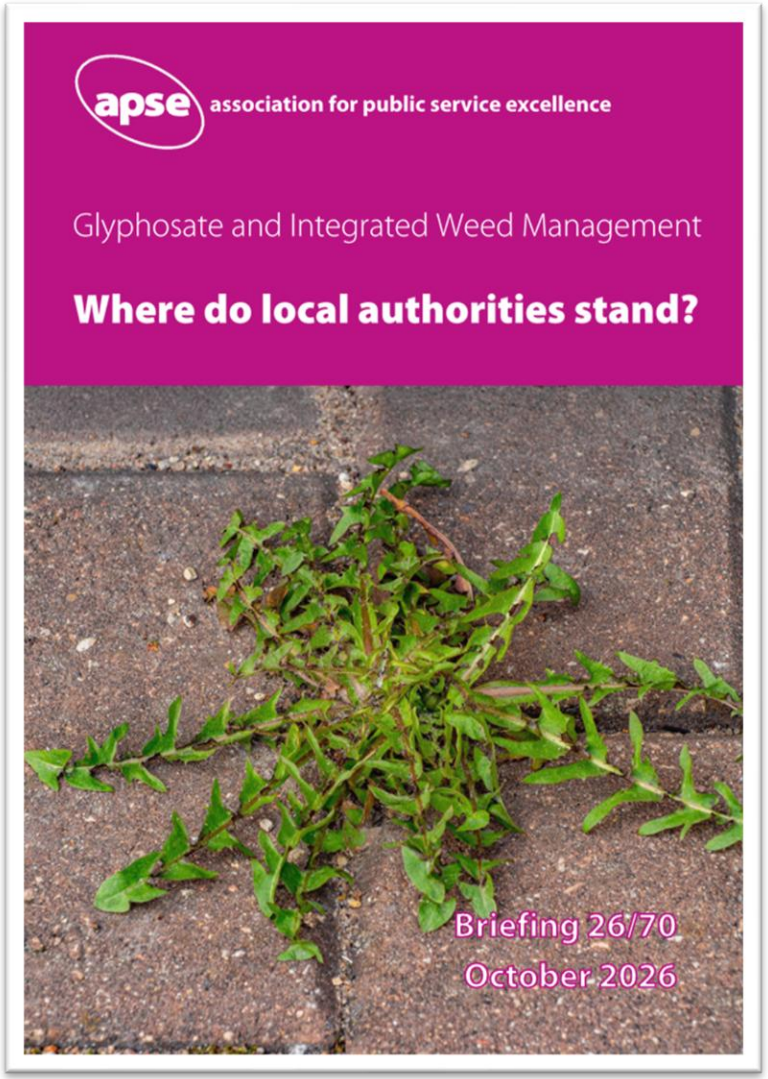
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Glyphosate and Integrated Weed Management:

Where do local authorities stand?

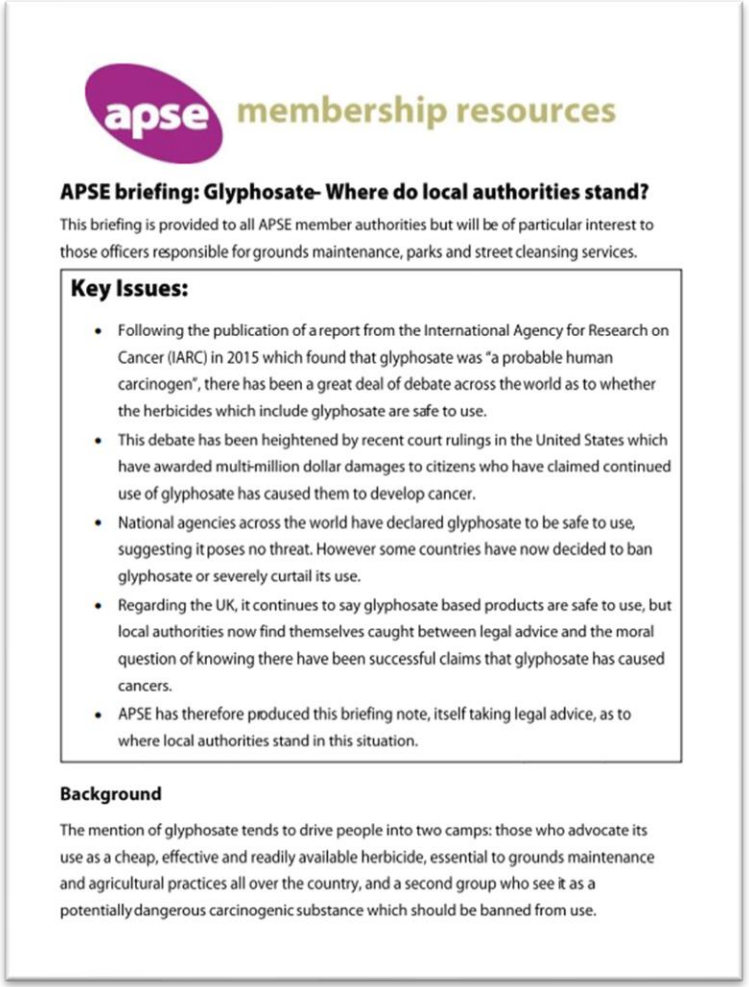
Matt Ellis, APSE Principal Policy Lead



Why are we revisiting this issue?

APSE first examined glyphosate in 2019

- APSE published *Glyphosate – Where do local authorities stand?* in 2019
- Since then, APSE has received almost 40 network enquiries on the issue
- Significant developments have occurred in: Biodiversity and nature recovery policy; Alternative weed control technologies; Public and political interest; Regulatory reviews
- APSE undertook this new survey to understand how the sector has changed



apse membership resources

APSE briefing: Glyphosate- Where do local authorities stand?

This briefing is provided to all APSE member authorities but will be of particular interest to those officers responsible for grounds maintenance, parks and street cleansing services.

Key Issues:

- Following the publication of a report from the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) in 2015 which found that glyphosate was "a probable human carcinogen", there has been a great deal of debate across the world as to whether the herbicides which include glyphosate are safe to use.
- This debate has been heightened by recent court rulings in the United States which have awarded multi-million dollar damages to citizens who have claimed continued use of glyphosate has caused them to develop cancer.
- National agencies across the world have declared glyphosate to be safe to use, suggesting it poses no threat. However some countries have now decided to ban glyphosate or severely curtail its use.
- Regarding the UK, it continues to say glyphosate based products are safe to use, but local authorities now find themselves caught between legal advice and the moral question of knowing there have been successful claims that glyphosate has caused cancers.
- APSE has therefore produced this briefing note, itself taking legal advice, as to where local authorities stand in this situation.

Background

The mention of glyphosate tends to drive people into two camps: those who advocate its use as a cheap, effective and readily available herbicide, essential to grounds maintenance and agricultural practices all over the country, and a second group who see it as a potentially dangerous carcinogenic substance which should be banned from use.

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Why glyphosate remains a key issue

Glyphosate sits at the centre of competing policy priorities

Councils are balancing:

- 🌱 Biodiversity and nature recovery ambitions
- 🚜 Effective management of weeds and invasive species
- 🛣️ Highway and public realm safety
- 💷 Financial pressures and resource constraints
- 👥 Public expectations and reputational considerations
- ⚖️ An evolving regulatory landscape

Regulatory context

Glyphosate: Current position

- Glyphosate remains authorised for use in Great Britain
- The Health and Safety Executive is currently considering a renewal application
- The review will consider the latest available scientific evidence

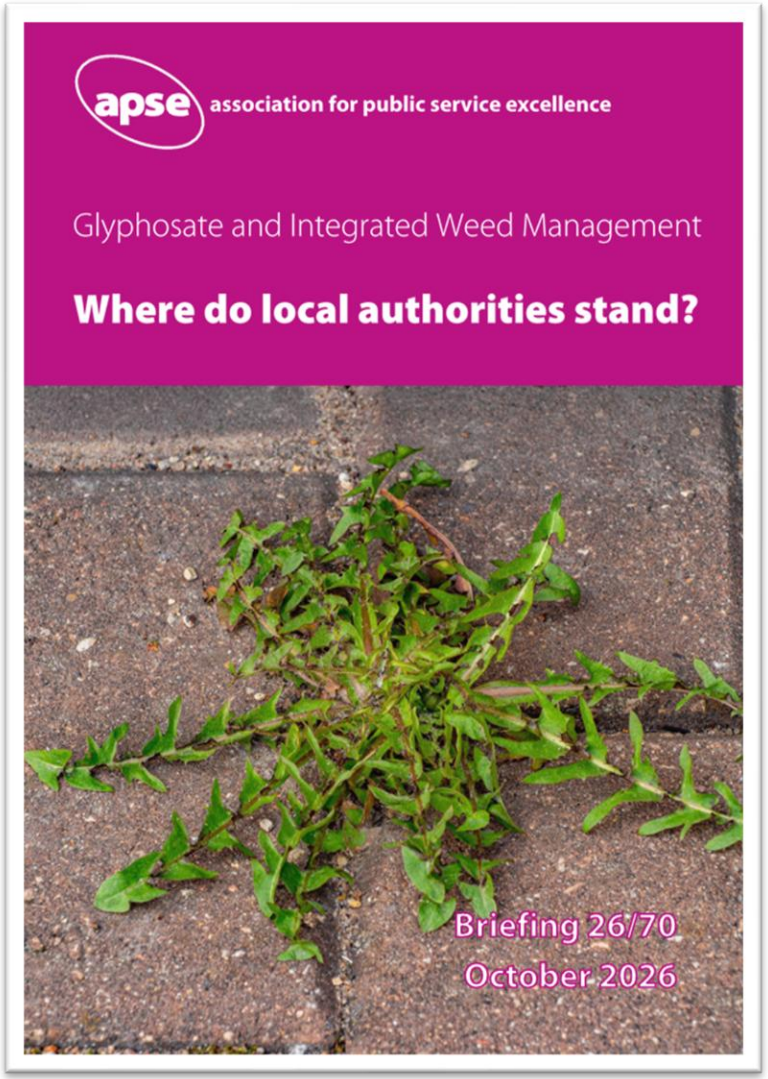
What does this mean for councils?

- Continuing uncertainty
- Increased focus on risk management
- Greater interest in integrated weed management approaches
- More councils exploring reduction programmes

Research methodology

APSE Survey 2026

- Conducted August-September 2026
- Responses from 143 councils across the UK
- Examined: Current glyphosate use; Reduction programmes; Alternative weed control methods; Barriers and challenges; Public perception; Future expectations



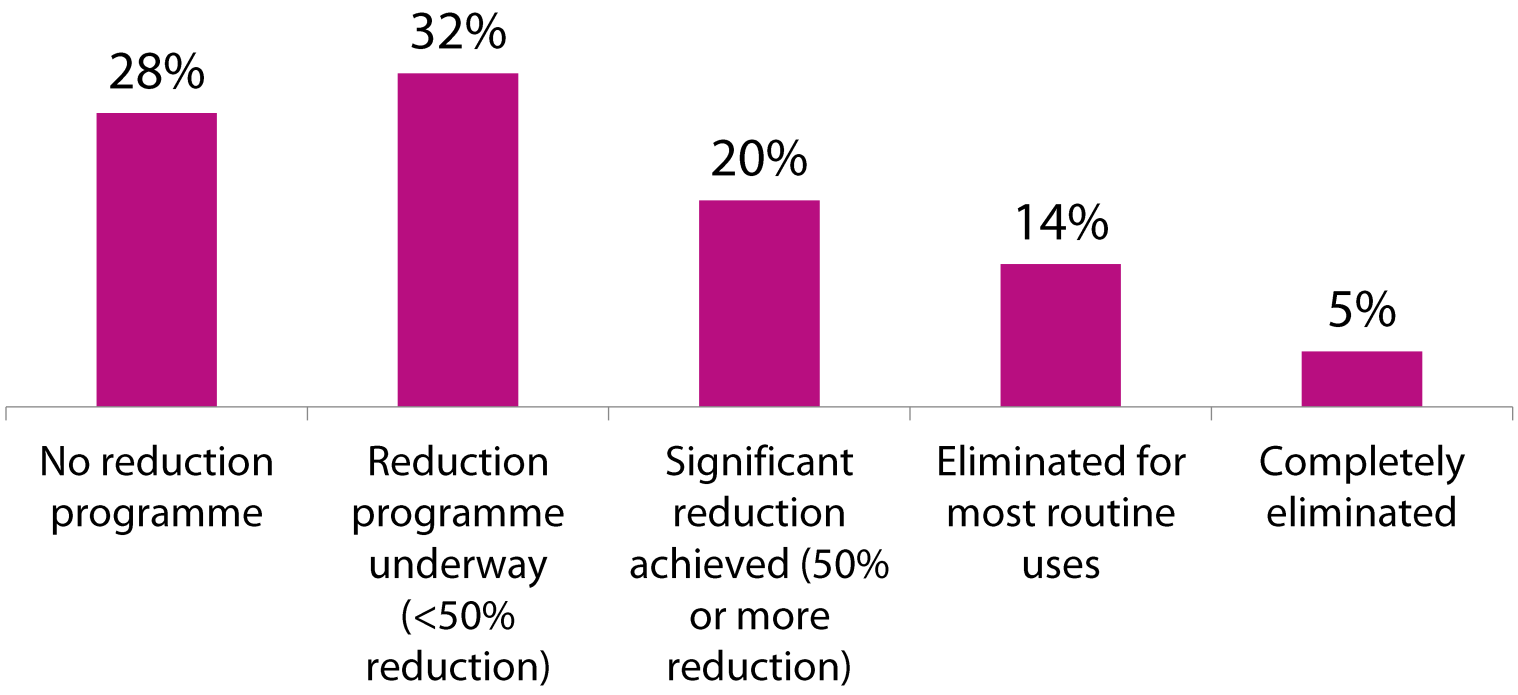
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Headline finding

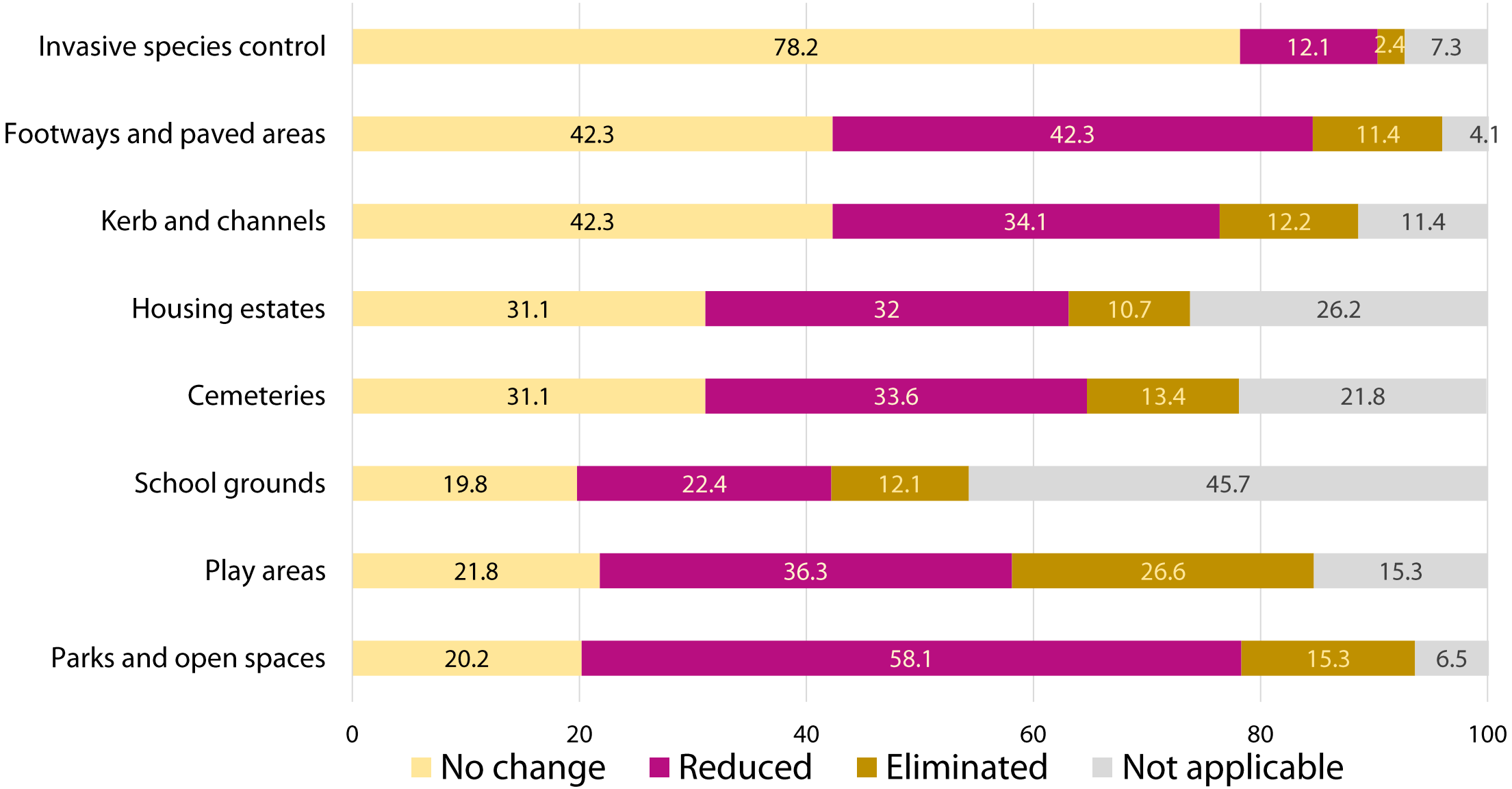
72% of councils have taken steps to reduce glyphosate use

"We have reduced the amount of Glyphosate use by over 50%, we will continue to try to reduce further."

How would you currently describe your authority's position on glyphosate?



Since 2020, how has glyphosate use for the following activities changed?



Current uses of glyphosate

Activity	% using glyphosate
Invasive species control	87%
Footways and paved areas	81%
Kerb and channels	72%
Parks/open spaces	64%
Cemeteries	53%
Housing estates	51%
Play area maintenance	41%
School grounds maintenance	29%

"Only used for aggressive weeds such as Japanese Knotweed."

"Only used for stem injection to plants such as Japanese Knotweed, and eco plugs into tree stumps."

What alternatives are councils trying?

IWM measures trialled?	%
Manual weeding	78%
Mechanical weed removal	72%
Wildflower/meadow management	68%
Reduced mowing regimes	53%
Hot foam	52%
Increased sweeping	37%
Hot water	35%
Acetic acid	34%
Steam	32%
Electric weed control	31%
Pelargonic acid	17%

What alternatives are councils adapting?

IWM measure	Trialled	Adopted
Manual weeding	78%	78%
Mechanical weed removal	72%	65%
Wildflower/meadow management	68%	58%
Reduced mowing regimes	53%	56%
Hot foam	52%	31%
Increased sweeping	37%	6%
Hot water	35%	6%
Acetic acid	34%	4%
Steam	32%	3%
Electric weed control	31%	3%
Pelargonic acid	17%	2%

"None of the above as they are not scalable for public realm/highway weed control."

"Effectiveness not currently matching budget."

What's driving change?

What factors have influenced your authority's efforts to reduce glyphosate use?	%
Environmental concerns	78%
Biodiversity objectives	66%
Political commitment	56%
Public pressure	55%
Health concerns	38%
Regulatory requirements	21%

What have been the main barriers to reducing glyphosate use?

What have been the main barriers to reducing glyphosate use?	%
Effectiveness of alternatives	84%
Cost	66%
Public expectations	50%
Staffing	46%
Political considerations	19%
Availability of requirements	13%
Health and safety concerns	13%
Procurement issues	2%

"None of the other methods were cost effective or reached quality standard of herbicide."

"We do not use any integrated weed management measures as, when trialled, they did not give us the longevity that we get with glyphosate."

Cost implications

Compared with glyphosate use, how would you describe the cost of your alternative approach?	%
Much higher	42%
Slightly higher	21%
Similar	5%
Slightly lower	6%
Much lower	3%
Not known	23%

"Significant investment of the order of 10x higher p.a. than previous glyphosate approach."

Public Expectation Challenge

Councils face competing expectations

- Reduced pesticide use
- Enhanced biodiversity
- Weed-free streets and public spaces

"They like Glyphosate not being used, but are then disappointed with the resultant weeds."

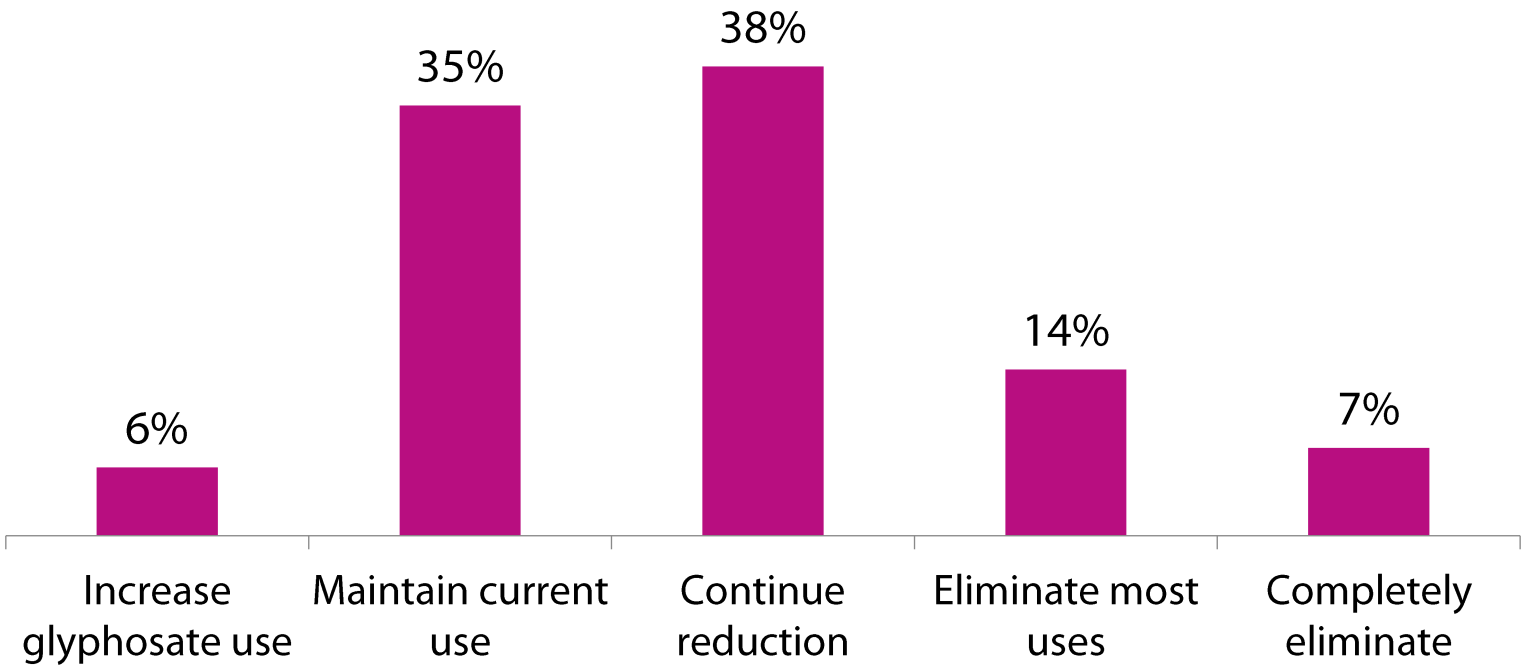
"Complaints that we are using glyphosate and complaints that we aren't dealing with weeds."

Future direction

"Depends on the licensing of glyphosate."

"We will continue to look at reductions."

What do you think will happen within your authority over the next five years?



Five Key Takeaways

1. The sector has changed significantly since APSE's 2019 briefing.
2. Most councils are reducing reliance on glyphosate.
3. Integrated weed management is becoming mainstream.
4. Cost and effectiveness remain the major barriers.
5. Future progress is likely to be gradual, pragmatic and locally determined.

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