

Submission to Offaly Co Co County Development Plan 2021-2027 Birr Tidy Towns and Birr 20:20 jointly request that Offaly County Council reassess its herbicide policy in the Birr Municipal District. A zero-tolerance policy on herbicide use should be adopted as soon as possible. In the meantime a reduction in herbicide usage should be implemented. These actions would have major benefits for public health and biodiversity. Each small step helps in our fight against Climate Change by protecting our biodiversity. The following suggestions would assist in the reduction of herbicide :?? 1. A narrower definition of what is classified as a weed should be adopted. Small plants such as ferns which grow on walls are not classified as weeds. Old stone walls provide important habitats for mosses and lichens adding to the biodiversity of the town and should not be sprayed with herbicide. Ivy and other detrimental woody plants can be controlled by hand pulling. 2. Replace blanket treatment or spraying of footpaths for weeds with a spot treatment method. 3. Using hot water solutions or similar treatments where applicable should replace spraying herbicides on hard landscapes. 4. The elimination of spraying in parks and open spaces in support of the All Ireland Pollinator Plan would help biodiversity. 5. The use of natural fertilisers such as seaweed should be encouraged. 6. Spraying herbicides in where fresh food is sold, such as the Marion Hall Park carpark, should be discontinued. 7. Tidy Towns supports communities in protecting their biodiversity, sustainability and helping to reduce their impact on the planet. Reducing and eliminating the use of herbicides plays a large part in doing this. Birr Tidy Towns group adheres to this policy and only weeds by hand pulling and scuffling. 8. Thought should be given to the future weed control of areas when hard surfaces need to be replaced.??These are only a few suggestions from the many that can help us as a town to reduce our herbicide usage and work towards a zero tolerance policy. As you may be aware Dun Laoghaire - Rathdown County Council have trialled some of these methods as part of their Weed Control on Hard Surfaces Plan 2018 and we suggest that Offaly Co Co adopt a similar policy. ??Dated 5/10/2020 Birr Tidy Towns Birr 20:20