etc., have a key role to play. It is an important and vital task. Public opinion can be very much influenced by media stories and coverage. We must be bold in stating the facts and seeking argument to be based on the science and evidence. How many people when boarding a train recognise that, without weed control on the track, their journey would be impossible? Proper weed, pest and disease control is essential and important for public safety and sustainability of amenity areas.

Let us be proud of what we do and demonstrate our professionalism.



Pesticides in the News

There have certainly been a number of news stories affecting the sector of late. These have included the continuing tale of the re-approval of glyphosate (see later), the withdrawal of chlorpyrifos and, in particular, the impact on airports and sports surfaces, endocrine disruptors, etc.

Our pleas would be that such reports are based upon proper science and evidence and not just reviews of a wide range of work on the topic with no weighting given to whether it is good or bad research. All it does is create alarm. Nobody involved in weed, pest and disease control would wish to use something that is dangerous to health but we need to deal with facts and proper process. Ending up with unsafe and unhealthy amenity areas because of a

lack of ways to control weeds could pose much greater risks to human health.

However it is very important that all involved in operations do so with best practice living up to [the Forum's Golden Rules](#). It is important and, not to do so, impacts on us all. The Amenity Forum is very pro-active in responding to such matters. We cannot always make things right but we can seek to influence and lobby and ensure matters are addressed fairly and properly. Always, we try to give straight answers based on the best available science and evidence and focus on getting this across to those with influence on policy. We do not go out to grab the headlines – we think this can be counter-productive but believe our approach is right and has been successful.

SALTEX 2016

We have been invited once again to host our popular **Question Time session at SALTEX on November 2nd at the NEC at Birmingham.**

John Moverley will also be part of a panel on the 3rd November debating the future after the European decision in June! IOG are valued members of the Forum and we are delighted to have been invited.



Website

The amount of traffic (hits) on our [website](#) is substantial and continues to increase. It is a vital element of our activity. The re-vamped site has been well received as also the re-structured guidance material aiming to make it easier to access and link it directly to the [Ten Golden Rules](#). The site has dedicated home page sections for news, events, guidance and members – these link to further pages, with more detailed information. There are also links to the Forum's Twitter account and a dedicated member section. You have to join to access that!

Over the coming weeks, we will also be adding to our website and [Facebook](#) pages, one page leaflets of two types. You can also get links to these if you follow us on [Twitter \(@AmenityForum\)](#). The first set will be aimed at increasing public understanding of the reasons for weed, pest and disease control in specific amenity situations. The second set will be internal facing seeking to inform those who operate in our sector of the key dos and don'ts.

Thanks are due to our webmaster, Gary Harland from Wakefield Council, who spends many hours of his off duty time to maintain and improve the site.



Follow us on twitter.com/AmenityForum



Glyphosate

Developments continue on this topic and by the time this is read, matters may have moved on. However the Forum's most recent statement on the matter is as follows:

Glyphosate has attracted a great deal of attention in recent months, largely prompted by reports identifying it as a possible carcinogen. This brief note seeks to summarise the current position.

Before coming to market, any chemical for use in weed, pest and disease control has to go through an extensive approval process under EU regulations which considers every aspect of the safety of the product and the risks of using it as well as its effectiveness. Indeed the process is much more thorough than that applied to many other products such as cleaning agents for example. If approved, the product has to be reviewed on a regular basis and certainly within a set time period. This process is overseen by the EU pesticide review programme.

Glyphosate was already due for review when the stories relating to its possible carcinogenic effects were publicised. The German regulatory authority took the initial lead in assembling all the information, consulting experts, commissioning research etc. Earlier this year, both the German regulatory authority and the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), concluded that glyphosate was safe to continue to be used. The EU review was extended/broadened from its original schedule to include a review of the IARC work which first raised the possible carcinogenic link but this did not result in any changes to the EU's findings. So, on the basis of all known facts, we can at this point in time say that, even the extremely conservative/precautionary EU regime views glyphosate as being able to be used without unacceptable risks to people or the environment.

The final stage of the formal process is for national experts sitting on the Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed (Phytopharmaceuticals Section) to vote to adopt

or reject the Commission proposal by at least a qualified majority. They met earlier in the year but decided not to take the issue to a vote given other business. This week they voted on the matter but were unable to confirm a decision. Whilst it is understood that only one country voted against, there were a number of abstentions which made the rules for a qualified majority not possible. The UK voted for re-approval. The matter is now to follow an appeal process.

The challenge for the EU is that the full process of review, agreed by them, has recommended re-approval and not to confirm that decision could lead to legal challenge. This is especially pertinent as failure to make a decision by the end of June would mean that glyphosate could not be used after that date, having significant implications not least financial to operators and the public. It needs stressing that the formal agreed review process has shown glyphosate to be safe for use. There have been recent debates in the EU Parliament and elsewhere expressing a range of opinions on both this and pesticide use generally. However it is important to always look at these matters based upon the science and evidence. Nobody could support unsafe use of chemicals but, as described, a due process of review for glyphosate has been thoroughly undertaken and declared it safe.

Our view is that all decisions should be based upon the science and evidence and the established review process conducted has been very thorough and rigorous and followed correctly and rigorously. The Amenity Forum is the voluntary initiative for the amenity sector recognised by Government which promotes best practice and an integrated approach to weed, pest and disease control and ensuring all methods and options are considered for any specific situation. Pesticides, including glyphosate and others, used correctly and according to recommendations are important elements in ensuring safe and sustainable amenity areas and proper control also results in significant environmental benefits.

Integrated Approaches

A key message within the National Action Plan, implementing the Sustainable Use Directive in the UK, is a need to adopt integrated approaches. Before addressing weed, pest and diseases problems, it is important to consider all the control options available. In this context, it is important to stress that integrated does not mean no pesticides; however it seeks everyone to fully consider all options – chemical and non-chemical – and make appropriate use of them to maximise effectiveness and efficiency. Within our membership are organisations who provide non-chemical approaches as well as chemical solutions and, on our website, [there are guidance notes specifically designed to assist all involved to draw up Integrated Management](#) plans and we hope shortly to have a standard pro-forma available to help you make the right approach to it all.

Water Matters

Aside from the implications of the [Sustainable Use Directive](#) and the accompanying National Action Plan, the sector is also facing up to the challenge of implementation of the [Water Framework Directive](#) and related matters.

The standards sought for water quality are high and it is important that everyone understands the implications in controlling weeds, pests and diseases close to water courses and the like.

The Forum is ensuring our voice is heard in all these discussions, working closely with the relevant agencies and other key stakeholders. It will be one of a number of key areas for discussion and debate at our conference on October 13th.

Purchasing Pesticide Products

The requirements and legislative requirements have changed. It is important to make clear that anyone purchasing a pesticide for professional use must ensure that it is applied by a properly certificated operator. The legal responsibility is on the actual purchaser and that responsibility cannot be delegated. This is important especially in situations such as local authorities for example where procurement officers often purchase. The legal responsibility is on them.



The Value of Membership

There are certainly no shortage of issues and challenges for all involved in weed, pest and disease control. Never has there been a time for the sector as a whole to stand together, keep abreast of developments and demonstrate that through it voluntary action, it is committed to best practice and continuing to drive up standards.

The Amenity Forum is your voluntary initiative and your voice on all matters concerning weed, pest and disease control. We have substantially increased our membership and support over recent years but more is to be done. There are areas of activity under-represented which weakens our case when seeking to influence. When asked about the benefits of membership of the Forum, I often describe it in three key points.

- It is about protecting your future – providing a co-ordinated approach to issues and concerns and demonstrating the sector's professionalism and commitment to best practice.
- It is about keeping up to date and being involved in debate and discussions.
- It is in being part of a professional network of all involved in our diverse and important sector.

In the Forum, all pay the same membership fee and all have an equal voice. If you are involved in any aspect of weed, pest and disease control, do consider joining and supporting. The next few years are set to be challenging and we need to ensure that, wherever we can, we stay in control. We are a lean and mean organisation determined to keep our costs as low as we can and maximise the benefits. We rely on voluntary input in many areas and we are making a real difference.

Amenity Sprayer Operator of the Year

The judging for this year's prize is underway but having seen the entries I know that a group of winners of as high a standard as last year will emerge from the rigorous judging process.

Announcements of the winners and runners up will be made at this year's conference on October 13th.

We couldn't have run the Awards without the sponsorship of ICL and Syngenta ably supported by BASIS so we are very grateful to them. Also thanks are due to Geoff Wilson and his judging panel. The award wouldn't have happened without Geoff's enthusiasm and energy.

Amenity Register and Amenity Assured

The new BASIS Amenity Training Register was launched towards the end of 2014 and replaced both the previous BASIS Register and the NASOR scheme of City and Guilds. We now have one combined scheme which has sought to address previous concerns. What is required now is for everyone to support it and importantly get engaged. We need to demonstrate to Government and others that we are serious in our intent to keep updated and not just say the words.

The same sentiments apply to the Amenity Assured Standard. We are pleased to see more and more people who are responsible for specifying amenity work and engaging contractors, see Amenity Assured as an essential requirement. If organisations hold the standard, they demonstrate their compliance and commitment to required operation levels and customers can feel confident that they are engaging with professional organisations.

WORKING WITH PARTNERS

The Forum has limited resources. We rely upon voluntary input and working with partners to make things happen. The Forum has been, and continues to be, grateful to supporters for their help in provision of resources and finance.

Without such assistance we would not be able to develop our activities and take out the message of best practice. Such support assists with the design and composition of both this newsletter and our updates to members.

It includes those members who provide meeting facilities throughout the year and our supporters of the annual conference, all of which are listed and featured on the conference pages on our website.

We are always seeking the right opportunities to work with sponsors. If you can help, please do contact us.

From Our Committees

In order to undertake its work, the Forum has a number of sub groups and committees. A description of these is given below. Minutes and relevant papers are available to member organisations via the special section of our website.

Our Board – the Amenity Forum operates as a non-profit making organisation with a business structure as a company limited by guarantee. Our Board currently comprises members of the committee previously known as Governance. Elections to our Board will in future be considered annually at the appropriate full Forum meeting. The Board will have the normal company duties and responsibilities. It is also responsible for ongoing revision of, and making recommendations, to enhance the functionality of the Forum. It helps gauge the needs of the organisation to develop and evolve the appropriate structure and monitors financial matters. The full Forum will remain as the central decision making body for the organisation. As members know, the Forum has also made application to gain charitable status.

Education & Skills – is responsible for detailed consideration of the wide range of education and training matters affecting and impacting upon the sector.

Communications – this group does what it says – it assists in improving communications and contributes to the planning of events and similar activities.

Amenity Development Group – this brings together a range of representative organisations seeking both to consider longer term developments to assist in strategic thinking and to further extend partnership working across the sector.

Chairman’s Concluding Remarks

The amenity sector is important and essential. It has great diversity and impacts on everyone. We should be proud of what is undertaken.

Please support the Forum – your recognised voice on such matters – and continue to demonstrate professionalism and best practice at all times.



Newsletter designed and supported by **Bayer**

Taking Out Our Message

The Forum continues to contribute articles and give presentations at a range of events and it has been a very busy period of late. No matter though as it takes out the message wider and wider. Copies of any PowerPoint presentations used can generally be found on our [website](#).

We also have received a great deal of press coverage on a range of topics. If you seek a speaker for an event, or require article material, please contact our chairman, [John Moverley](#), this is very much core to our objectives of promoting best practice across all the sector.

We issue press releases on a regular basis to our press list but always seek to develop this. If you are involved with, or know of publications or areas of news, please contact our Secretary, [Alan Spedding](#).

From the Secretary

Alan Spedding, our Secretary, writes;

Forum membership has increased steadily to 65 organisations currently with a further 7 observer members who support our objectives. Many of these members give freely of their time serving on our various committees and in other ways, quietly helping to get things done with their advice and contacts. We couldn’t operate without their help.

We represent the sector better now than we ever have but there are still many working in the sector who are not on board – and should be! The greater our membership the more power we have to represent the sector politically but also in improving standards for our customers. So if you know of organisations that should be with us twist their arms and get them to join or just [drop me a line](#) and we will chase them up.



Have you got items of news or views of interest? Please do let us know. Alan Spedding regularly circulates information on a variety of issues and advances, guidance, and event information to members. If this would be of interest, please consider joining the Forum.

John Moverley

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