



Summer Recess 2024: How to discuss the issue of urban pesticide use with your MP

Following on from the General Election on July 4, many of us have brand new MPs. Out of 650 MPs, 335 are brand new to parliament!

Parliament is only sitting for a few weeks until Summer Recess, when MPs will spend a few weeks away from Westminster and in their constituencies.

Summer is therefore a fantastic time to speak to your MP about this campaign.

1) Get in touch with your MP

The first step is to get in touch with your MP! You can find out who your MP is on the parliament website [here](#).

They may have two email addresses, a parliament one and a constituency one. As one of their constituents, it's a good idea to contact the constituency email address in the first instance.

Before you email, make sure you do some research about their background and their work as an MP so far. The website [TheyWorkForYou](#) is very helpful for this.

Send them an email about this campaign, why it matters to you, and what you want them to do about it as an MP. More detail in the 'sample text' section below.

2) Attend a constituency surgery

Most MPs host a weekly 'surgery' in the constituency, which is a slot for constituents to attend and speak to their MP face to face about a particular issue. You often need to book a slot in advance and may need to wait a few weeks to get an appointment, but it's a great opportunity to discuss the campaign directly. If you'd like help preparing for your appointment, get in touch with amy@pan-uk.org and we'd be happy to help.

3) Ask your MP to raise the issue in parliament

In your email or during your surgery appointment, make sure to ask your MP to raise the issue of urban pesticides in parliament. Things you can ask for include:

- Ask them if they can:
 - Table a written question
 - Ask an oral question
 - Apply for a debate
 - Write to the relevant government minister
 - Bring up the issue of urban pesticide use in other relevant discussions, e.g. in a debate on biodiversity

We are happy to advise on what to ask of your MP - contact amy@pan-uk.org for help!

Sample text

Below is some suggested text for any emails or letters you send to your MP. Make sure you adopt this text into your own words: the more you personalise and target your approach the better. Make sure to include your address, an introduction that includes a personal sentence or two about why you care about this issue personally, and a conclusion/request

As a local resident I am deeply concerned about toxic pesticides being sprayed in our parks, playgrounds, pavements and other public spaces. Many of the chemicals being used have been linked to serious health problems including cancer and Parkinson's.

Pesticides are also devastating urban biodiversity by contaminating the natural resources relied upon by wildlife such as birds and bees. Urban pesticide use is unnecessary and there are lots of safe and sustainable non-chemical alternatives available.

Local councils need support. *If a nationwide ban was introduced by the UK Government, then it wouldn't be up to individual local authorities to chart their own course when it comes to going pesticide-free. It is well-known that local councils' budgets have been squeezed and there is a lack of resources and funding for basic services. The councils that have managed to go pesticide-free have done so with no support, simply because they are committed to better protecting human health from chemicals and bringing nature back to our towns and cities. A ban could lead to greater access to funding, as well as more advice and knowledge-sharing between councils, making the journey to going pesticide-free easier for everyone.*

We are in the midst of a nature crisis. *The UK is one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world. Due in large part to habitat loss in the countryside, and the large quantities of pesticides used in UK agriculture, our wildlife is struggling. Urban spaces have the potential to act as a refuge for a wide range of species including birds, insects, bees and hedgehogs. But the overuse of pesticides by local authorities is destroying many of the areas where these animals forage for food, and contaminating the natural resources they depend upon. In addition,*

pesticides will often run off hard surfaces such as pavements and paths, contaminating water courses and harming aquatic wildlife in the process.

Our health is impacted by exposure to pesticides. In March 2015, the UN World Health Organisation declared glyphosate to be a 'probable carcinogen' for humans, meaning that repeated or long-term exposure to the chemical is linked to cancer. The herbicide 2,4-D is also a probable carcinogen and suspected endocrine disruptor, and MCPA is acutely toxic and a possible carcinogen. These are the three most widely used pesticides by local authorities in public spaces. Glyphosate is also increasingly being linked to [Parkinson's](#).

Since 2015, more than one hundred councils around the UK have ended, or significantly reduced, their pesticide use, proving that going pesticide-free is completely possible. The UK should follow the examples of [France](#), [Denmark](#) and [Luxembourg](#), which have all successfully banned pesticide use in villages, towns and cities.