

The Pesticide – Free Newton Abbot Initiative

2025 – 26 Feedback Report



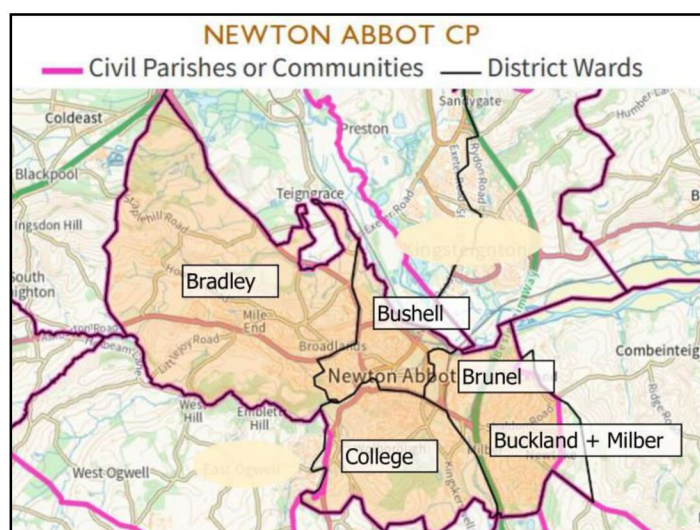
Project Overview

Green Futures Newton Abbot was awarded £850 by Newton Abbot Town Council in June 2025 to cover the core organisational running costs which enabled us to deliver a number of key activities across Newton Abbot which have reduced the risks of pesticide pollution and raised awareness of the need to adopt pesticide-free approaches to managing gardens and other areas of land. We were also awarded and £500 from our local Devon County Councillor and £1000 by Devon Environment Foundation.

Our Aim was to engage across the whole community of Newton Abbot in the Autumn / Winter of 2025/26 in preparation for a Town – wide pesticide collection in March 2026.

Community Engagement Workshop with Town Councillors – July 2025

A key element of our community engagement strategy was to work directly with Town Councillors to seek their advice and support around how best to engage with the wider community. In July 2025 Green Futures facilitated a Community Engagement workshop with Town Councillors from Community and Heritage Committee, which was well attended.



We looked at the 5 wards in the Civil Parish of Newton Abbot – Bradley, Bushell, Brunel, College and Buckland and Milber and explored ideas of how best to engage with local people there to publicise a household pesticide collection. The main outcomes of the workshop were :

- Create a publicity flyer that is accessible and engaging
- Collaborate with local groups and organisations
- Promote Pesticide-Free Newton at the next public Town Meeting in October
- Develop a focus for working with children and young people
- Engage with older people as they are more often users of pesticides
- Create a mascot for the initiative – ideally a female bee because 95% of all bees are female
- Show people the alternatives to pesticides
- Help people develop pollinator habitat in their gardens

The outcomes of Community Engagement workshop were incredibly useful and informed how we designed and delivered the project going forward.

Design of the Publicity Flyers, Posters and Roadside Banners

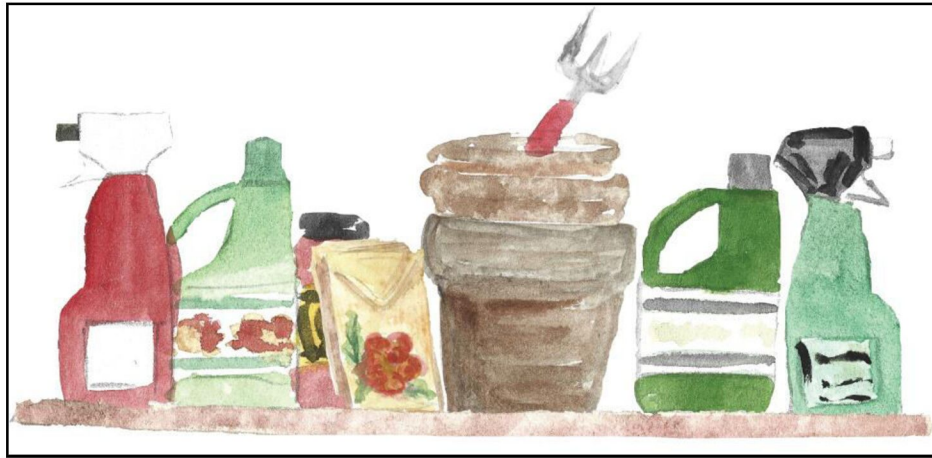
Based on our previous household pesticide collection we had planned to call the initiative the Big Newton Pesticide Collection, but it was clear that the key action we needed to encourage people to take was to actually look in their garden sheds and garages for any stored pesticides. We therefore decided to call the Newton Abbot pesticide collection “Check the Shed”.

We had designed a prototype flyer before the Community Engagement workshop :

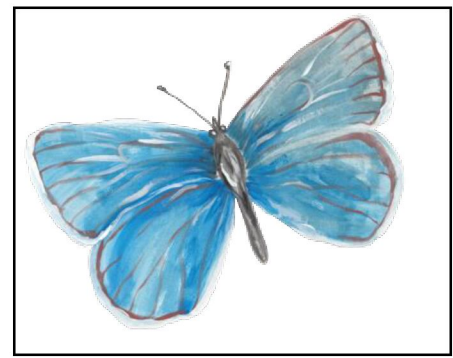
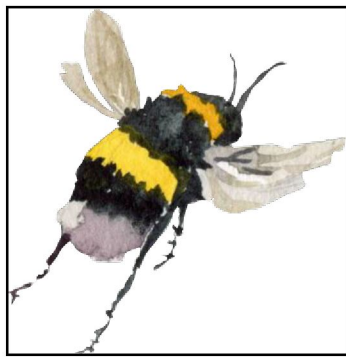


The Councillors really liked the “3 nudges” on the left-hand side and the basic design of the woman entering the shed with her dog, but understandably, they suggested that the image needed to be more lively and engaging, so we developed the design in a number different ways. One update was to commission a Green Futures volunteer and local artist Katie Moore to paint some interiors for the shed :





We then changed some of the fonts and another Green Futures volunteer Lucy Wiltshire created some wonderful insect designs using the Canva programme.



These different design elements then went to our graphic designer, Simon Heath and we created the final version seen below:

Check the Shed

BOOK YOUR FREE PESTICIDE COLLECTION

Have a look
Take a peek in your shed, garage, or anywhere else you might be storing old or unwanted pesticides.

Book your collection
Scan the QR code below or visit the website and fill in the booking form - we'll do the rest!

Share the word
Ask friends and neighbours to check their sheds for unwanted pesticides.

To find out more visit:

www.pesticidefreenewton.co.uk

Alongside the landscape flyer / poster design we also created a portrait version suitable for larger street signs:



Alongside the main roadside banner design at the top of this document, that we made for 10 2.7m long banners we also created a different design for the longer 4.3m banner that was placed over Wolborough Gate :



Publicising Check the Shed

Between late January to early February 2026 we distributed the A5 flyers and A4 posters around shops and public information centres like the Library, the Courtenay Centre and the Buckland Centre. The Mid Devon Advertiser kindly published two promotional articles which can be seen below:

News

Residents urged to check for unwanted pesticides

JO BOWERY

NEWTON Abbot residents are being urged to check garden sheds, workshops and garages for old or unwanted pesticides as part of a project to make the town pesticide-free and a healthier place for future generations.

As part of the 'Check the Shed' initiative, householders can book a free collection of any weedkiller, insect repellent, slug pellets or similar products that they no longer use or need, so they can be safely collected and disposed of.

Check the Shed, which runs until the end of March, has been organised by community group Green Futures Newton Abbot, which is working with Newton Abbot Town Council and SUEZ Recycling and Recovery.

It follows a successful pesticide collection initiative in Bradley that took place just over a year ago, in which 167 unwanted pesticide containers, equating to 140kg of pesticide materials, were collected from households across Newton Abbot's Bradley ward.

Many home and garden pesticide products sit on a shelf in a shed of garage for some time. In some cases, with older products, there is a risk of the containers beginning to decompose,

allowing the toxic contents to leak out, warned Green Futures co-ordinator Andrew Rothery.

Green Futures hopes that by enabling residents to arrange the safe collection and disposal of these home and garden pesticide products, the risk of these toxic materials causing a hazard in the home or local environment will be reduced.

'The more Newton Abbot people can get behind this initiative, the better,' Andrew said. 'The Town Council no longer uses pesticides and we want to help as many people as possible to go 'pesticide-free', so please also spread the word,' he added. 'Maybe you have neighbours or family friends who have been gardening for many years and could benefit from this service,' he added.

Newton Abbot Town Council declared it would no longer use pesticide products to manage the areas of land it is responsible for in 2023.

Pesticide products like herbicides, insecticides and fungicides are increasingly being linked to a range of human health problems including cancer, Parkinson's disease and respiratory conditions like asthma. Pesticides are also damaging for the complex web of life within the local environment. There is clear evidence that long-term pesticide use across the UK is partly responsible for the concerning decline in pollinating insects, which are needed for many types of food production.

'When pesticides are used in the garden or home to eradicate unwanted plants, insects or diseases, they impact a much greater population of organisms that are important for the health of our wider ecosystem, and over time this is weakening the very system that we all rely on for food and many other resources,' Andrew explained.

Bookings for the Green Futures free pesticide collection can be made via the Green Futures website at www.pesticidefreeweb.co.uk



Check your shed and help restore nature

PEOPLE across Newton Abbot and surrounding areas are being urged to check their sheds and make the most of a free pesticide collection and disposal service operating until the end of March.

Local community group, Green Futures Newton Abbot, with support from Newton Abbot Town Council, SUEZ Recycling and Recovery, Devon County Councillors and Devon Environment Foundation, are organising the collection to help clean up the environment and make our local community a safer and healthier place to live.

Chair of Newton Abbot Town Council's Community and Heritage Committee, Cllr Louise Cooke said: "We're learning more about how damaging herbicides and insecticides can be, not just to pollinators and our wider ecosystem, but to people as well. If we can with the safe disposal of these hazardous materials and shift to alternatives, this has got to be good for our children and grandchildren's future".

"We want to make the disposal of household pesticides as easy as possible" added Green Futures Co-ordinator. Andrew Rothery. "The term pesticide covers any chemical products that are designed to kill weeds, insects, slugs and snails or aphids, plus fly sprays, ant powders or pet flea spot treatments bought from the vets.

"We are told that these products break down into harmless materials, but this just isn't the case, with increasing evidence that they have much wider effects to nature and affecting human health."

The collected pesticides will be transported to a specialist disposal facility for hazardous waste where they can be safely broken down. Newton Abbot Town Council's Facilities and Maintenance Officer Rob Woodger said: "We have supported this initiative right from the start because we want to help people across the community to have access to safe disposal services for their hazardous household waste".

The initiative has already collected more than 50 pesticide containers, but organisers want to help people to dispose of as many unwanted pesticides as possible. To book your collection go to <https://www.green-futures-newtonabbot.co.uk/pesticide-free-newton>



We also placed an advert in the local One Magazine as the printing timelines for the Cryer unfortunately didn't fit with the timings of the collection.

The roadside banners were put up in strategic locations, mainly on the metal railings that are owned by Devon Highways, after the appropriate permissions were given. We also placed a banner on the Teignbridge District Council car park by Wolborough Road and on a fence owned by Newton Abbot College, again with the appropriate permissions confirmed:



We were also given permission to place a large 3m long banner by the car park at Fermoy's Garden Centre:



And very generously Newton Abbot Town Council gave us permission to place a specially designed banner in pride of place across the Wolborough Gate, right next to the town centre:



In addition to publicity based on brand and messaging, we took Check the Shed to local events, the first one being the Tree and Seed Giveaway at the Courtenay Centre in early February 2026.



We also engaged with Fermoy's garden centre and were given the opportunity to have a Check the Shed promotional day there on the 21st of February:





The day went really well and we had positive conversations about reducing pesticide use with a significant number of people and generated at least one definite collection booking.

Alongside our material forms of publicity we also posted information on the Green Futures Newton Abbot Facebook page and these posts were very helpfully amplified by Newton Abbot Town Council and other supportive organisations and groups.

Managing the Collection of Household and Allotment Pesticides

On all flyers, posters and banners was a QR code that took people directly to the booking form on the Green Futures Newton Abbot website. Once people had booked their collection they were issued with an appropriate number of recycling sacks that had been donated by the Teignbridge District Council Waste and Recycling Team. We had produced stickers with the Pesticide-Free Newton Logo on so that householders would know that the bags were specifically for their pesticide collection.



Householders who had booked a collection were contacted directly and asked to bag up their

pesticides and arrange a specific day and time for them to be collected. They were asked not to put them out on the road or land in front of their properties to ensure that the bagged material wasn't confused with any other kinds of collectable waste.



The bagged pesticides were then placed in a lidded plastic box to be transported to the commercial 1100 L storage bin that had been provided by our private waste management contractor – Future Industrial. The storage bin was located at the Newton Abbot Town Council maintenance depot, which was a 24 hr a day secure location, to which we were given daytime access by the wonderfully supportive Town Council Maintenance Team.

In addition to collecting pesticides from individual households, Green Futures also collaborated with the Newton Abbot and District Co-operative Allotment Association to run a collection from each of the 6 allotment sites across town. Teignbridge District Council kindly offered to loan us a number of green wheely bins which we branded up with Check the Shed stickers and placed at the relevant allotments in co-ordination with the site representatives. Publicity was sent out to all plot holders via the NADCAA newsletters and via individual email.



The Results

28 households participated in the Check the Shed collection and we collected 175 individual containers weighing 155 kg. The Allotment Collection produced 30 containers weighing an additional 26 kg. So the total collected and safely disposed of was 205 containers weighing 181 kg.

Based on the assumption that the average coverage per litre of weedkiller is 40 m², we successfully removed a pollution and contamination risk for approximately for 7240 m². This is the equivalent to the size of a Premier League football pitch or the area of the main pedestrian shopping area in the centre of Newton Abbot.

Due to funding constraints covering the contractor's disposal costs we had to stop the collection once we had reached a cost of £1500. There were more people who wanted to book a collection if we had been able to keep the service going.

In addition to safely removing potentially harmful pesticide products from across our local area, the collection also gave us a great opportunity to speak to local residents about whether they were currently using pesticides and if they would use alternatives in the future. 100% of the householders who participated in the Check the Shed collection said that they were no longer using pesticides.

We also asked local residents why they hadn't taken their pesticide containers to the local Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) and the responses were as follows :

- We didn't know that you could take pesticides
- The 5L limit on pesticide products is too low (several households had 10L or more)
- We didn't want to carry toxic chemicals in our car
- We don't have transport
- Our containers were deteriorating

Green Futures is currently liaising with Devon County Council, who have a statutory responsibility for disposing of householders hazardous waste, to use the results of the Check the Shed initiative to make the disposal of pesticides more achievable at HWRC's, but it is very clear that for different reasons, significant numbers of people are currently storing unwanted and unused pesticides at home because it's the easiest option.

Budget Review

Project Costs

Running Costs, including Public Liability Insurance, Accounts and Website provision - £760

Artwork £75

Graphic Design £255

Banner Printing – £926

450 Flyers + 50 A4 Posters printing – £152

A1 – Signs – £60

One Magazine advert - £184

Plastic Container for transport– £20

Collection and Disposal of Waste - £1408

Total Costs = £3840

Grant Income + Benefits in Kind

Newton Abbot Town Council - £850
Devon Environment Foundation – £1082
Devon County Council Locality Budget - £500
SUEZ (paid for disposal) - £1408
TDC donated recycling sacks

Total Income and Benefits in Kind = £3840

Originally SUEZ were providing £750 towards the project, but as it became clear how many pesticide containers we were likely to collect we asked Devon County Council's Cabinet Member for Nature and Climate Cllr Jacqi Hodgson if she could double this amount. Thankfully Jacqi was able to achieve this!

Conclusions and Next Steps

The Check the Shed collection worked extremely well. We demonstrated that with a clear message to householders and good levels of visible publicity across the local area, people booked collections and we disposed of unwanted and potentially dangerous pesticide materials.

There are many people to thank without who's generosity and support the Check the Shed initiative would not have been able to happen:

- Newton Abbot Town Councillors
- Newton Abbot Town Council Administration Team
- Newton Abbot Town Council Maintenance Team
- SUEZ Recycling and Reclamation Devon Management Team
- Devon County Councillors
- Devon County Highways
- Teignbridge District Council Waste Management Team
- Teignbridge District Council Planning Team
- Fermoys Garden Centre
- Devon Environment Foundation
- Simon Heath Graphic Design
- Katie Moore Studio
- Lucy Wiltshire Graphic Design
- Green Futures Newton Abbot Volunteers

We have also confirmed that the storing of unwanted pesticide materials is a phenomenon which exists in households across our local community and almost certainly across Devon and the UK. If we disposed of 155 kg of material from 28 households, imagine how many tonnes of unused pesticide containers are sitting in peoples sheds and garages across our landscape, many of which are beginning to deteriorate. We feel that this represents a growing public health and safety issue as well as an environmental pollution issue and concerted action must be taken.

Devon County Council's Cabinet Member for Climate and Nature, Jacqi Hodgson has now issued a clear statement of support for the development and expansion of our work :

" Devon County Council Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Biodiversity, Cllr Jacqi Hodgson has confirmed that through its Environment Policy, Devon County Council recognises the harm that pesticides (synthetic industrial chemicals that are used for

plant control or protection and control of invertebrates) can do to wider human and environmental health. This mandates that pesticides are only used when absolutely necessary and where practical alternatives are unavailable.

This means that Devon County Council encourages activities that advocate for a reduction in pesticide use, a transition to safer, alternative, methods of plant control or protection and the safe disposal of unwanted pesticide products. Cllr Hodgson expressed her thanks to Green Futures for their help to local communities in the collection and safe disposal of household pesticides with their Check the Shed Initiative. "

We have also now received requests from other communities across Devon to help them develop similar Check the Shed household pesticide collections, including the Parish of Ilsington, the town of Chumleigh and local residents in Teignmouth. We are currently seeking a more formal working relationship with Devon County Council's Waste Management team in the hope that we can maximise our resources to tackle the emerging challenge of "legacy" household pesticides.

In Newton Abbot our next area of focus is to work with local schools to help them go pesticide-free in order to protect the health of local children, teachers and parents and improve the wellbeing of our local ecosystems.

Andrew Rothery June 2026