



 Promoting best practice

Annual Report

2020 / 2021



Introduction

The Amenity Forum is the voluntary initiative for this essential and diverse sector. What happens in amenity impacts upon every UK citizen every day. The Amenity Forum promotes best practice and is recognised as the national voice on such matters. It seeks to ensure that 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 terms of weed, pest and disease management. Supporters of the Amenity Forum set a very high standard and are proud of its achievements.

This report refers to some of the activity over the twelve month period to 30th June 2021. It has certainly been a busy and we believe productive year. A key development is the Amenity Standard which was introduced across the UK at the start of 2020. It was formally launched in Scotland at a specially convened conference in Edinburgh and introduced by their Minister for the Environment and Rural Affairs in the Scottish Government. Since its launch, it has been enthusiastically received by all sides including policy makers and the sector itself. A key objective is to see the Standard adopted as a requirement in the future providing assurance to public and all involved that operations are being undertaken to the highest professional levels.

The pandemic has changed the way that we all live our lives and its consequences will be long lasting and very painful for many. It has highlighted the importance of health, safety and sustainability. It has also brought to the fore the importance of amenity management, seeking to keep our amenity and sports spaces safe, healthy and fit for purpose, maintaining transport networks, our parks and more. It is vital that all of us can be assured that the operations undertaken are of the highest professional level carried out by trained and qualified staff fully following the principles of best practice and adhering to the standards set. All Amenity Forum members are committed to this.

The role of the Amenity Forum in working with the sector and policy makers has never been as important. A new UK National Action Plan relating to weed, pest and disease management is currently being drafted and the aftermath of the pandemic will continue to create real challenges. However undoubtedly those operating in the amenity management sector have proved to be a key service during the health crisis, a vital service. Whatever challenges lie ahead, there will also be opportunity. I am immensely proud of our sector and its work and working together through the Forum and its activities all who operate in amenity management can fully demonstrate its value and importance.

Thank you

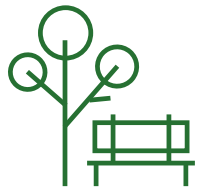
Professor John Moverley OBE

Independent Chairman



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 and parks



Professional lawn care



Rail track and highway



Sports facilities and surfaces including golf, football, cricket and more



Public utility areas including supermarkets, and amenity areas in all public places



Cemeteries and bowling greens

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



Objectives & How They Are Delivered

The key objectives can be summarised as follows:

- To be the key body informing reporting and responding to government on policies and plans relating to best practice management of weeds, pests and diseases in the amenity sector
- To actively encourage integrated approaches to amenity management and proper, responsible and optimum use of pesticides and other products that may be used
- To promote the widespread adoption of the Amenity Standard as a means of increasing public confidence and providing assurance of a professional approach to amenity management, meeting targets to seek to create safe, healthy and sustainable amenity spaces fit for purpose
- To advocate that all practices are sustainable and seek to protect the environment with minimum risks to public health
- To champion, encourage and promote scientific advance, research and innovation
- To coordinate and encourage the establishment of sustainable qualifications, training and continuous professional development activity

To achieve these, the Forum's principal activities include:

- Maintaining strong relationships with the UK and national governments as well as with the key agencies
- Working closely with policy makers in helping to both implement and develop strategies and frameworks for weed, pest and disease management
- Driving forward the development and adoption of the Amenity Standard to be universally adopted, required and sought for throughout the sector where only professional operators at all levels can practice
- Giving great emphasis to communications both internally and externally and substantially increase awareness amongst the general public
- Producing guidance materials in all aspects of best practice amenity management and keeping the sector full informed of developments
- Delivering a successful and productive conference each year together with an updating programme of events offered at venues across the UK
- Encouraging and championing innovation and research into all aspects of weed, pest and disease management
- Supporting full engagement in continuing professional development to be seen as 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
- Organising activities within the Amenity Forum membership and linked organisations which will help fulfil these objectives and keep the membership fully informed of developments, provide advice where possible and create a network of organisations covering all aspects of the amenity sector

Some Key Achievements in this Reporting Period

Even without the implications of the Pandemic, this has certainly been another year full of change, challenge and opportunity for the Forum. There is much going on at policy level with the Government finalising its review of the National Action Plan and a further review of pesticide policy ongoing. The Forum is fully contributing to the process where requested and appropriate.

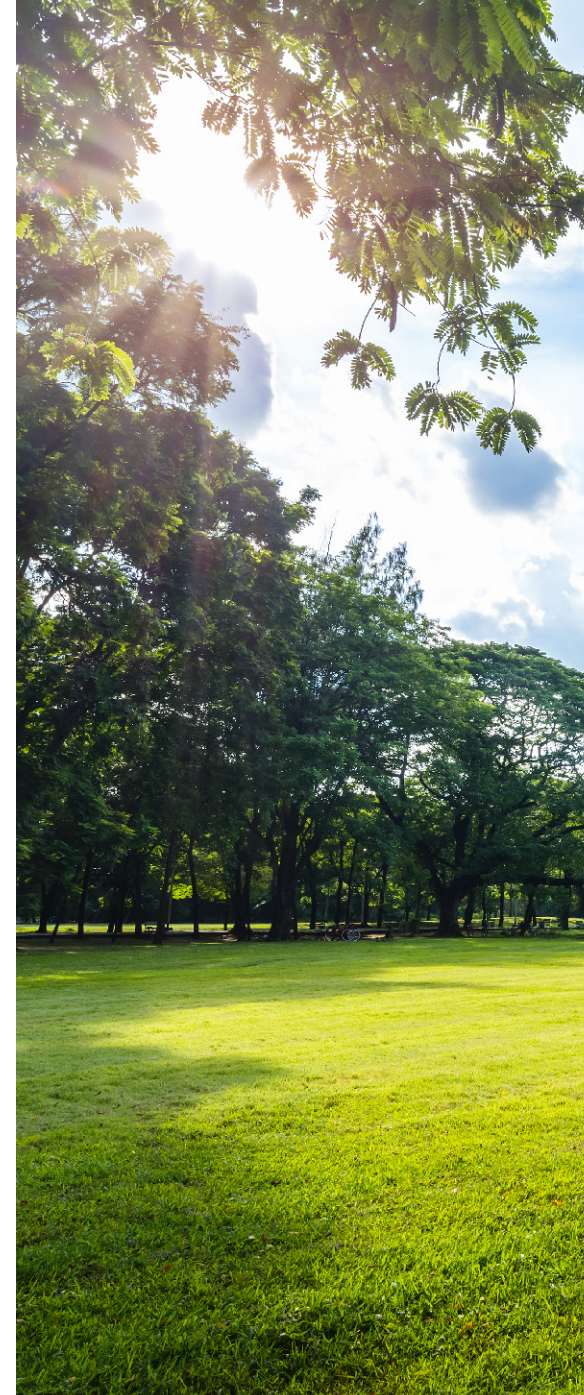
The Forum continues to respond to a wide range of consultations and has been fully engaged with partners and all stakeholders dealing with the implications of the pandemic. The role of amenity managers during this time has been essential maintaining our transport networks, parks and more. It has not been easy working conditions and they deserve all our thanks.

The year has seen continued debate and public interest in the use of pesticides.

The Forum has sought to respond and fully engage with this, focussing on the need for science and evidence to inform discussions. Also, it is important to ensure the debate is not an either or but based on an integrated approach making use of all the tools available in the most effective way. The year has also seen the debate widened to take account of the environmental costs of different approaches particularly in determining carbon sums for the various methods employed.

Those engaged in amenity management perform a vital role in maintaining safe and healthy amenity areas. 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. The Forum has been active on many fronts and reached out to increasing numbers of organisations, stakeholders and the public in promoting good practice and providing appropriate guidance to all involved.

Some key priorities in the year have been in assisting everyone engaged to further develop integrated management approaches, promote the sector wide Amenity Standard and to significantly increase communications both to the public and within the sector, building upon our successful Get Moving campaign. All three of these will be commented upon later in this report. We always advocate an integrated approach to weed, pest and disease management examining all the options in any particular situation – cultural, mechanical, biological and chemical. Use of approved safe chemical products often remains the most effective and efficient. However, it is important to always ensure they are used in a targeted way 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 meet targets set in the National Action Plan and other policy requirements. 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 continues to grow. Members include manufacturers, distributors, contractors, local authorities, water companies, greenkeepers, groundsmen and more. A full list can be found on our website. We have increasing numbers of local authorities as associate members.

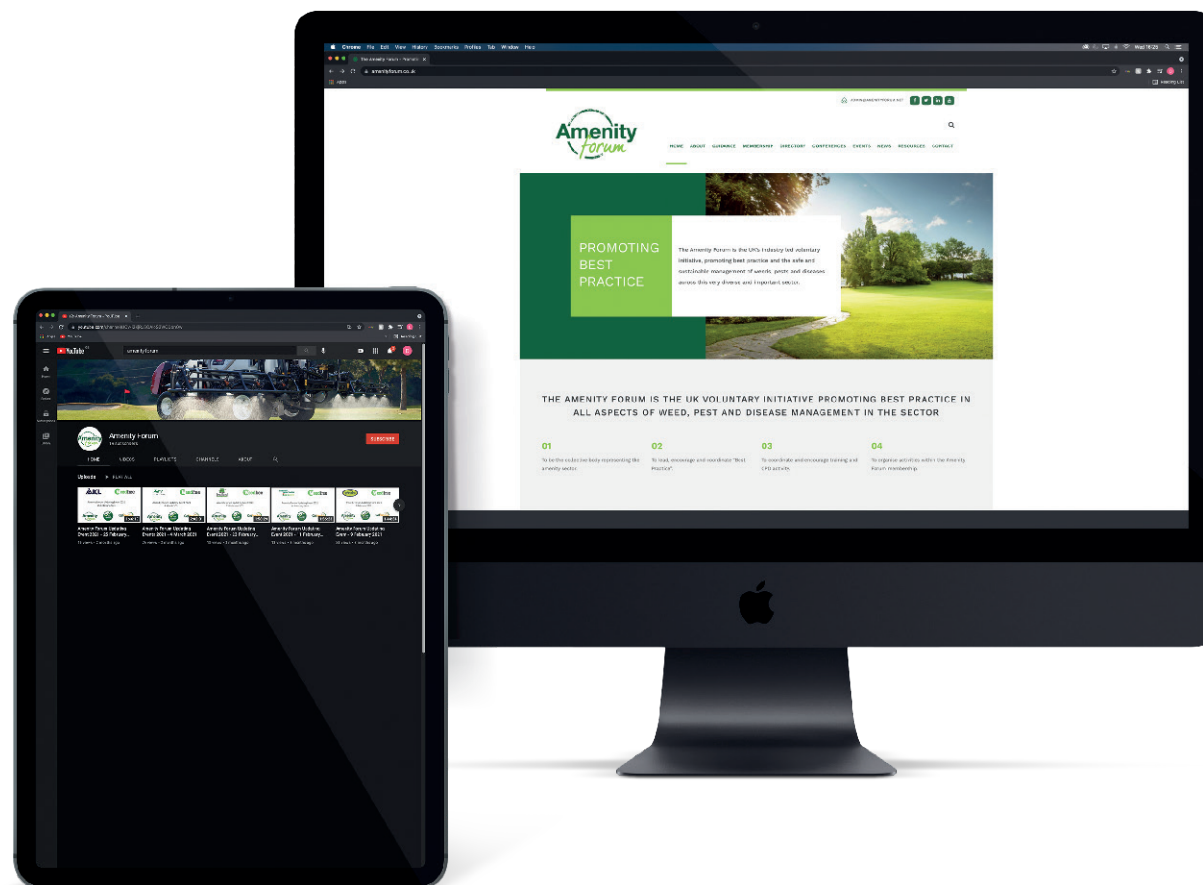
Members fully contribute to our wide range of activities and engage in consultations and networking. The Forum is often described as a 'lean and mean' organisation and voluntary contribution to our work is a vital element to our success and ability to deliver. One way to ensure a professional approach is to engage the services or talk to our members.



2 Our Updating Events

This year, instead of taking the events physically around the UK, we did so virtually.

Of course, some of the value in terms of networking was reduced but nevertheless the events proved very successful. The events provide a valuable way of updating the sector on current issues and a great networking opportunity. A copy of the presentations for these events are available on our website as well as video material. The latter can be found on the Amenity Forum You Tube site along with a range of other videos on topics of current interest and providing industry data.



3

Our Conference

The Amenity Forum conference has established itself as the must attend event for all involved or interested in amenity management. Feedback from the previous events has been extremely positive with the high quality of speakers and topics highlighted and the implementation of well-timed punchy presentations. This year was another first in that it was run as a fully on line live event and proved very successful.

All the presentations are available on our website. The 2020 conference was entitled Amenity Management – Planning for the Future and the major headings of the various presentations were policy updating, the sector response to adopting integrated approaches, education and training, current research and professional standards.



Amenity forum conference & exhibition 2021

Thursday, 21st October 2021

Burton Albion Football Club

Pirelli Stadium, Burton-on-Trent

FACING THE FUTURE

Full programme available on the Forum website - www.amenityforum.co.uk

To book your place, contact - Admin@amenityforum.net

Tickets

£95 + VAT (or) £85 + VAT if booking is confirmed by 1st September 2021

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Communication



The need to communicate with the public, stakeholders and indeed across our sector has never been so important.

There is much more public interest in amenity management in all its forms and it is important to provide factual information to help guide opinions and decisions. Our chairman has been involved with many discussions with politicians, opinion formers, press and the public. He always emphasises the need for an integrated approach and to operate at professional standards. Nobody would support any practice that might impact upon public health or safety.

Our communication work has three main elements. Firstly in terms of communicating to our members and the sector through use of social media, video clips, printed material and more. Secondly we seek to very much target promoting the Amenity Standard (see later).

Finally our important Get Moving campaign seeks to be public facing to communicate why weed, pest and disease management is both 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 website has been fully refreshed and we wish it to be seen as a vital tool in communicating what the sector does and its importance. Why not take a look at the website and help us cascade its content as widely as possible - **www.getbritainmoving.uk**. This year we have also engaged in a specific project highlighting the importance of parks and why the highest standards of management are required to keep them fit for purpose.

The Forum continues to be 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. It regularly issues press releases and responds to media requests and is fully engaged in social media, an activity which has continued to grow considerably in the last year.



5 Integrated Management Planning

A key UK priority is the adoption of an integrated approach to weed, pest and disease management. This is an approach that has been widely adopted within the amenity sector for some time. The approach 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. Also available are two documents giving a full guide and tool kit for preparing Integrated Weed Management Plans. These are available to download for members free and at a small charge to others. Please contact admin@amenityforum.net for further information.



6 Local Authority Initiative

This special initiative seeks to increase participation of local authorities in Forum activity and increase their access to up to date information on all aspects of weed, pest and disease management. We have been pleased with the response but still not all authorities have taken up the opportunity and we encourage them to do so. We of course welcome authorities as full members but if initially they wish to receive support and in effect test the water, associate membership can be extended to them, certainly for the first year.

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Amenity Standard

The introduction of the Amenity Standard is very much a game changing moment for the sector. It allows all organisations who operate within the sector, in terms of managing amenity and sports surfaces, to demonstrate that they fully comply with legislation and best practice levels and that all operations are undertaken in a professional manner by fully trained operatives. Those who hold the Standard and display its logo are entitled to do so by being a member of an approved assurance scheme, recognised and validated by the Amenity Forum and its audit procedures.



The Forum and its members seek the Standard to become a requirement going forward when bodies such as local authorities, for example, issue tenders and appoint those to do the work. We look for the logo being displayed in parks, sports grounds, transport hubs and more, giving assurance to the public that all operations undertaken seek to be safe, protect human health and the environment, sustainable and fit for purpose, all undertaken by professionals. The introduction of the Standard as a requirement would drive out bad practice operators and because of its requirements ensure all who hold it are committed to best practice and meeting government priorities and requirements.

Speaking at one of our Updating Events in 2020, the Minister for Rural Affairs and the Natural Environment in the Scottish Government said,

“We need to maintain and develop our amenity spaces, but we need to do this in a way which is safe and in a way which provides the general public, and users of amenity spaces, with clear assurances that all those involved are operating at the highest professional standards. The Amenity Standard is designed to provide that reassurance. I would like to take the opportunity to reiterate its benefits and encourage you to ensure that your weed, pest and disease management operations meet the Standard whether those are undertaken in house or by an external contractor. Those operating to the Standard are committing to an integrated approach to amenity management and to the highest professional standards. The Amenity Standard and your engagement with it and the work of the Amenity Forum generally, is really important”.

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Amenity Standard



The Amenity Standard is a bespoke quality management standard that has been developed, as a partnership, by all sides of the amenity sector. Those operating to the Standard are committed to an integrated approach to amenity management and to the highest professional standards. They are members of an approved assurance scheme recognised by the Standard.

The Amenity Standard is designed to:

- Provide an industry benchmark
- Provide a basis for continuous improvement
- Focus on quality as an objective
- Provide assurances about the quality of the approved organisation and maintenance of the amenity space
- Ensure that quality assurance scheme operators recognised under this Standard use staff with technical knowledge and experience of the sector concerned
- Promote confidence in organisations operating and providing resources in the amenity sector by provision of a robust and transparent standard

Clearly embedding the Amenity Standard fully will need time; it is not a quick fix but this could certainly be accelerated if seen as a UK wide requirement. Hopefully the logo will soon appear on amenity areas across the UK and be upheld with pride by more and more operators. For more information visit www.theamenitystandard.co.uk or contact Admin@amenityforum.net.



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Website 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. If you haven't already, do check it out at www.amenityforum.co.uk

The Forum's guidance notes have been expanded in the year both in topics covered and also to include specific guidance to local authority members and our important fact sheets for the wider public and general stakeholder groups. As said, these are available on our website. If you have any questions or need assistance, please contact admin@amenityforum.net



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Amenity Survey & Sub Sector Groups

This year has seen the launch of a UK wide pesticide survey seeking to gather information on total usage, types of application, operator qualifications and more. A particular focus in 2020 is on local authorities, golf and transport infrastructure but it has encompassed all sub sectors. The outcome will be important for all involved or with an interest in the sector.

During the year, the Forum has also established sub sector discussion groups aimed at sharing data and discussing topics of mutual interest. They have proved very successful and will be on going. At an early stage, is a young person initiative seeking to engage more closely with young people from the various member organisations.



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Innovation & Research

In early 2021, a new publication was produced and released by the Forum. This seeks to highlight innovation and current research and has been extremely well received. The plan is to produce two editions each year.



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Sprayer Operator of the Year Awards

These awards seek to recognise the quality and high level of performance by spray operators in our sector. Sadly because of the pandemic, the awards were not run in 2020 but have returned for 2021.

The awards seek to highlight the real professionalism that exists within operators throughout the amenity sector. We are very grateful to our sponsors for making this award possible.

Conclusion

This document has set out just some of the Forum's key achievements in 2020/21. There has been further significant progress in achievements and in lifting both the profile and practice across the sector. The year has seen major challenges with the impact of the pandemic. It has however highlighted how those in our sector are quick to adapt and ensure the tasks they undertake are vital for everyone to continue safely and effectively.



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
www.Getbritainmoving.uk



For further information on the Amenity Standard
www.theamenitystandard.co.uk





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