Toni van Tonder report – Feb 2020

Report Period: **From 11/12/2019 – To 18 /02/2019**

Use of chemical weed spray in Devonport.

Background

Following the December business meeting I was contacted by Vauxhall resident Sharon Byron-McKay who raised her concern about the decision to start using chemical spray on Devonport Domain and Vauxhall Reserve. In response to the North Shore Cricket Club's request to support their turf maintenance regime and reduce the proliferation of Onehunga Weed & Broadleaf, the DTLB resolved that operational staff commence using the Bow and Arrow application at the two sports grounds in alignment with Auckland Council's Weed Management policy. What I was unaware of, and I suspect other members too, was that Sharon had submitted to the Local Board a petition with 1039 signatures in Feb 2015 requesting that Devonport remain spray-free. This was in relation to a cost-saving proposal to change from mechanical edging to sprays as part of the 2015-2025 Long-term Plan[1].

I met with Sharon to discuss the need to spray and why the decision was made to do so on Jan 16th and suggested I connect her with the Cricket Club so that they can discuss the non-chemical ways that they have endeavored to use to maintain the grounds. I also assured her that Devonport Peninsula, aside from the sports grounds, remains to be spray free and that the area is treated by Ventia as a 'special zone'. This was my understanding, and one that Local Board Services staff also shared. This is supported by the AC 30 Nov 2015 Weed Control Methods pdf which states that the Devonport-Takapuna Local Board was one of 5 local boards that opted to fund non-herbicide weed control methods for some or all hard edges and infrastructure in local parks.

Sharon also noted to me, following our meeting, that she had seen council contractors using sprays along the road corridor where passing children were on the way to dairy, and that there was no hazard signage up. The contractor was using glyphosate.

What I wish to raise in this report is the need for Local Board members to be informed on the extent of agrichemical use in the Local Board area so that we can answer questions around the use of agrichemicals truthfully. There is a long-standing sentiment that Devonport is 'chemical-free', a belief that I also shared, but this is not true as contractors are clearly using sprays in the area. As a local board we need to understand these products, and how widely they are being used so that we can advise the community of any risks associated with them. I have been advised by Community Facilities that whilst agrichemicals are used in the Devonport area, that use is minimal when compared to other areas in our Local Board.

I wish to note my expectation that the minimization of agrichemical use is not limited to the Devonport area only and is something that is extended to all of the Devonport-Takapuna Local Board area.

[1] While the Governing Body accepted the change from mechanical edging to sprays when the Long-Term Plan was adopted in 2015, the local board funded the ongoing of mechanical edging from its operational budget.

The following questions must be addressed:

1. Can we please have clarity on where chemical sprays are being used by maintenance contractors across our Local Board area?

2. Are the correct protocols being followed when chemical spray is being used? Ie. Notification and signage.

Attachments

A	Auckland Council Weed Control Methods Doc
B	Summary of informal feedback recived from community members

Signatories

Author	Toni van Tonder

30 November 2015

Methods used for weed control in Auckland

Mechanical

Weed control by weed-eating, mowing or shredding.

Mechanical control methods are not effective ways of killing the entire plant including the root system, but they trim foliage and can prevent or reduce seed production and restrict growth. It is most effective when it is timed well, e.g. before a plant sets seed.

Auckland Council generally uses mechanical control for selected pest plants in the road corridor, in catchments used by Watercare Services and in some parks to keep some open drains and swales clear. It is used most often in combination with other weed control methods (such as synthetic herbicide, steam, and hot water) to increase effectiveness.

Mechanical control methods must be undertaken on a regular frequency, depending on the species, to prevent weeds from re-sprouting from stem and root fragments.

There is the potential to spread some weeds through mechanical control methods as fragments can travel on machinery, or re-sprout from fragments on site.

Manual

Weed control by hand, hand tool or mulching.

Council uses this method in various sites, though it is not an effective method for most of the hard edges in local parks, or for the road corridor. In other sites it can be effective against small shrubs and trees and herbaceous weeds in small infestations, removing the whole plant. It is best suited to small plants without extensive root systems that can be removed without breakage. It is not recommended for plants with deep underground roots and/or easily broken roots.

Most weeds should be removed from the site entirely to avoid fragments or seeds colonising and careful disposal is important for some species (e.g. those that re-sprout from fragments).

This method also creates soil disturbance, which can lead to weed invasion, and manual control on species that re-sprout from fragments can lead to weeds spreading further. The labour-intensive nature of this method and the need to remove and dispose of weeds makes it comparatively more expensive than other methods.

Biological control

Control using a weed's natural enemy.

Biological control (biocontrol) agents are usually insects or pathogens that attack different parts of a weed, including the seeds, stems, shoots, leaves and roots. This method is used to control suited species in sites across the region including regional parks. The agents are released into a target area with a suitable weed population.

It is not suited to control weed species typically occurring on hard edges of local parks and many species in the road corridor as there is a high probably of these agents attacking similar species outside the target area, including neighbouring private land. It can be a suitable method for sites alongside native bush or commercial crops which may be impacted by control using synthetic herbicides.

There is an initial financial investment to research, breed and import a biological control agent however if an agent is successful it can be a cost-effective option as it continues to kill the pest with no further direct help from humans and at no additional cost.

Before a new biological control agent is released, approval from the EPA is needed and all proposed agents are rigorously tested to assess the risk of damage to non-target plants. They are also tested for disease and evaluated for any other unwanted interactions they might have.

High pressure steam

Application of high pressure steam.

Steam is not an effective way of killing the entire plant including the root system, but it treats the foliage and can prevent or reduce seed production and restrict growth. The steam destroys the surface foliage of the weeds, leaving the roots primarily untreated as the temperature of the steam decreases (forming liquid water) rapidly upon touching the ground.

Steam does not destroy the foliage of some types of weeds (nutgrass and kikuyu for example).

This method is used in the road corridor in the north-east urban area of the North Shore (methodology used in the road corridor remains that of the legacy North Shore City Council). Steam treatment is required every six weeks in combination with or interspersed with mechanical trimming/removal. This method uses 2000L to 3000L of water per control shift which must also be heated.

Hot water treatment

Application that involves rubbing the foliage with a wand delivering hot water.

Hot water treatment is not an effective way of killing the entire plant including the root system, but it treats the foliage and can prevent/reduce seed production and restrict growth.

The hot water destroys the surface foliage of the weeds, leaving the roots primarily untreated as the temperature of the water decreases rapidly upon touching the ground. Hot water does not destroy the foliage of some types of weeds (nutgrass and kikuyu for example). Thermal treatment of weeds can reduce soil micro-organisms and invertebrates.

This method is used in the road corridor in the north-west urban area of North Shore (methodology used in the road corridor remains that of the legacy North Shore City Council). It uses 5000L to 6000L of heated water per control shift. Control is currently repeated every eight weeks in combination with mechanical trimming/removal of larger weeds.

Plant-based herbicide

Weed control by plant-based herbicide via foliar spray.

Plant-based herbicide includes products such as ‘Organic Interceptor’ (derived from pine essence) and ‘Agpro Bio-Safe’ (derived from coconut oil). Both are non-selective, contact herbicides. (A non-selective herbicide kills or injures all plants present, and is effective on the plant parts contacted by the herbicide if applied at an adequate rate).

Plant-based herbicides are activated on contact with the foliage of weeds and brown off the foliage thus can prevent or reduce seed production and restrict growth. They are usually fast acting, and they can control some weeds that hot water and steam don’t affect (such as kikuyu).

Plant-based herbicide is used in approximately 1049 km of road corridor in central Auckland and on Waiheke Island (methodology used in the road corridor remains that of the legacy Auckland City Council). Plant-based herbicides are also be used in combination with other methods, and they require more frequent application compared to synthetic herbicide. Bio-Safe is used on a four- weekly cycle and is supplemented with synthetic herbicide. Interceptor is used on a 12-day cycle in combination with mechanical removal.

Bio-Safe becomes a non-active substance on contact with the soil and has no residual activity.

Synthetic herbicide

Application of approved synthetic herbicide through foliar spray or other suitable method.

Synthetic herbicides are effective when correctly selected for the target species and when used according to label and best practice methodology. For all synthetic herbicide use, Auckland Council complies with the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) national level requirements for the storage, mixing, use, disposal and certification of contractors for synthetic herbicide.

It is often the most effective control method for a weed, including some of the worst environmental weeds (pest plants) managed by our biosecurity team. Common application methods include foliar spray, cut and paste, roller ball, weed wipe or stem injection.

Glyphosate-based herbicides are used on 3551km of hard edges in local parks except where a local board has decided to fund non-herbicide, mechanical control in this area. To date five local boards (Waiheke, Great Barrier, Kaipātiki, Devonport/Takapuna and Whau) have opted to fund non-herbicide weed control methods for some or all hard edges and infrastructure in their local parks.

Glyphosate-based herbicides are the preferred method of vegetation control in the road corridor and are widely used across the road network.

Glyphosate-based herbicides are an effective tool for controlling annual broadleaf weeds, grasses and other monocots, effectively killing the entire plant including its root system. This control method requires less frequent follow ups than other methods, with an average of three to four treatments a year, making it very cost-effective. Auckland Council and Auckland Transport notify the public of intended application in the following ways:

- Prior notice in local newspapers, or door-to-door advice
- On-site signage
- Signage on application equipment

If you do not want your street frontage sprayed with herbicide, read about the council No-Spray Register**.**

No control

Where no weed control is undertaken at a particular site.

No control can be effective in some sites and with some species, for example no control of gorse in the rural road corridor can lead to successful regeneration of native species. This method can take many years to be effective and any interventions, especially maintenance during the period where the site looks unkempt, can set the effectiveness period back many years.

In situations where erosion control is more important than species composition, no control of weeds is also an effective option. No control can also be suitable on sensitive sites such as maunga (volcanic cones) where intervention and disturbance could have an adverse impact on cultural, archaeological and geological site values.

There is no immediate direct cost for this method, though there are unquantified potential longer- term costs from damage to assets caused by weeds (cracks in footpaths, car parks etc.) There is also the potential environmental cost of weed species out-competing native plant populations and weed species like privet triggering asthma and hay fever and other species presenting a physical hazard (e.g. trip hazard).

INFORMAL FEEDBACK: TvT JAN/FEB 2020

The following two pages contain a table of informal feedback that I received from friends, networks and local business owners in the Devonport area (and a couple in Milford). The majority (although not all) of the comments come from men and women typically my age and stage in life: so this provides a bit of a snap shot of what's important for busy/working families.

Recurrent themes that I've identified are around:

1. MOVEMENT OF PEOPLE: Better connected and SAFE cylceways that get kids to school, coupled with more strategic zebra crossings. More rapid PT options that are integrated.
2. BUSINESS SUPPORT: Redesigning our town centres to make them more vibrant, human-centered areas. Greater support for smaller BIDS. Closing roads for more events, greater pedestrianization of areas, built out curbs to put in seating, more planted natives to provide tree canopy and shade. Get on with Unlock Takapuna development and the Belmont Town Centre plan, and look at Vauxhall shops and push for a transit-oriented commercial and residential development at Bayswater Marina.
3. INVESTMENT IN THE ARTS: Sculpture trails, arts events etc.
4. ENVIRONMENT: Pollinator pathways, far more native planting, sustainability education (capacity building in this space), water quality and protection of marine species.
5. COMMUNITY FACILITIES: The ones that are closed – open them up. Give the community a chance to make use of them. Support for more community-led initiatives such as kai tahi.

INFORMAL FEEDBACK: TvT JAN/FEB 2020

Deliver a transit-oriented development at Bayswater Marina. Turn it into a fantastic little commercial and transport area like Hobsonville Point with high density housing.	1. Get Fullers sorted out with reliable sailings and better connection to PT. 2.Better connected cycleways that are safe and separated, and kids can travel on without parents observation. 3. Make school routes safer for children to travel and get to school on scooters and bikes ie. more zebra crossings around schools. 4. Close North Head to cars.	More zebra crossings, especially along Old Lake Road / Sea View intersection, and the bottom of Handley Avenue and across to Woodall Park so kids can get to school easily.
1. Bardia Road needs a roundabout. 2. Lake Road needs dynamic lighting. 3. Progress Takapuna Town Centre upgrade. 4. Close off Devonport High Street and relocate the markets there. 5. Focus on waste diversion.	1. Progress Belmont Town Centre upgrade. 2. Make Vauxhall road more pedestrian focused and build out the curbs for seating and apply a different treatment to the roading so that it reads as a town centre. 3. Cycleways need to progress - east & west green route cycleway to get traffic off Lake Road.	1. Better management of water quality in our rivers and beaches. 2. Better care and protection of our marine species and biodiversity. 3. Engage more <50 year olds in voting and ensure decisions reflect engagement with this age group.
Better bike tracks through Takapuna. I cycle to Albany every day and this is by far the most dangerous stretch.	Greater focus on rapid transit / PT options and getting cars off roads. More prioritisation on environment and education and assistance in our communities to change behaviour in the sustainability space.	1. More disabled carparks in town centres. 2. More funded street closures for events. 3. More support for small BIDS. 4. Fix Lake Road. 5. More FREE public transport (esp fullers).
Invest in more community events. Sort out toilets at Takapuna reserve. Get on with Takapuna town centre. Place less stock on the boomers opinions and listen to more 'younger' residents. Sort out water quality issues - we won't swim at Milford any more. The Milford playground is not all ages - it should have included play things for older children.	1. Deliver the skate park/pump track with toilets available. 2. Create better opportunities for tweens/youth. 3. A Hobsonvillepoint-like development at Bayswater Marina. 4. More cycleways - Kawerau to Eversleigh in particular. 5. More community events especially around the arts. 6. More street parties, road closures, reasons to get out of your homes locally. 7. Mini summer music festivals in parks.	1. More cycleways. 2. Walkway around the mangroves and connection for bikes to Esmonde.
I have long thought it would be great to unlock the potential of council owned properties to better meet the needs of the community. This would include activating some of the fantastic open spaces. Eg at the end of Bayswater Ave there is a reserve that was gifted by the original O'Neill family for a kids play ground. I have thought it would be a great spot for a children's garden with some facilities for water play, messy play etc. There are models for this overseas working with communities to give the opportunity to develop public land. It doesn't have to be flashy or expensive - better if it isn't! Another thought is opening up buildings for community uses - eg it would be great to have hubs where secondary students could go to study with ncea study resources and computers. I think it is assumed that kids have these resources at home but lots don't. Also these could be spaces for small business owners to hot desk / hold meetings. The local board could facilitate the opportunity for the community. Many times I don't know who to talk to at council - I am often stumped because it is so big now. It would also be great to have pollinator pathways - there are many orphan spaces by roads that could easily be planted.	1. Paths to the skate park in Ngataringa reserve from Recycling Centre side are in poor condition - can we turn the whole area into a great park with native trees for shade, picnic tables, bike tracks like Onepoto domain?	Calm the traffic. We live on Albert Road at the Lake Road roundabout. The speed of vehicles travelling on Albert Road is becoming too fast and too dangerous. How can we prompt people to slow down? Speed limit changes? Road bumps? There is nowhere safe to cross the road after the pedestrian crossing at St.Leo's
Establishment of a local/North Shore based advisory group on focused on art and culture on the North Shore. This could be made up of industry professionals, creatives, artists with an invested interest in developing arts and culture on the North Shore	We have enjoyed taking our children to Preschool Play, on the Devonport Heritage Walk and Athletics in Devonport over the years, we are keen to participate in more of these sorts of events for children	Waste Management, how can we deal with green waste including compostable food waste better, cheaper and more effectively in Devonport?

Opportunities for young people to be exposed to art through active making and participation in arts-based activities in the local area. The Devonport Arts Festival is doing their best to make this happen, could more funding be directed towards this festival or other programmes established? Recent criticism of the lack of art education in schools across all of the creative disciplines is in the media at present - if schools aren't able to provide this, how will our children discover the creative disciplines? More public art. Devonport is a prime destination for international visitors, where is the public art?		
Like most residents commuting to the city, we want to see the ferry service sorted Congestion on Lake Road, it is reaching a level of complete failure, as a Devonport resident how can we do business in wider Auckland when we can't get out of the suburb to attend appointments?	Protected bike lanes in as many places as possible, including fast-tracking Lake Road plans, adding better bike lanes along King Edward Parade, areas around schools. Supporting initiatives such as The Bike Lounge to encourage more biking, less driving. Alongside this some development of the walking environment to encourage people to get out of their cars and walk (so increasing shade, replacing some large stretches of asphalt with interspersed permeable/garden areas, to help keep it cooler)	A lot more street trees, particularly natives, both in the town centres and other streets. I understand that other Local Boards have put quite a bit of money into this area recently and Devonport/Takapuna has been lagging. More money on environmental projects, such as increased tree planting and restoration around Shoal Bay/Ngataringa Bay (continuing and ideally extending the work of Restoring Takarunga Hauraki and the equivalent in other parts of the Local Board area)
Some money going into climate change awareness and local resilience projects - particularly in the areas of community building, urban farming/growing initiatives, composting workshops, zero-waste, action around transport/biking, possibly a Library of Things/share initiative etc.	Supporting projects such as what Stephen McLuckie was doing in Bayswater, very local community projects.	Some funding going into drawing attention to the Maori heritage of our local spaces - including incorporating Māori names such as Te Hau Kapua/Torpedo Bay, and the Māori name for Windsor Reserve with possibly some signage around this, especially along the Devonport waterfront which has had some significant archaeological finds dating back to some of the earliest Polynesian arrivals where the Esplanade is and the Navy Museum. There are no doubt other places such as headlands and pa sites as well. I have just been in Melbourne, where one of the urban park areas along the river, Birrarung Marr, has been designed as a whole space reflecting the original aboriginal landowners and significance of the site, it seems quite unique and something we could consider here (I realise this will be happening on the maunga, but feel there is room for a more general inclusion of these concepts into planning public spaces).
Local art project funding, for exhibitions and projects with direct local connections. Possibly utilising some old council spaces for art workshops or exhibition venues (ie repurposing the old Devonport Bowling Club as an open-access studio space).		