GRANGE PRESTONFIELD COMMUNITY COUNCIL

HARNESSING NEIGHBOURHOOD COMMITMENT TO COMMON GOOD

23 October 2026
To Southside Newington Ward Councillors

Overgrown Weeds in Edinburgh's Streets – an embedded problem

1. Grange Prestonfield Community Council (GPCC) writes to record its concern about the overgrown weeds blighting streets in our area and across our city. We acknowledge that, since April 2024, the City Council has been phasing out the use of glyphosate, the weed killer that had been used for many years to control growth on pavements and roads. However, no replacement method has been found that is as cheap and effective. Consequently, the situation has become unmanageable. Many streets and pavements in our capital city are unsightly, and frankly embarrassing.

2. We recognise that the Council took the decision for sound environmental and health reasons and that many residents agree with the ban. We know that glyphosate use is currently under review by the UK's Health and Safety Executive. We note that the UK Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) is promoting an Integrated Weed Management control approach. We are prompted to ask what innovation in procedure Edinburgh Council is now pursuing?

3. The Council appears to rely on mechanical removal, either by hand or by machine. Unfortunately, that approach is labour intensive, time-consuming and costly. From the state of the streets, it is obvious that the Council does not have the resources to carry out this work on the scale that is needed. Individuals are clearing the weeds outside their homes. Groups of volunteers are driven to act in some areas. The Council will provide tools and bags.

4. However, we don't believe self-weeding should be the answer. There are people unable to do this due to age, disability or health problems. Equally, many residents rightly feel that maintaining our streets is a basic service that their Council Tax should be paying for. In reality, the Council is expecting communities and their residents to step in where the Council is failing to act. No doubt the visitor levy will be used to tackle weeds in the city centre, but what about the rest of the city?

5. When Council workers do appear to clear the weeds, there is no advance notice. Parked cars then compromise the effort. In any case, the weeds soon reappear. They spread along pavements which are in need of repair, become embedded and even more difficult to clear. They crack the tarmac, causing more damage.

6. You will be well aware of the surge in complaints to the Council about all of this. In response to Councillor Beal's question at the Full Council of 17 September, a figure of 1464 over 12 months was given.

7. This is not tenable. GPCC calls on councillors to acknowledge our concerns about weed ridden pavements and streets and to recognise that the Council should not expect residents to self-weed. We ask you to urge the Council to prioritise this basic civic service to our communities and to find new ways of keeping weeds under control. (SG)