

Dear Landowner,

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Giant Hogweed has been increasing steadily in the Ifold and Loxwood area, particularly along the canal. As neighbouring communities who share the same landscape, Loxwood Parish Council and Plaistow & Ifold Parish Council are keen to work together with local landowners to reduce and ideally remove this growing problem.

We know many landowners already take great care in managing their land, and we are grateful for the efforts made so far. By coordinating our approach, we can make a real difference to the safety and wellbeing of everyone who uses our paths, waterways, and green spaces.

What Giant Hogweed Is

Giant Hogweed is a tall, fast-spreading invasive plant that can reach 3–5 metres in height. It has large white umbrella-shaped flower heads and purple-blotched stems with coarse bristles. It spreads rapidly along watercourses, disturbed ground, and unmanaged margins.

The plant's sap contains phototoxic chemicals that can cause severe skin burns when exposed to sunlight. Contact may lead to blistering, long-term sensitivity, and scarring. This makes Giant Hogweed a significant public safety concern, particularly for children, pets, and anyone carrying out land management work.

Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, it is an offence to cause Giant Hogweed to spread into the wild. While removal is not a legal requirement, landowners are responsible for preventing its spread and managing risks on their land.

Managing Small Outbreaks

If you choose to tackle small patches yourself, please ensure full PPE is worn. Recommended actions include:

- Cutting and removing flower heads before seeds develop (June–July).
- Digging out the root crown at least 15 cm below soil level.
- Avoiding strimming or flailing, which increases injury risk and spreads sap.

All plant material must be handled carefully. Giant Hogweed waste is classed as controlled waste and must be disposed of at a licensed facility.

Managing Larger Infestations

For more extensive growth, a systemic herbicide containing glyphosate is typically effective:

- Apply during active growth (April–June).
- Multiple treatments may be needed.
- Follow all product instructions and environmental protection requirements.

If the plant is near watercourses, Environment Agency consent is required before using herbicide.

Because Giant Hogweed seeds remain viable for up to 10 years, ongoing monitoring is essential:

- Inspect the site annually.
- Remove new seedlings promptly.
- Maintain ground cover to prevent re-establishment.

Working Together to Protect Our Area

If Giant Hogweed is present near boundaries, footpaths, or watercourses, please notify neighbouring landowners so that action can be coordinated. Early intervention reduces long-term cost, environmental impact, and risk to the public.

If you are unsure whether a plant on your land is Giant Hogweed the District Council's Environmental Protection Team can assist with identification.

Key Actions for Landowners

- Identify and confirm Giant Hogweed.
- Wear full PPE before any contact.
- Remove flower heads and dig out roots or apply approved herbicide.
- Dispose of waste legally.
- Monitor the site annually.
- Prevent spread to neighbouring land and public areas.

For advice on managing major outbreaks, the Environment Agency helpline is available on **0800 80 70 60**, and many contractors specialise in safe removal.

We hope you will join us in this shared effort to protect our local environment. By working together, we can significantly reduce the presence of Giant Hogweed and keep our community safe.

Yours faithfully,