



Minehead Town Council – Targeted Street Weed Control Report 2025

Background

In December 2024, Minehead Town Councillors agreed to reintroduce targeted street weed control following several years of inaction and two years of trialling alternative methods. These alternatives proved costly, largely ineffective and raised ecological concerns of their own. Public feedback and a significant increase in complaints highlighted that residents expected street weed control as part of the town's maintenance. The Council therefore decided to reintroduce controlled and targeted herbicide use for 2025.

The appointed contractor visited Minehead three times during the year:

- **First visit:** May
- **Second visit:** July
- **Third visit:** October

This report summarises the herbicide application in 2025 and outlines considerations for councillors regarding next steps.

Selected Contractor

The contractor appointed was Complete Weed Control, a nationally recognised franchise. The Somerset, Dorset and Devon franchisee has extensive experience working with local authorities, commercial and private clients. Their approach included:

- Advanced application methods
- Use of adjuvants and chlorophyll sensors
- Precision nozzles for accurate and limited application

Herbicide Used – Glyphosate

Glyphosate is widely used for weed control in agriculture, horticulture and amenity settings such as streets and parks.

- The UK Government has extended its approval until December 2026 while a full scientific review and public consultation take place.
- Concerns primarily relate to large-scale agricultural use, not amenity settings.

- When used responsibly, glyphosate poses little to no known risk to human health or the environment.

2025 Application Summary

First Visit – May

- This was the first herbicide application in approximately five years.
- Despite previous manual clearance and alternative methods, weeds were well-established, and the seed bank was substantial.
- Some streets were missed during initial treatment, identified after visible differences in weed die-off. The contractor returned promptly to address these areas.
- **Public concern:** A report of dogs becoming ill over social media having recently been walked in Park Walk coincided with this visit. A press statement clarified that only street weeds were treated, not parks. The issue did not escalate.

Usage:

- Estimated coverage: **40+ miles** (both sides of streets)
- Mix:
 - **35 litres glyphosate**
 - **1,200 litres water**
 - **12 litres Adjuvants**
- Glyphosate concentration: **Approx. 2.8%**
- Adjuvants reduced glyphosate requirement by approximately **47 litres to 35 litres**

Second Visit – July

- Regrowth was visible but less severe than expected.
- Dry conditions limited weed growth, making coverage easier.
- No significant issues reported.

Usage:

- Estimated coverage: **40+ miles**
- Mix:
 - **26 litres glyphosate**
 - **890 litres water**
 - **8.9 litres of Adjuvants**
- Glyphosate concentration: **Approx. 2.8%**
- Adjuvants reduced glyphosate requirement by approximately **35 litres to 26 litres**

Third Visit – October

- Aim: Catch late-season growth and maintain control over winter.
- Application was hindered by lack of proactive leaf clearance, which contributes to detritus and future weed growth.
- Minor social media concerns about contractor legitimacy were noted but did not escalate.

Usage:

- Estimated coverage: **40+ miles**
- Mix:
 - **23 litres glyphosate**
 - **780 litres water**
 - **7.8 litres Adjuvants**
- Glyphosate concentration: **Approx. 2.86%**
- Adjuvants reduced glyphosate requirement by approximately **31 litres to 23 litres**

Operational Note:

All visits were scheduled early in the day to minimise public contact and ensure safety when operating machinery on footways.

Contractor Feedback

- The town had clearly suffered from a lack of proactive weed control and recovery will take time.
- Results in the first year were considered satisfactory. Complete eradication is unrealistic; the goal is an acceptable level of control.
- Logistical challenges included:
 - Street trees and uneven pavements
 - Parked cars on residential streets
 - Lack of leaf clearance in autumn

Cost

- **First visit Cost:** £3,170 exc. VAT
- **Second visit Cost:** £3,170 exc. VAT
- **Third Visit Cost:** £3,000 exc. VAT
- **Total cost for three visits:** £9,340 exc. VAT
- First and Second visit includes treatment of the railway station car park of £170 exc. VAT per visit (reimbursed by Somerset Council).

Information Sharing

- The Council published information on its website explaining:
 - The decision to reintroduce glyphosate use
 - Application methods and schedules
 - Risk assessments and method statements

- Updates were posted before each visit to maintain transparency.

Complaints and Enquiries

The contractor noted that, due to the negative perception surrounding glyphosate use in some areas, they occasionally receive adverse comments when working in public spaces. However, in Minehead, they reported a significant number of positive comments from residents who appreciated the role that responsible glyphosate application plays in maintaining a clean street scene.

- No formal complaints regarding glyphosate use or spraying were received by the Town Council office during 2025.
- A few discussions occurred on social media, as referenced earlier in this report but none escalated into official complaints.
- This contrasts sharply with previous years, when the lack of effective weed control generated numerous complaints.

A small number of residents requested that herbicide not be applied outside their properties. These requests were respected and the contractor was provided with the relevant locations to avoid.

The only complaints received in the office related to service lanes, where residents queried why these areas were not treated. Councillors are reminded that Minehead Town Council previously decided not to apply herbicide in service lanes, focusing instead on the main streets.

Summary

Minehead has faced challenges over the past five years in determining an effective approach to street weed control. The Council explored alternative options and should be commended for its forward-thinking approach. However, these alternatives proved:

- Ineffective
- Too costly and labour-intensive
- Raised their own ecological concerns

Public expectation clearly favours visible weed control. Through 2025, the Council demonstrated that controlled and responsible glyphosate application:

- Is cost-effective
- Produces satisfactory results
- Can balance environmental considerations

The Council's ambitious and well-received rewilding programme in open spaces helps offset any perceived environmental concerns and habitat loss. However,

residents generally expect a clean street scene and unmanaged weeds on residential streets are not widely appreciated.

Street weed management has historically consumed significant officer time. In 2025, this issue was largely resolved, allowing officers to focus on higher-priority matters. Since devolution, the Council does not have the resources to manage such issues manually.

Recommendation

That councillors agree to continue targeted street weed control using the appointed contractor in 2026, committing to three visits throughout the year.

Additional Options for Consideration

1. To extend the targeted street weed control strategy to service lanes within the town. (Estimated at £1,500 exc. VAT per treatment)
2. To include mechanical application in Alexandra Road and North Road car parks, now owned by Minehead Town Council. (Estimated £100 exc. VAT per site per treatment)

Ben Parker

Town Clerk

December 2025