



Lambeth's non-chemical romance

Wednesday 30th March 2022

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A bit about Lambeth Parks Service

- The service manages over 80 parks and open spaces and over 45,000 trees on the highway, parks, cemeteries and housing estates, and undertakes grounds maintenance on 300 housing sites
- Top service in the Good Parks for London Guide in 2020 and 2nd in 2021
- We currently hold 19 Green Flag Awards and achieved 26 London in Bloom Awards in 2021



A bit about Lambeth Parks Service



- From this coming Friday it will be a wholly in-house service delivery model:

- Parks maintenance in-sourced in 2016
- Arboricultural maintenance in-sourced in 2019
- Housing open space/estate maintenance in-sourced in 2021
- Parks Sports Bookings in-sourced on 1st April 2022



Where the romance began ...

- It was officer led initially in parks – Head of Service wanted to stop herbicide use when parks maintenance was in-sourced in 2016
- Staff transferring from contractor said they used very little pesticides/chemicals!
- Lambeth councillors signed up to Pesticide-free London pledge in 2018 – Cabinet Member at the time (now Leader) used this to bring about change in other service areas



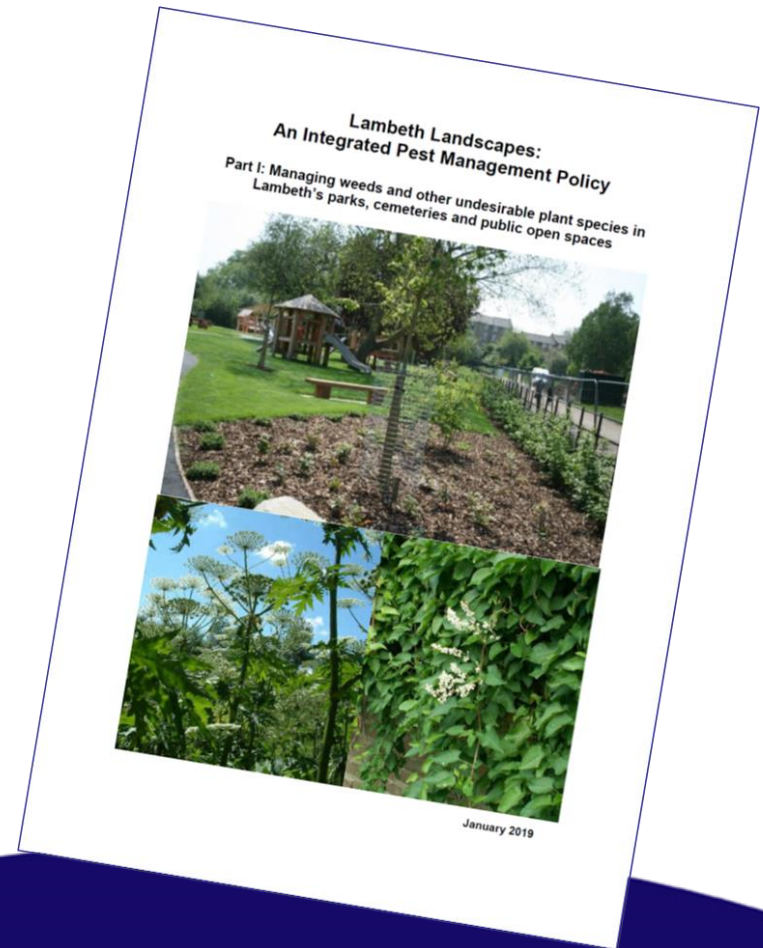
Other services following our example



- Housing stopped the use of herbicides in 2020 on all estates
- Environmental Services stopped the use of herbicides in 2021 when the council's new waste and streets contract started:
 - Prior to that individual streets could opt out of having their street treated with herbicides
 - Now mechanically swept once a year but still with an resident opt out

Integrated Pest Management Policy

- Adopted in 2019
- Sets out background to the council's decision
- Our premise is not to use herbicides for routine grounds maintenance; only in specific instances where there is no alternative
- Weed control methods
- Our responsibilities and policy statement



What have we done to tackle weeds in parks since 2016

- Firstly, we have greater tolerance of weeds
- Manual weeding
- Hot water
- Mechanical sweeping
- Strimming
- Flame gun
- Mulching
- Where we still use herbicides



Manual weeding

- 2 mobile gardeners
- 2 static (HLF commitments)
- More horticultural apprentices planned
- Friends Groups and Volunteers
- Community Payback
- Community managed sites



Hot water

- Large unit purchased in 2017
- Effective on young weeds
- Resource-intensive
- Vehicle requirement
- Several treatments needed
- Paving issues
- Length of hose / access
- Diesel generator to heat water, diesel vehicle to transport and petrol engine to power jet wash



Mechanical equipment



- Pedestrian weed-ripper purchased 2017
- Very effective, regularly used
- HAVS issue

Strimming

- Fast and effective
- No impact on roots
- Different wire heads on order, haven't assessed HAVS impacts yet



Flame guns

- Now our default method but ...
- Small units so slow and impacted by wind
- Trolley-mounted system meaning not overly mobile



Mulching

- Used S106, events income and other sources to purchase peat-free soil improvers
- Insourcing tree maintenance service has provided a source of woodchip
- Would like to create two composting sites in depots but limited with space



When we do use chemicals

- Japanese knotweed – stem injection only
- Eco-plugs – cemeteries and trees



Resident perception

- Generally very good in parks and open spaces – we get a handful of complaints each year
- Resident satisfaction with parks has never been higher – in 2020, 74% of people agreeing parks were excellent or good and in the top 3 valued things by residents about the borough
- Majority of residents positive about the changes and very supportive



Where we have struggled

- We are seeing ever increasing weed coverage on our sports pitches – we are working with Football Foundation and GMA on an investment programme
- Housing open spaces – year one was a struggle coupled with ideal grass growing conditions last year



Our big challenges managing housing open spaces

- We took over the service in February 2021
- Year one was a struggle – not helped by good grass growing conditions
- We learnt the previous provider as well as spraying Glyphosate also used growth suppressants on hedges and shrubs



Our big challenges managing housing open spaces

- We didn't take into account the additional resource involved in strimming along building edges and fence lines – previously sprayed with glyphosate
- Staff that ended up doing this work were previously involved in hedge and shrub maintenance
- We ended up with overgrown hedges and shrub beds and lots of weeds



Our big challenges managing housing open spaces



- Housing had an increase in complaints and have had to manage resident expectation – this is a service residents pay for so there are expectations
- We had to manage the expectations of Housing Officers as well as educating them on why this was happening
- We have had to counter the perception from senior management the new service wasn't performing well

Our big challenges managing housing open spaces

- A few positives:
 - Residents commented that the roses had never looked so good
 - We have a committed group of residents and stakeholder groups keen to work with us and change how estates are managed
 - We have a keen Housing client who really wants to deliver changes to the service and improve biodiversity



Our big challenges managing housing open spaces



- What are we doing differently in 2022:
 - All shrub beds have been weeded and mulched over the winter
 - Developing a programme of planting up empty beds
 - We are changing how we mow grass – fewer areas will be closely cut in 2022 (follows what we have been doing for a number of years in parks now)
 - Colleagues in Housing are publicising the service changes and speaking to residents about why we are doing this

An opportunity for change?

- Definitely!
 - Our experience is the public on the whole support us not using herbicides and accept things have/will change
 - The statutory obligation under Environment Act 2021 and Lambeth declaring an Ecological and Climate Emergency has given us the mandate to change our management regimes



Thank you



Lambeth