



Rebecca Pow MP
DEFRA
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Councillor Sue Dann
Cabinet Member for Environment and
Street Scene

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Date 16th November 2020

Dear Rebecca Pow MP

GRASS CUTTING AND WEED CONTROL THROUGHOUT PLYMOUTH

It is widely accepted that due to a temperate climate, mild and wet winters with minimal frost damage, controlling growth (especially weeds) in our city has become a significant problem. Benchmarking with other local authorities would also suggest that whilst it is particularly problematic in the South West, other areas of the UK are experiencing a similar challenge in controlling weed growth.

Moreover, extensively reported concerns on the use of herbicides containing glyphosates have also led to a reduction in its use and a return to the more traditional – but resource intense – manual removal. During the last few years, we have experimented with a variety of alternatives to keep weeds under control, which have included trialling a range of innovative equipment – some of which is excellent – but costly. We have also had periods where we have simply allowed weeds, grass and wild flowers to flourish, especially in areas that attract insects, thus creating a more diverse ecosystem. However, there are areas where weeds especially will proliferate and cause damage to our highways, pedestrian ways and cycle paths as well as creating a dangerous hazard for motorists, pedestrians and cyclists.

So, you cannot fail to see that we are doing all we can and we now ask government to play their part in securing our critical green infrastructure and provide the funding that is so urgently needed. Each year, tackling problem areas creates huge pressure on our budget and we are forced to make difficult decisions, especially at a time when our green space has become so central to our residents' health and wellbeing. If the last 6 months has taught us anything, it is just how important our green spaces are, especially to those more vulnerable in our society and those not able to jump in the car and head off to the countryside.

Many years of austerity and a reduction in funding from government has further exacerbated the situation and I fear that this is no longer sustainable – which will lead to a terminal decline. If government fails to act now, the cost of addressing the deterioration to our infrastructure will create further, unmanageable pressure elsewhere. I now urge you to provide additional funding, which can be earmarked to address the growing problem with weeds and help us maintain our green spaces and maintain our critical infrastructure.

Yours Sincerely,

OFFICIAL

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sue Dann". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Councillor Sue Dann

Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Scene

CC:

Luke Hall MP

Minister of State for Regional Growth and Local Government

House of Commons

London

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