

National Action Plan for the Sustainable Use of Pesticides (NAP) – What it means for local authorities

To: All local authorities in UK

1 Summary

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) has published an updated National Action Plan for the Sustainable Use of Pesticides (NAP). The Plan outlines the UK Government's strategy for reducing the risks and impacts of pesticide use on human health and the environment while ensuring effective pest control across agricultural, amenity, and residential sectors.¹

The NAP supports the UK's transition to more sustainable pest management practices, aligned with international obligations under the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive (SUD) and broader goals for biodiversity recovery and climate resilience.

This briefing outlines the key objectives of the NAP and the practical implications for local councils in their role as land managers, regulators, and public service providers.

2 Key Points

Objectives of the National Action Plan

The NAP sets out to:

- Minimise risks from pesticide use to human health and the environment.
- Promote Integrated Pest Management (IPM) as the preferred approach across all sectors.

¹ https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-pesticides-national-action-plan-2025/uk-pesticides-national-action-plan-2025-working-for-a-more-sustainable-future?utm_source=chatgpt.com

- Enhance surveillance, monitoring and enforcement related to pesticide application.
- Support innovation and alternatives to chemical pesticides.
- Increase transparency and public access to information on pesticide use.

The Plan recognises that some pesticide use is necessary but stresses that such use must be safer, more targeted, and better monitored.

3 What this means for local authorities

3.1 Review and adaptation of pest management practices

Councils managing parks, highways, cemeteries and public land are expected to:

- Phase out routine chemical pesticide use where alternatives exist.
- Develop site-specific IPM strategies that reduce reliance on pesticides.
- Prioritise mechanical, cultural, biological and preventative controls.
- Justify any continued use of chemical products, especially in sensitive areas (e.g. near schools or waterways).

3.2 Biodiversity and green infrastructure planning

Local authorities will need to align pesticide practices with broader environmental strategies:

- Support pollinator-friendly planting schemes.
- Ensure pesticide use does not undermine Biodiversity Net Gain commitments.
- Integrate pesticide reduction goals into Local Nature Recovery Strategies and Local Plans.

3.3 Training and awareness

The NAP encourages upskilling of operatives and decision-makers:

- Operatives applying pesticides must have up-to-date qualifications.
- Grounds teams should be trained in IPM techniques and alternative control methods.
- Councils should support public education around non-chemical weed and pest control on private property.

3.4 Procurement and supply chain responsibilities

APSE has long argued that public procurement can be a highly effective lever for sustainable change. The NAP encourages:

- Contracts for landscape and grounds maintenance to include clauses on reduced or no-pesticide practices.
- Authorities to seek suppliers committed to sustainable and low-input solutions.

Monitoring and transparency

Local councils may be asked to contribute to national datasets on pesticide usage:

- Establish internal monitoring protocols for pesticide applications on council-managed land.
- Maintain transparent records and make them available to regulators and the public where required.

4 Timeline and expectations

While no statutory targets have been set specifically for local authorities, the NAP outlines a commitment to reducing pesticide risks and impacts by at least 10% by 2030, using the UK PLI as a measurement tool.²

Councils are encouraged to act now by:

- Reviewing current pesticide use.
- Identifying quick wins for reduction.
- Engaging contractors and communities in the transition process.

5 Opportunities and challenges for councils

The NAP presents a range of benefits and opportunities for local authorities. These include improved public health outcomes, particularly in urban areas where communities are more

² https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-pesticides-national-action-plan-2025/nap-target-explainer-a-detailed-explanation-of-the-pesticides-nap-target-and-how-it-will-be-achieved?utm_source=chatgpt.com

frequently exposed to chemical applications. It also supports enhanced biodiversity and soil health in public spaces through the adoption of less intrusive pest management techniques. Over time, councils may benefit from reduced chemical input costs as reliance on pesticides decreases. Furthermore, by embracing these practices, local authorities can demonstrate leadership on sustainability and climate adaptation within their communities.

APSE member councils, alongside the opportunities presented by more natural methods of control, often report that they are conflicted on pesticide control issues. In some cases, residents can be vociferous in opposition to weed growth and in some APSE member councils have reported mixed success with alternative methods of control. That being said in many areas councils, with the support of resident groups, have adopted policies towards more environmentally friendly weed control measures and in some cases have specifically pledged to stop using glyphosate.

6 How can APSE help?

APSE regularly receives queries on weed control methods from our member councils. We source responses to these queries by circulating them to our extensive UK-wide network of parks professionals. Queries relating to glyphosate usage have even been collated into a report [here](#) (which APSE member councils can access by contacting enquiries@apse.org.uk).

If you belong to an APSE member council and have weed control queries – or any queries relating to grounds maintenance – the APSE network may have the answers. Connect with the APSE network and get involved with our Network Queries service [here](#).

All APSE members can sign up to APSE's Parks, Horticulture and Grounds Maintenance Network, which is an online network providing four learning events across the year, with expert speakers from across the parks and greenspace sector. You can sign up to the network using [this link](#).

6.1.1 Training

APSE Training has also designed several special interactive online courses for parks professionals:

1. **Introduction to Parks Management (CPD)**. This preliminary course provides an introduction to the key issues and principles of parks management. If you are looking to move towards a more senior position, or you want to grow the skills to understand, develop, and cope with the demands faced by managers, this course will provide a robust overview. You can book your place on the course [here](#).
2. **Making Space for Nature in our Burial Grounds**. The course will look in depth at the challenges of gaining acceptance to naturalise areas of burial grounds and the approaches some local authorities have taken to successfully overcome such challenges to improve opportunities for biodiversity in these spaces. You can book your place on the course [here](#).
3. **Wildflower Meadows and Grasslands Management for Local Authorities**. This training course will look at adopting different grassland management techniques, including wildflower planting schemes, which can be implemented at a much faster rate, with similar

benefits to tree planting. In addition to climate mitigation, species-rich grasslands and wildflower areas also create diverse habitats and deliver increased food sources. You can book your place [here](#).

6.1.2 *Benchmarking*

APSE Performance Networks is the largest voluntary public sector benchmarking organisation in the UK. With over 200 authorities in membership, Performance Networks assists local councils by:

- Demonstrating progression on carbon reduction/ecological actions
- Helping to set a clear baseline on which competitiveness, efficiency and value for money can be measured in a systematic manner.
- Identifying the impact of service changes and interventions for your own local authorities and for others.
- Assessing the quality, cost and competitiveness of the services that councils provide on a regular basis.
- Helping to report data in meaningful ways to both elected members and the public.
- Identifying direction of travel and pace of change with regard to service delivery.
- Identifying inefficiencies such as poor productivity and high cost.
- Supporting service improvement through process benchmarking and sharing best practice examples.

For more information about how your parks service can benefit from Performance Networks membership, click [here](#).

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Sign up for APSE membership to enjoy a whole range of benefits

APSE member authorities have access to a range of membership resources to assist in delivering council services. This includes our regular network meetings, specifically designed to bring together elected members, directors, managers and heads of service, together with trade union representatives to discuss service specific issues, innovation and new ways of delivering continuous improvement. The networks are an excellent forum for sharing ideas and discussing topical service issues with colleagues from other councils throughout the UK.

Networks are a free service included as part of your authority's membership of APSE and all end with an informal lunch to facilitate networking with peers in other councils. If you do not currently receive details about APSE Network meetings and would like to be added to our list of contacts for your service area please email enquiries@apse.org.uk.

Our national networks include:-

- FM and Building cleaning
- Catering (School Meals)
- Cemeteries and Crematoria
- Highways and Street Lighting
- Housing, Construction and Building Maintenance
- Local Authority Commercialisation, Income and Trading Network
- Local Government Reorganisation Network
- Parks, Horticulture and Grounds Maintenance
- Renewables and Climate Change
- Roads, highways and street lighting
- Sports and Leisure Management
- Vehicle Maintenance and Transport
- Waste Management, Refuse Collection and Street Cleansing

Visit www.apse.org.uk for more details.



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