



Promoting Best Practice  
**Annual Report 2017/18**

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# An introduction from our Chairman

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**Professor John Moverley OBE**  
Independent Chairman

*John Moverley*

**The Amenity Forum is the voluntary initiative for this essential and diverse sector. What happens in amenity impacts upon every UK citizen every day.**

Weed, pest and disease management of amenity areas is vital to ensure public safety and health and to provide surfaces fit for purpose whatever the user. **The Amenity Forum promotes best practice and is recognised as the national voice on such matters.** It seeks to ensure all aspects of the sector are represented and strives to continue to drive up standards to meet both legal and voluntary requirements and targets established by Government in their implementation of European Directives. The UK amenity sector sets a very high standard and is proud of its achievements.

This report refers to some of the activity over the twelve month period to 30th June 2018. It also looks ahead at some of the challenges and opportunities.

**“The UK amenity sector sets a very high standard and is proud of its achievements.”**

# Objectives of the Amenity Forum and how they are delivered

The key objectives can be summarised as follows:



To promote and encourage proper and responsible use of both chemical and integrated methods for the control of pests, weeds and diseases.



To lead, coordinate and encourage achievement of “Best Practice” objectives in weed, pest & disease management.



To ensure that all practices are sustainable and protect the environment with minimised risks to public health.



To run a communication programme to support these aims and to promote the image of the sector among stakeholders and the public.



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.

To achieve these the Forum’s principal activities involve:



Production of best practice guides principally via the web site, publications, newsletters, articles etc.



Implement a communication programme increasing awareness of why amenity management matters and impacts upon every UK citizen



Dialogue with government, media, stakeholders, etc. Influencing and more.



Production of a regular Newsletter and Chairman’s Update.



Organisation of seminars, workshops and our conference.



Regular email update service.

# Some key achievement in this reporting period

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**This has certainly been a year full of change, challenge and opportunity. There is much going on at policy level with the Government publishing its 25 year environmental plan and ongoing consultations about its implementation and impact.**

A review of the National Action Plan is also proceeding; related to the Sustainable Use Directive. **Out of change inevitably comes challenge - but the professional Amenity sector is robust and ready.** There is much to be proud of in the professionalism of our sector and the Amenity Forum can report on real progress and achievement over the last 12 months. We have expanded our activity and reached out to increasing numbers of organisations, stakeholders and the public in promoting good practice and providing appropriate guidance to all involved.

We recognise there is more to do and it is important to embrace everyone in this; but we are moving forward strongly. In looking at progress against current National Action Plan targets, again there is much to report. A recently published Pesticides Forum report highlighted many of these. We advocate an integrated approach to weed, pest and disease management examining all the options in any particular situation – cultural, mechanical, biological and chemical. The use of approved safe chemical products often remain the most effective and efficient way of management. However, it is important to always ensure they are used in a targeted way by professional operators to minimise use whilst gaining effective control.

**The opportunities ahead are great. Amenity management is an essential element of everyone's life.**

## **1. Increased participation & membership**

The Forum is independent and those organisations who join as members, and thus give essential financial support for our work, do so to demonstrate their **commitment to best practice and the highest professional standards.** They commit to demonstrating to Government and others that the sector can deliver to the highest professional standards and meeting targets set in the National Action Plan arising from UK implementation of the Sustainable Use Directive. Our members, on joining, agree to abide to our code of conduct. We seek to draw membership from all sub sectors of amenity. Growth in membership over recent years has been high and, at time of writing, we have 66 organisations. These include manufacturers, distributors, contractors, local authorities, water companies, greenkeepers, groundsmen and more. A full list can be found on our website.

Members fully contribute to our wide range of activities and engage in consultations and networking. The Forum is often described as a 'lean and mean' organisation and voluntary contribution to our work is a vital element to our success and ability to deliver.

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## 2. Updating Events

The Forum offers a programme of **free half day Updating Events** in the period, February to April. These are open to all with an interest in weed, pest and disease management in amenity and in 2018, they were offered at **14 locations across the UK**. The attendance at all the events was over 450 with a programme including methods of effective amenity management, continuing professional development, integrated management planning and policy change and its impact. The events would not be possible without the help of many – and not least our members who host as well as our speakers who give of their time.

The events are a very positive way of taking out our core messages as well as increasing engagement and commitment to best practice.



## 4. Get Moving

Our Get Moving campaign seeks to communicate why weed, pest and disease management is so important and essential and impacts upon every UK citizen every day. It is vital to ensure public safety and health and to provide amenity surfaces fit for purpose wherever their location. The campaign has three core key targets – key stakeholders, those working in the sector and very importantly, the public.

Get Moving comprises a resource of printed and electronic material including video clips highlighting aspects of amenity management in everyday situations which are continually being added to. These have proved very popular and have been well received. There is a website [www.getbritainmoving.uk](http://www.getbritainmoving.uk) and this focusses upon the Colins's family – Jim and Lynne and their children. Jim has his own blog, Twitter account and email and addresses issues from a member of public perspective. Further developments are on-going.



## 3. Our Conference

The Amenity Forum conference has become the must attend event for all involved or interested in amenity management. Feedback from the 2017 event held at the Pirelli Stadium at Burton on Trent indicated that this had been the best yet with the high quality of speakers and topics highlighted and the implementation of well-timed punchy presentations proved to be a hit.

There was also an associated exhibition area which proved very busy where delegates could hear of new innovations and products. Over 200 attended and the event got extensive media coverage. The 2018 conference is being held at the same venue on Tuesday, October 9th, 2018. This year's title is appropriately **'Change, Challenge & Opportunity'** and there are again some excellent speakers on offer as well as the opportunity to network with others and discuss topical issues.

### Amenity Forum Conference 2018 October 9th

#### Change, Challenge & Opportunity

At the Pirelli Stadium, Burton on Trent

Full programme available on the Forum website

– [www.amenityforum.co.uk](http://www.amenityforum.co.uk)

To book your place, contact

[Admin@amenityforum.net](mailto:Admin@amenityforum.net)

Tickets are £85 or £75 (plus VAT)

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## 5. Integrated Management Planning

A key focus in the UK National Action Plan is the adoption of an integrated approach to weed, pest and disease management. This seeks to ensure that in planning a weed, pest & disease management programme, you consider the level of control required for specific areas and circumstances and consider all options available to achieve the required outcome efficiently, effectively and economically. Best practice is to produce such a plan, known as an IPM, for every different situation. It need not be complex but demonstrates full consideration has been given to all options and that where pesticide is used, it is applied at the correct place and optimum level.

The Forum has produced best practice guidelines and these are available via the website [www.amenityforum.co.uk](http://www.amenityforum.co.uk). It has been a key focus in updating events and through all activities.

## 6. External Events & Communications

The Forum has been asked to speak at a large number of conferences and events throughout the period and are always pleased to do so.

The Forum is a regular contributor to publications including the Greenkeeper, Groundsman, Pitchcare, International Pest Control, Horticulture Weekly and Professional Horticulture. It regularly issues press releases and responds to media requests and is fully engaged in social media, an activity which has grown considerably in the last year.

## 7. Pressures on pesticides

The year has seen increased pressures on pesticide availability with the European authorisation and review process becoming more focussed on risk to human health. We live in a world of instant communication and 24 hour news. The power of social media means any story can be transmitted instantly by the press of a button. It is an exciting and fantastic technology. Yet it holds dangers. It has created the phenomenon of fake news enabling one individual to release a fact or facts without any real verification and, in an instant, what subsequently turns out to be fiction, becomes fact.

Best practice is founded on an integrated approach to weed management in amenity, ensuring correct cultural and design practices, making use of mechanical and biological control where appropriate and using approved and authorised chemicals. In keeping our amenity areas safe, clean and healthy – whether that's on our streets, railways, sports surfaces, or parks – chemical control often provides the most economic and effective approach. **The herbicides that are used are subject to extensive approval processes and are constantly monitored.** Indeed the authorisation is far tougher and rigorous than for many other everyday products.

**In wide scale operations, not using approved chemicals for weed management comes with significant cost.** Research undertaken by Oxford Economics last year showed that a ban on weed killers would add at least £228 million to the UK's council tax bill each year. The additional requirements for funding the alternatives would require an increase in the average household council tax bill of £7.80.

Recently there has been a particular media 'discussion', if that is the word, about herbicides and their safety. This is welcomed provided it is based upon proper science and evidence – fact not fiction. Stories featuring headlines such as "killer pesticides" within such discussion do nobody any good. They can cause unnecessary fear and are generally accompanied by information far removed from verification. No professional amenity operator would advocate using any product that could danger nor would it be allowed.

We recognise concerns can arise but, in dealing with them, we need a rational debate based upon science and facts. The management of weeds and pests in amenity impacts upon every UK citizen.

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## 8. Continuing Professional Development

Since the end of November 2015, anyone applying a pesticide must now hold an appropriate specified certificate showing they have been trained and hold adequate knowledge of how to use pesticides safely. Whilst there is no legal requirement for continuing professional development beyond this, scientific knowledge and technology is rapidly advancing and we are in a period of radical change in the availability of pesticide products and, more importantly, the expectation on how pests, weeds and diseases could and should be managed.

To keep up to speed, the Forum strongly advocates continuing professional development and encourages everyone involved to join the Amenity Register, administered by BASIS Registration. It is a key way for any operator to demonstrate their credentials. We also urge organisations to hold the Amenity Assured standard. The Forum would like to see universal adoption of Assured Standards demonstrating commitment to all elements of best practice.

The last 12 months have seen a significant increase in those registered to both schemes and participating in continual professional development. The Forum is also working hard with the sector to increase recognition of Amenity Assured standards. **We strongly urge everyone engaging a professional organisation to ensure they are fully aware of the Forum and its aims and can prove its adherence to Amenity Assured standards. It really does matter.**



## 9. Website and Guidance Notes

The Forum website is an invaluable resource with its informative guidance notes, presentations and other information. It is now regarded as the first point of call for any questions on weed, pest and disease management in amenity. A full refresh and redesign took place in the year improving its lay out and capability. If you haven't already, do check it out at [www.amenityforum.co.uk](http://www.amenityforum.co.uk)

## 10. Sprayer Operator of the Year Awards

These awards seek to recognise the quality and high level of performance by spray operators in our sector. 2017 saw a record entry with category winners announced at the Forum conference. The overall winner was announced at BIGGA's BTME Event in January 2018. Coverage has been excellent. **The awards seek to highlight the real professionalism that exists within operators throughout the amenity sector.**

# Amenity Survey 2016

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**Whilst it is accepted that the response rate was lower than would have been liked, some key highlights emerge. Work has already started on the 2020 survey and the Forum will work closely with those involved to gain further participation and hence information from it.**



## **Some points from 2016 are:**

- Good knowledge of Defra's code of practice for using plant protection products.
- The use of BASIS-qualified staff.
- Following label instructions; and storage and disposal practice.
- Respondents' replies reflected the steps taken to protect workers and the public, awareness of situations they believed to be of higher risk when using pesticides, and the measures they took to protect water and sensitive areas.
- Information on application equipment includes the number, distribution and inspection of different equipment types, and frequency of calibration.

# Looking Ahead

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**The Forum will seek to continue to deliver against its objectives and alongside that, has engaged in a full review of its strategic plan to ensure it can have the structure and resources to continue to deliver effectively and efficiently.**

**Some of the key priorities in the year ahead are:**

## **Understanding of our sector, not just by the public but by key stakeholders and all involved**

Our communications campaign will continue within resource available. Real effort is being made to increase general media coverage and develop understanding by all of the important and essential nature of weed, pest and disease management and how it impacts upon every UK citizen. It is vital that issues are debated and considered based upon science and evidence.

## **Integrated approaches and what they really mean**

The Forum is leading the way in promoting integrated approaches and will continue to do so. It is important for all involved to fully understand what is meant and how to deliver against it. It requires use of all techniques available in an optimum manner.

## **Ensuring the sector can maintain its current ability to manage weeds, pests and diseases and maintain the high standards and safe use of all sports surfaces and amenity areas**

As said previously, nobody engaged in amenity management should advocate use of any approach which risks public health or safety. By the same token, it is important that any decisions to stop the use of any particular method or product are based on properly sourced evidence. A key role going forward will be to champion the professionalism of our sector and its importance. The cost of not being able to maintain current high standards will be costly, not just in financial terms but in terms of public safety and health.

## **Continuing to increase numbers demonstrating involvement in continuing professional development and develop and promote strongly the importance of Amenity Assured standards**

The Forum recognises that there is still some work to do in increasing participation in continuing professional development across the sector. We will continue to advocate this as well as fully supporting the widespread adoption of the Amenity Assured standard. In the year ahead we seek to create an understanding of the standard akin to the Little Red Tractor in agriculture.

## **BREXIT**

Whatever individual views on BREXIT, whilst initially we will take on all existing European regulations, there is now an opportunity to influence our Government as they plot changes and the Forum will do this as best it can. We believe continuing dialogue and persuasion is better than revolution as part of a unified approach and will continue to be active in this.

# Conclusion

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**This document has set out some of the Forum's key achievements in 2017/18. There has been significant progress in achievements and in lifting both the profile and practice across the sector.**

**It was pleasing to see this highlighted in the Pesticides Forum Report published in 2018 which in particular highlights:**

- Continuation of the 'GetMoving' campaign, increasing public awareness of the importance of amenity maintenance impacting on UK citizens, and includes:
  - A professional video, 'Why Amenity Matters';
  - Growth in social media communication #AmenityMatters; @Amenity Forum.
- Further development of best practice notes, following the '10 golden rules'.
- The growth of the Amenity Spray Operator of the Year award.
- Continued increase in participation by all involved.

**Our key role is helping maintain safe, healthy and sustainable amenity areas fit for purpose.**

For further information on Forum activities, please go to our website [www.amenityforum.co.uk](http://www.amenityforum.co.uk) or contact us at [admin@amenityforum.net](mailto:admin@amenityforum.net)

For further information on our Get Moving campaign visit [www.getbritainmoving.uk](http://www.getbritainmoving.uk)



Newsletter designed and supported by **Bayer**

# What is Amenity?

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For some reading this report, the answer is clear but to many whilst directly affected by our sector, the term remains confusing and is often interpreted wrongly. A complete definition is not possible but suffice to say it includes such areas as:



**Street and Pavement  
Cleaning & Parks**



**Professional  
Lawn care**



**Rail Track  
& Highway**



**Sports Facilities  
& Surfaces**

including golf, football,  
cricket and more



**Public Utility  
Areas**

including supermarkets and indeed  
amenity areas in all public places



**Cemeteries &  
Bowling Greens**

The list goes on and this emphasises why weed, pest and disease management in these areas is so important.



The Amenity Forum is a company limited by guarantee Registration Number 10204434

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