

President's letter March 2021 - neonics

Last month I indicated that we were taking steps to prevent the use of neonicotinoids on the sugar beet crop. We pursued this with the help of two barristers and a solicitor.

The Wildlife Trust was also involved and following a similar process, using a Pre-action Letter and a Judicial Review. I contacted them to ask if we could work together but unfortunately their policy is to work alone on legal matters, but they have shared information with us that has been very helpful.

The derogation is only for this year but with a proviso that it could be applied again in 2022 and 2023, each being a separate action.

Because of the frosts we have recently suffered, which reduced the aphid count, it is now low enough for the pesticide not to be used in 2021. This has just been confirmed by the Government. However, that still leaves 2022 and 2023 when the derogation might rear its ugly head again.

John Chittenden, a solicitor at Humphries Kirk LLP and Yasin Patel, a barrister who would both be acting for us, agree that there is no need to take action for a Judicial Review this year. However, we need to ensure that we are ready and keep up the pressure throughout this year to show we are determined to prevent this pesticide use in future.

The thought is that the seed manufacturers will develop a seed that is resistant to aphids in future years, but this is likely to be after a couple more years at least.

The Wildlife Trust and the BBKA have agreed to share information so that we have the best chance of preventing the use of pesticides for future years. Both John and Yasin agree with this action and they will continue to support the BBKA to ensure that we can, if needed, apply for a Judicial Review.

One concern is that there may be a cost for any action, especially if we lose the review. This could potentially amount to tens of thousands of pounds, despite our trying to defray the costs. We will take advice from John regarding this and keep our members up to date as events unfurl.

Kind regards

Margaret Wilson, President