



# The Amenity Forum 2023 Conference Changing Landscapes

## **The Amenity Forum 2023 Conference – Changing Landscapes**

Too much work, not relevant to me or simply couldn't be bothered to go?? Well, if that's what happened we're so sorry that you missed the Amenity Forum Annual Conference 2023 and on some absolute gems as to how the amenity world is now navigating the 'Changing Landscapes' that we all face, along with some great networking opportunities, and more importantly delicious sausage rolls.

For those that couldn't make the event here are some of the key outtakes from the conference speakers – who shared their experiences, insights, industry legislation updates and technological developments.

Keynote addresses that inspired: -

### **Mike Potts – CRD Enforcement Team**

#### **Topic – Pesticide Enforcement Officer & OCR Update**

An update was given on how The Official Controls (plant protection product) Regulations (OCR) register was running. Currently over 25,000 manufacturers, importers, distributors, and end users (Contractors, Schools, Sports Grounds, Retailers etc) have signed up; but it is believed there are many more still to join.

Even though the official registration cut off period has passed it is still possible to sign up with no repercussions – for more information ([Plant protection products \(PPPs\): register as a professional user - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/plant-protection-products-ppps-register-as-a-professional-user)). It was emphasised that the focus for the CRD team will be on inspecting those companies/individuals that have not yet registered.

The hot topic of eBay and Amazon selling 'professional use only' products was also raised as an issue. Mike assured the conference that this is being monitored regularly and HSE/CRD have direct contact with Amazon and eBay. DEFRA are also working with both companies to try to resolve the issue.

### **Peter Corbett – Consultant**

#### **Topic – What does the Sector Need to Focus on**

An overall update was given on compliance and legislation changes that many members may not be aware of. One highlighted area was 'The Control of Explosives Precursors and Poisons Regulations (2023) ACT'. The ACT now applies to a new list of chemicals which many of us will use. Suppliers & sellers now need to have a list of products that have come in scope and take the appropriate actions when retailing these products.

Parallel Products – Reminder – 30<sup>th</sup> June 2024 marks the final ‘use up date’ for all these products.

National Action Plan (NAP) – Is still being updated, however integrated methods of control will still exist, along with guidance on operator refresher training, a focus on biodiversity and sustainability as well as record keeping. The Amenity Forum will keep you updated on any future news.

### **Paul Bannister – Amenity Training**

#### **Topic – The Practicalities of Compliance**

The audience were guided skilfully through the best practices for safe storage of products and application methods. Areas for improvement that Paul highlighted as being picked up regularly, during his work, were storage and use of old products/out of date labels, lack of spill kits, spraying in unsuitable conditions, poor refresher training and a lack of guidance on how to manage co-working with untrained staff.

Paul discussed the benefits of being BASIS Amenity Assured and having a BASIS Nominated Storekeeper as a great way to ensure you always operate to the highest standards. For more information on BASIS Amenity Assured [BASIS | BASIS Amenity Assured Scheme \(basis-reg.co.uk\)](https://basis-reg.co.uk) and BASIS Nominated Store Keeper [BASIS | Basis Store Inspection Scheme \(basis-reg.co.uk\)](https://basis-reg.co.uk)

### **Dr Dan Jones – Advanced Invasives**

#### **Embedding sustainable practice in weed management.**

Dan is always a keen supporter of the Amenity Forum and took time to share his ongoing research on Japanese Knotweed and how different plant protection products can be used sustainably. The key learning from this highly technical paper, in simple terms, was that to measure sustainability one should not just look at the result, but that there is a need to measure the whole process – input costs, environmental impacts and outcome. Dan felt that if we are not careful as an industry and did not take a holistic approach, we could be making the wrong sustainable decisions. When looking at new and alternative approaches Dan emphasised that they must be rigorously tested before jumping to adoption. And for those that want to know Dan’s view on how to sustainably control Japanese Knotweed Dan still saw traditional methods of control as having the ‘best all-round outcome’

### **Simon Clark – Heathrow Airport**

#### **Heathrow Airport Grassland Management**

Whilst Simon made most of the audience feel like they wanted to be somewhere else with his presentation he managed to hold their thoughts away from a beach in Mauritius and shared the complexities of an amenity world most of us will never encounter. So, when you think your job is tricky, spare a thought for the Habitat Management Team at Heathrow who need to operate around 1300 flight movements a day, manage 122 grass areas in 292 hectares to a mown height of 225mm, with access to some areas only at night all within a tightly regulated level of health and safety. A health and safety supported culture that actively encourages reporting not just the errors that are made, but also as importantly potential near misses – so that health and safety improvements can continually happen. Perhaps a culture change for us all to think about and adopt.

## **Ed Lewis – Railscape**

### **Drones**

AI & drones meet Amenity – who would have ever thought it. Ed took us all on a journey through the early developments of drone application of pesticides and the key benefits delivered – these being safety, greater efficiency along with improved environmental and economical solutions. Originally developed for use on rail tracks it is now believed applications can go further stepping away from just weed management to potentially controlling invasive pests, tracking and monitoring vegetation growth and controlling other hard to reach/dangerous areas. Whilst still very much in its infancy the flight path is set but the destination could take us anywhere.

### **SUMMARY**

Many of those that attended the conference concluded that by addressing and sharing the complexities ahead and others experiences they all felt better prepared and ready to embrace the way towards a more sustainable and resilient future. A big thanks goes to all who attended, all who presented and hopefully this little insight has helped those that couldn't come feel that they've also benefited...