



Promoting Best Practice
Newsletter January 2019

Introduction



Professor John Moverley OBE
Independent Chairman

John Moverley

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

Happy New Year to all. We live in uncertain times in so many areas and there is no shortage of challenges. However there are also opportunities and it is important that those in our sector are proud of what they do and we stress the importance of amenity management.

The news seems to constantly focus upon bad stories and yet there are so many good ones to report. It is the same for what we do; a good resolution for 2019 might be to focus even more on the really good news and best practice in our sector and to ensure everyone involved looks to support our objectives and the Forum. It has never been more important for the sector to be united.

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 the Forum is proud of its achievements.

This newsletter highlights just some of our recent activity and forthcoming events.

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 pesticides 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.



Regular email update service.



Organisation of seminars, workshops and our conference.



Production of a General Newsletter & regular Chairman’s Update.



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

Free Updating Events 2019

The Amenity Forum is once again organising a series of free Updating Events at venues across the UK.

This series of free Updating Events seeks to address topical issues of interest and relevance to all involved in the amenity sector and will comprise short topical presentations by speakers drawn from the Chemicals Regulation Division of HSE and our membership along with the various host organisations and from the Amenity Forum itself. They are timed to occupy half a day, normally mornings, and on dates between February and April 2019. They are open to all involved in or with an interest in amenity management.

The series has been given the title of **'Adapting to Change'** and there will be adequate time for questions and discussion. Whilst the events are free, delegates are required to register in advance. So, if you are interested in an event, please email admin@amenityforum.net for further information. These have proved extremely popular events in previous years and have been very well received.



Locations and dates confirmed are:

Shropshire	7th February
Cardiff	21st February
London	27th February
Everton FC, Liverpool	28th February
Greenmount	6th March
Kent	12th March
Surrey	19th March
Lincolnshire	26th March
Durham	27th March
Gloucestershire	3rd April
Bracknell	4th April
Perth	10th April
Buckinghamshire	11th April
York	17th April

In total, some 450 delegates attended our events in 2018, representing all areas of activity across the diverse and vitally important amenity sector. We received excellent feedback on the programme from those attending so don't miss out, register now. Full details on locations and dates for 2019 are shown on this page.

Conference 2019

The Amenity Forum conference has grown to become the must attend event for all involved or interested in amenity management. **In 2018 we were delighted to welcome a record number of delegates** - so it's a huge thank you from us to everyone who presented, exhibited and attended and helped to make the day such a great success. With representation from all areas of our diverse and important amenity sector, as ever the day was a chance to discuss and debate current issues.

There is also an associated exhibition area at the event which this year was busier than ever. The 2019 conference is being held at the Pirelli Stadium at Burton on Trent on **Thursday, October 10th**. This year's title is **'Adapting to Change'** and there will again be some excellent speakers on offer as well as the opportunity to network with others and discuss topical issues. So make a date now or why not book. There is a **£10 discount** on offer for all bookings made before September 1st on the delegate rates of £85 + VAT for members and £95 + VAT for non-members.



Get Moving

Some two years ago, the Forum formally launched its Get Moving campaign. This sought 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 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. These have proved very popular and have been well received. There is a website **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.

We have significant plans for its further development in 2019. This includes seeking your help in being ambassadors for our Get Moving messages. To discover how you can best support, please do get in touch by emailing **John.Moverley@amenityforum.co.uk**



Strategic Planning

Over the last 12 months or so we have been engaged in a review of what we have achieved and our strategic aims and priorities going forward. This culminated in October with our full Forum agreeing the plan taking us forward for the next three years. Key drivers for us are:

- Working with policy makers is helping to develop strategies and frameworks for weed, pest and disease management. This will be especially important in the time period of this plan with exit from the EU and all that this implies.
- Continuing to influence opinion formers and policy makers and, in particular, lobbying for a future where only professional operators at all levels can practice through being able to demonstrate their commitment to best practice and fully supporting the aims and objectives of the Forum. We believe that this is important in every way as we go forward.
- Driving forward the development of an Assured Standard which is universally adopted and sought for throughout the sector akin to the Red Tractor in agriculture. Under this standard it is accepted that sub sectors may drive forward their own schemes – Lawn Assured, Amenity Assured etc. – but this will be under one assured logo and quality standard overseen by the Forum. In effect we seek a licence to practice for the sector as a whole.
- Seeking to embed continuing professional development into the culture of our sector and working with all involved to seek to recognise all forms of training and delivery systems with the emphasis on providing flexibility of delivery.
- Continuing and expanding upon our communication role, to the public in particular, but also to our key stakeholders, sub sectors and operators within the sector. The need for managing amenity spaces providing safe, healthy and fit for purpose environments is our key message

We have achieved much in bringing our sector together to demonstrate the professionalism of our sector and commitment to best practice. However there is more to do and our plan will seek to address the key issues.



Connections

A key element of the Forum's work is in making connections, contributing to discussions and consultations and using every opportunity to represent our important and essential sector.

During the year, our chairman has presented at a wide range of conferences and workshops, attended numerous meetings and events and been engaged in a wide range of national consultations.

During the year, our chairman also was appointed Chairman of the Pesticides Forum, a very important body reporting to Government.

A key element of the work is also responding to members' questions, communicating with the press and more. As our chairman says 'Life is never dull'. It has been a challenging year and there are more ahead of us. However the amenity sector is so important and that message cannot be repeated too often.

2019 is set to be a busy year as we exit the EU, review the current National Action Plan for implementing the Sustainable Use Directive and engage with all relevant aspects of Government's forward planning and actions. It is vital that the sector stands together; that is why your engagement with the Amenity Forum is so important.



Communicate, Communicate, Communicate

With the support of a number of our members, some two years ago we launched a specific communication project aimed at increasing awareness and taking out our message to an ever wider audience. It allowed us to acquire some specialist support.

In the last year this work has yielded very positive results. Some examples include:

- Much improved social media presence and activity
- The launch of our new website
- Improved guidance notes and other support materials
- An improved communication process with our members with a well-received monthly newsletter, Hot Topic contributions from members and other support materials
- Support for Get Moving
- Launch of a specific project aimed at increasing engagement by local authorities which has already proved highly successful

Whilst funding within the Forum is always limited, we have plans to further take forward this work in 2019. The aim to **further develop Get Moving has already been mentioned and we look to expand our work with utility organisations and in other areas where participation can be increased.** We are involved with specific work with the Welsh and Scottish Government and look to expand our activity in Northern Ireland.

Getting Our Messages Across

The Amenity Forum seeks to promote best practice and ensure approaches taken are based upon proper science and evidence. The year has seen a wide variety of pressures and indeed unnecessary scares at times.

In such times it is important that we stress the importance of taking a professional approach, adopting an integrated approach to amenity management and responding to the challenges in a reasoned manner based upon fact not fiction.

During the year our chairman was heavily involved in the debate. The following is extracted from one of his presentations:

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 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 go through extensive approval processes and are constantly monitored. Indeed the authorisation is far tougher and rigorous than for many other everyday products.

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.

Managing weeds in amenity situations is a vital task – it impacts on every UK citizen every day providing safe and healthy environments. It really keeps Britain moving. As we move forward in this continually changing world, the need for decisions to be based upon proper evidence and science has never been so important – real news not fake.



Glyphosate

There continues to be much discussion about glyphosate and its use. **Despite it being re-approved by the EU after extensive and exhaustive trials and investigations, there continues to be active groups campaigning against it.** Writing a few months ago, our Chairman wrote:

*Managing weeds in amenity situations keeps Britain moving. As we move forward in this continually changing world, the need for **decisions to be based upon proper evidence and science has never been so important.** Chemicals used for amenity management are more rigorously tested than many household products. **Not only are amenity chemicals thoroughly tested and approved but they are continually monitored.***

***In the case of the active glyphosate, it has only recently undergone a thorough review in Europe and been re-approved for use in amenity situations as a safe chemical.** This review, conducted by the Expert committee of scientists in Europe and approved by vote of member states, took into account some concerns expressed about the active possibly having carcinogenic effects. Based on all the science and evidence available, it was concluded that these were unfounded and it was safe to use.*

In that context, the Forum was very surprised to hear the outcome of the recent judgement in the USA relating to glyphosate in the product Round Up. We understand that an appeal is to be made by the manufacturer and so it is inappropriate to comment further on this.

*The Forum seeks to work with everyone across the important sector of amenity promoting best practice in all aspects of weed management, chemical and non chemical. We support an integrated approach making best use of all tools available to ensure a safe and healthy environment fit for purpose whether it be streets and pavements, parks, railways, sports grounds and indeed all amenity spaces. **Glyphosate has proved to be a very important and essential element in such management programmes as an approved, regulated and fully authorised chemical.***

*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.*



The Forum would never advocate any unsafe practices and always advocates the use of properly trained professionals operating to recognised assurance standards.

Assurance & Integrated Approaches

Throughout this newsletter reference has been made to operating at recognised assured standards. Within our sector such schemes exist such as Amenity Assured. However it is our aim to develop an over-arching sector wide recognition for such schemes so operators and the public can have full assurance. The Red Tractor scheme is well known in the food sector and our aim is to create the equivalent in relation to amenity management. We would wish to see all professionally managed amenity spaces proud to display the related logo and for all commissioning work to ensure they use operators who hold the standard. If a member of the public engages an electrician, they seek evidence of his assured practice. We need the same in amenity management in all its activity.

The process is underway and our intention is to launch this in 2019.

Taking an integrated approach to amenity management is vital and essential. Whilst it may sound new, in reality it is not so. It requires operators and those commissioning work to define clearly the best approaches to amenity management for specific situations. It allows use of all approaches ensuring the very best combination of methods of control of weeds, pests and diseases is taken both chemical and non chemical. It involves choosing the right plants, creating the optimum soil conditions, co-ordinating mechanised approaches such as brushing and more. It requires a total approach ensuring the most effective and indeed economic management.

This is not revolutionary but good practice. The Forum in the coming months is stepping up its work in giving guidance to the preparation of Integrated Plans. It will be a feature in our Updating events and a group of members is being convened so we can produce appropriate templates and guidance.



National Action Plan Review

In adopting the Sustainable Use Directive, each member country in Europe had to produce and implement a National Action Plan. In the UK, whilst this did include legal requirements such as sprayer testing and training, it sought improvements by voluntary action. The Amenity Forum seeks to co-ordinate these events and report to Government on achievements.

A full review of the UK National Action Plan is being undertaken by DEFRA in which the Forum is fully engaged. Current indications are for more emphasis on water quality, continuous professional development, integrated approaches and more.

The Forum has produced best practice guidelines covering many of the issues and these are available via the website www.amenityforum.co.uk. We continue to add to them. The review of the National Action Plan will be a key focus in updating events and through all activities in the coming year.

Continuing Professional Development

Whilst we have seen increasing uptake of recognised CPD and registration on such, we still are seeing low participation when assessed against the numbers involved. It is vital that more do get involved. CPD is in itself important given all the new developments continually being brought forward. However it is also important that the sector shows its commitment to best practice by engagement.

To date CPD is voluntary but for how long? We urge all involved in our vital sector to keep updated and provide evidence of such engagement.



Sprayer Operator Of The Year Awards

These awards seek to recognise the quality and level of performance by spray operators in our sector. 2018 saw a record entry and the three category winners were announced at our 2018 conference. The overall winner is to be announced at BTME later this month. They will receive the additional prize of a trip to the USA.

The Awards will continue in 2019 so why not apply yourself or put forward others from your organisations? All that is needed is an email to admin@amenityforum.net and Kate will provide further information.



Conclusion

This newsletter has set out just some of the issues and activities of the Forum. There has been significant progress in achievements and in lifting both the profile and practice across the sector. Our key role is helping maintain safe, healthy and sustainable amenity areas fit for purpose.

If you are not already a member, please consider joining and demonstrating your commitment to best practice further strengthening our influencing and supporting role. The annual fee is just £600 + VAT.

For further information on Forum activities, please go to our website www.amenityforum.co.uk or contact us at admin@amenityforum.net

For further information on our Get Moving campaign visit www.getbritainmoving.uk



Newsletter designed and supported by **Bayer**

What is Amenity?

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.

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