

11 March 2021

Report of	Assistant Director of Place and Client Services	Author	Ben Plummer ☎ 508965
Title	Government emergency authorisation of use of neonicotinoid based pesticides		
Wards affected	Not applicable		

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report was requested by Councillor Cory at the previous Environment and Sustainability Panel.
- 1.2 This report presents information on the Government's decision to grant emergency authorisation for the use of thiamethoxam, a neonicotinoid based insecticide, for treating beet yellows virus in 2021. The UK Government previously banned the use of this insecticide in 2018.

2. Recommended Decision

- 2.1 There is no recommended decision. This report presents information to inform a discussion at the Environment and Sustainability Panel.

3. Reason for Recommended Decision

- 3.1 The report is to be used to inform discussion on this issue.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 Not applicable.

5. Background Information

- 5.1 On 8th January 2021, the Government released a statement detailing the reason for granting emergency authorisation of thiamethoxam, a neonicotinoid-based pesticide, the use of which had previously been banned along with two other neonicotinoid based pesticides in 2018 in the UK. The pesticide is to be authorised for use on sugar beet seed in 2021, to seek to deal with the potential danger posed from beet yellows virus spread by aphids, that has caused a significant reduction in yields of sugar beet in 2020. The [National Farmer's Union](#) argue that this action needs to be taken to avoid negatively impacting the farming businesses of British sugar beet growers.
- 5.2 The Government have detailed that use of the pesticide will be used in a controlled manner, applied in an approach so that is targeted to the sugar beet seed, to restrict spreading to the soil. It is suggested that a virus forecasting model will also be used to inform whether treatment of the seeds will be required. This will involve setting a threshold for virus infection for where negative economic impacts would not be produced, meaning if the threshold is met, the seed will not be treated with the pesticide.
- 5.3 As a non-flowering crop, it was assessed that risk to bees from applying the pesticide would be acceptable. Also, the potential for the insecticide to enter the soil and thus be present in following years of cultivation was recognised, and thus measures to mitigate this by excluding planting of flowering crops in subsequent cultivations is proposed. Following these steps detailed in 5.2 and 5.3, the Government believes will make application of the pesticide safe. These points are summarised in the [Government statement](#).
- 5.4 Neonicotinoid based pesticides are currently banned in the European Union, and the UK Government showed support for these restrictions in 2018.
- 5.5 [Academic research](#) published in *Science* has shown that the neonicotinoid based pesticides pose a threat to bee populations through affecting their nervous systems which can result in paralysis and death of bees. Bees are key within the agriculture sector, as well as the natural environment for pollinating crops, trees and flowers which is important for supporting food production around the world, food chains in ecosystems and providing habitats for wildlife.

6. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Implications

- 6.1 This report has no equality, diversity and human rights implications.

7. Standard References

- 7.1 There are no particular references to the Strategic Plan; consultation or publicity considerations or financial; community safety; health and safety or risk management implications.

8. Environmental and Sustainability Implications

- 8.1 This report contains reference to use of an insecticide that could potentially harm bee populations, affecting the wider ecosystem in the UK.

Appendices

Appendix A – [Government statement about the emergency authorisation of thiamethoxam.](#)

Appendix B – Letter from Councillor Cory to local MPs, opposing the emergency authorisation of the thiamethoxam.