

Councillor Sara Keeton
Convener, Climate Change and
Nature Scrutiny Panel

(SENT BY EMAIL)

Please ask for:

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Our Ref: AS/DH/AL/CA/JW

Your Ref:

Date: 27 June 2024

Dear Councillor Keeton

Thank you for your letter dated 11 June 2024.

Please see below our further comments as requested.

1. Information to be provided on new legislation regarding location of charging points on cars, and effects of this.

Panel note:

We discussed Public Electric Vehicle Charging points and asked if new legislation has been brought in that all new cars will have to have the charging point in the same place, for example, at the front of the car, and if so, what effect this will have on installation of charging points. Cllr Andrea Lewis agreed to provide a full written response following the meeting. We noted you are keeping a watching eye on emerging technologies and are trying to plan but have to be flexible as things are changing quickly.

Response:

At present, there is no specific legislation introduced in the UK that mandates the standardisation of the placement of connector sockets on electric vehicles. New requirements and regulations have been introduced by the UK Government to enhance charging infrastructure, although these pertain to the accessibility, reliability and technical specifications of public charge points rather than the positioning of connectors on vehicles. The positioning of EV connector sockets therefore remains at the discretion of the electric vehicle manufacturers.

The following article lists upcoming public charging regulations and their timelines for implementation in the UK.

[Upcoming public charging regulations in the UK – Monta](#)

2. Further information on 'no mow May' to be provided to the Panel.

Panel Note:

We stated we would like to see 'no mow May' rolled out across the County and were informed this was tried last year but equipment was damaged as the grass had grown so long. As a result, only a few areas were picked this year for 'no mow May'. We heard the Department has now managed to secure funding for new cut and collect vehicles and new plant which will be able to do the job. We were very pleased to hear this. We were informed that a full response will be provided by the relevant Cabinet Member following the meeting.

Response:

Swansea wide application of No Mow May (NMM) was trialled in 2023 and the results discussed in detail with relevant cabinet members, Nature Conservation Team and Parks. The NMM trial caused significant operational issues including damage to numerous equipment costing significant sums to repair as that equipment is not designed for cutting much longer grass. This presented an unsustainable pressure on the service revenue budget. As a result the decision was not to carry out the scheme in the same manner as 2023 but attempt to achieve similar principles through our cut and collect trial which utilises speciality equipment designed to cut longer grass, however we have limited numbers of this kit and due to its size and requirements for cuttings disposal is not suitable for all sites. The service will continue to review its equipment replacement programme and embrace future technological advances which allow wider biodiversity application. More details on the cut and collect trial can be found here:

<https://www.swansea.gov.uk/article/8806/Cut-and-collect-trial---boosting-biodiversity>

3. Further information on use of weed killers to be provided to the Panel.

Panel note:

We asked why the Council cannot stop using weed killers and added that some councillors have asked for it not to be done in their wards this year. Cllr Hopkins stated this has been debated at the Panel many times and ward members now have the opportunity to opt out wherever possible. We were informed this is ongoing, there is a commitment by the Council to look for alternatives wherever it can, and it is still looking at different technologies. We stated that we keep bringing it up because it is such an important issue as we are losing lots of insects every year due to spraying. We were informed that a full response will be provided by the relevant Cabinet Member following the meeting.

Response:

The Parks service do use a Glyphosate based herbicide when preparing wild flowering areas for sowing. Ideally we would prefer not to do so, but given that we sow some 40,000sqm per year we do not have the labour resources to manually remove invasive weed growth when prepping for sowing which is essential to have an effective floral growth and display. The council has to balance a range of views and approaches and whilst in some areas we are trialing further reduction there is still a desire from other stakeholders to continue the practice to ensure we can give efficient colourful displays which give much joy and enhance wellbeing and mental health.

The Parks service also use it for control of invasive species, in particular Japanese Knotweed.

The Formulated products continue to be classified as non-hazardous by The European Chemicals Agency's (ECHA) Committee for Risk Assessment (RAC). Taking this into account the service continues its limited use of Glyphosate whilst it remains fully licensed. It will of course continue to monitor opportunities for further reduction by use of alternative methods which must be as effective, affordable and not create inefficiency elsewhere. Parks' use of Glyphosate based herbicides is by fully trained and certificated staff.

The Highways service use Glyphosate for hard areas, kerb edges, paving joints, back of footways and the like. This is currently the only method for control over the length of the network. We will continue to look for large area alternatives that are as effective and affordable. The areas sprayed are not suitable for any flowers or other vegetation. The only Authority we are aware of that stopped spraying on Highways, was Brighton however, they have recently made the following comments: "Since 2019, we have been reliant on manual weeding alone. After 5 years, the problem is now out of control and many pavements present serious safety and accessibility problems for our residents. Manual weeding alone simply hasn't been effective and has left some streets inaccessible to wheelchair users, parents and carers with buggies and those with visual or mobility impairments". We will continue to monitor for alternative methods.

4. Further information on the installation of rain gardens to be provided to the Panel.

Panel Note:

We asked about the Council's approach to the design and implementation of rain gardens and were informed a full response will be provided by the relevant Cabinet Member following the meeting.

Response:

Rain gardens are engineered sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDS), designed to capture, and clean surface water run off diverting it from drainage systems. On Council owned land rain gardens should be designed and/or approved by qualified drainage engineers / landscape architects. Raingardens are typically installed in hard grey infrastructure or in green space and their creation depends on several factors:

Functionality, i.e. ecosystem services, contributing to reducing surface water flooding, cleaning water, increasing biodiversity by creating food and habitat for nature, providing summer cooling through evapotranspiration, increasing connectivity and improving amenity. There are different types of rain gardens offering different functions:

1. **Bioretention rain gardens** – these include engineered soils to capture, store water and remove pollutants. This reduces the level of pollutants reaching our waterways and affecting aquatic ecosystems. Bioretention rain gardens are often installed on or adjacent to areas with high vehicle movements (highways / car parks etc.). They are normally designed to be at and below ground level. A local example of a highways bioretention rain garden is currently being installed in Burrows Road in Sandfields.
2. **Rain planters** – Are very similar to rain gardens but they are above ground. They typically are designed to capture rainwater run-off from roofs. Local examples of rain planters can be found in Llys Glas, Swansea City Centre and at the Swansea Community Farm in Cadle.
3. **Swales and retention ponds** - These types of SuDS are generally installed in green space. Swales are shallow vegetated channels designed to be dry and wet. Retention ponds are areas of shallow open water designed to store rainwater.

Location – is key. Rain gardens need to be located where the water gathers. In the highway / hard landscape of the urban realm they need to be located adjacent to an existing drainage system allowing clean water to be slowly released back into the system and acting as an overflow in extreme weather events.

Design - they also need to be designed into the public realm taking into consideration existing services, accessibility, building basements, etc.

This means rain gardens are not suitable for all locations. There are a range of solutions to managing surface water quality and quantity across the urban landscape with multiple benefits for people and wildlife. Where rain gardens are not suitable other green infrastructure typologies such as green roofs / green walls and street trees also capture and hold stormwater as does urban landscaping. This range of typologies enables the urban landscape to act like a sponge, capturing and slowing the flow of surface water run-off and providing space for habitat creation and amenity.

Budget - there is no dedicated budget for installing rain gardens. To date they have tended to be designed into new schemes or are created from grant funded regeneration / enhancements projects. To maximise functionality maintenance is vital, and needs to be resourced either by Parks Services, where resources are limited, or externally which requires a maintenance budget.

Yours sincerely



Y Cynghorydd / Councillor Andrew Stevens
Aelod y Cabinet dros Yr Amgylchedd ac Chydraddoldebau
Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure



Y Cynghorydd / Councillor Andrea Lewis
Dirprwy Arweinydd / Aelod y Cabinet dros Drawsnewid Gwasanaethau
Deputy Leader / Cabinet Member for Service Transformation



Y Cynghorydd / Councillor David Hopkins
Dirprwy Arweinydd / Aelod y Cabinet dros Wasanaethau a Pherfformiad
Corfforaethol
Deputy Leader / Cabinet Member for Corporate Services & Performance



Y Cynghorydd / Councillor Cyril Anderson
Aelod y Cabinet dros Wasanaethau Cymunedol
Cabinet Member for Community Services