

Direct Line:

15 June 2018

Dear

I refer to your request under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 for information about weed management. You asked:

1. What is the cost to Highways England of weed management programmes in total and, separately, the cost of herbicides and specifically glyphosate products in the treatment of weeds on England's motorways and major A roads?
2. What assessment has Highways England made regarding the costs for using alternative methods to glyphosate products in the treatment of weeds on England's motorways and major A roads?
3. What assessment has Highways England made regarding the a) CO2 output, b) the implications for operator, bystander and environmental safety, and c) the implications for weed populations, their size and appearance, from alternative methods to glyphosate products in the treatment of weeds on England's motorways and major A roads?

As I advised in my interim response last week, some of the information you requested is not held by Highways England. I also advised how weed management work may be undertaken, setting out the main three business areas responsible for such activity. .

They are:

Safety, Engineering & Standards Directorate who may, in the course of their activities, carry out trials or pilot schemes on our network which may have required site clearance, including treatment of weeds. However, they advised they hold no information.

Major Projects Directorate, who are responsible for delivery of large-scale improvement schemes on the network. As above, this would mean they carry out weed treatment as pan of their activities. However, with over 100 such projects currently, reviewing records against each would take us over the cost threshold. Details of current schemes are available to view on our website.

Implications for an operator and bystander are their increased risk from time spent on the SRN when comparing time trials of herbicide application to physical or mechanical methods. Additionally, dependant on the weed of interest, there is an increased exposure to harmful toxins the plant may carry.

Environmental safety risk is increased when herbicide application is used. However, if weeds are not identified and treated in an appropriate timeframe, physical and mechanical methods also increase risk.

Again, this is a key summary from the responses received, relevant to the question.

3 (c) What assessment has Highways England made regarding the implications for weed populations, their size and appearance, from alternative methods to glyphosate products in the treatment of weeds on England's motorways and major A roads?

Using glyphosate products is a more systemic process; using alternative methods to glyphosate products requires more accurate control in use and specific contact. Due to this level of application it would have different effects to the weed population depending on the type of weed and its surrounding environment. Currently this data is not being measured due to the non-use of alternative methods.

As with previous responses, again, this is the key summary from contributions. I must stress again, that some contractors have no records or have not made such an assessment.

I hope this is useful. If you are unhappy with the way we have handled your request you may ask for an internal review within 2 months of the date of this response for Freedom of Information requests and within 40 days for Environmental Information Regulations requests. Our internal review process is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/highways-england/about/complaintsprocedure>

If you require a print copy, please let me know. You should also contact me if you wish to complain

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact me. Please remember to quote reference number 762487 in any future communications.

Yours sincerely