



River Esk Giant Hogweed Year End Report 2024

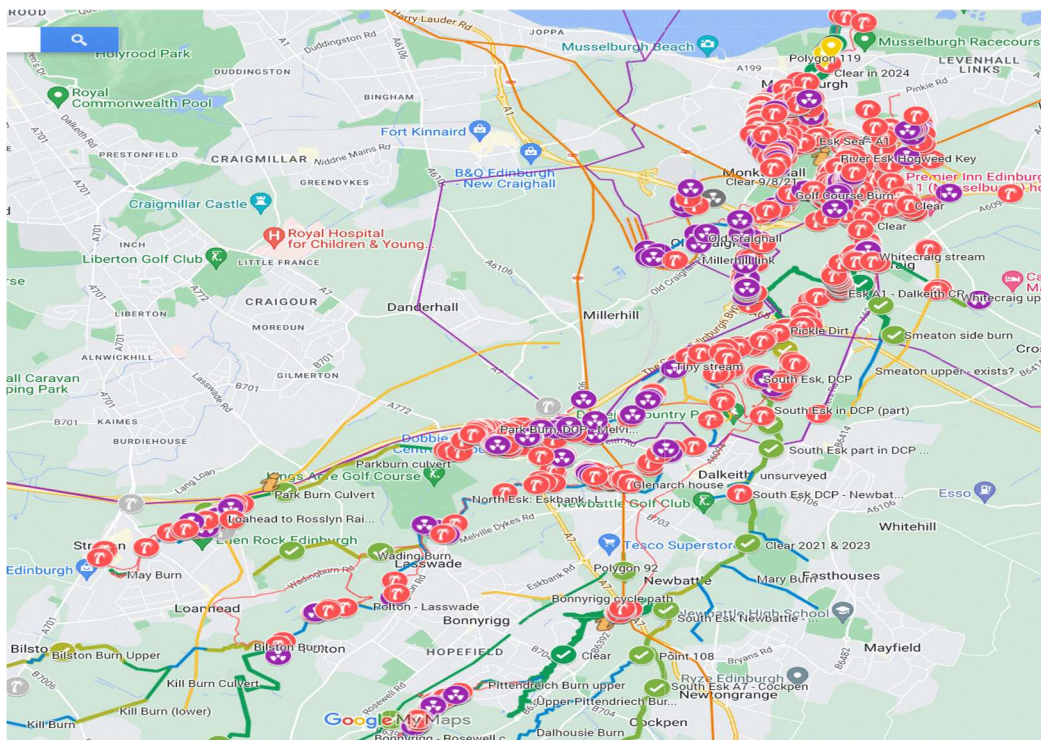
Dear Dave

We have reached the end of Year 3 of the upper Esk Giant Hogweed Eradication Project and Year 4 of the lower Esk Project.

I am very grateful to all the spotters who have send GPS sightings to Dave Quarendon to put on his unique GPS online map. I am immensely grateful for all that work.

With extra spotter support we have been able to survey some of the most upstream parts of the Esk this year and were pleased to find much of it Giant Hogweed free though we have uncovered a few local patches in new areas.

We have achieved even more success than last year over the entire catchment area with more landowners beginning to get more involved, realising that this is a community effort. This map below shows the location of Giant Hogweed plants on the River Esk recorded during 2024



Ownership of some areas has still proved difficult to establish as owners often prove elusive when it suits.

The Musselburgh area has achieved a greater success this year with more landowners getting more engaged.

Despite this there were some noticeable gaps in thoroughness. Railtrack were a classic example of being a bad neighbour and given that the rail network runs right through the centre of our area that has been a great disappointment to us all.

We will this year look at other ways of enforcement on any landowner who does not control this invasive plant which is harmful to human contact and is illegal to deliberately allow the spread of seeds.

Some landowners using contractors have also allowed them to begin spraying far too late when plants were well advanced in growth and heading to flower. Remember if a plant seeds the contractor has a job for life. **Get the last checks and spraying finished by Mid May.**

Where anyone is unsure where to find the Giant Hogweed on their land please visit the on-line link to the dynamic map to see where plants have been spotted and marked on the map. You can enlarge the map and see great detail and if you click on a sighting it gives you the number of plants and date spotted.

Link here www.elcv.org.uk/HogweedMapEsk

Every Giant Hogweed plant that flowers and produces seeds takes our project back again to year one as these seeds go back into the soil to germinate over the next 10 years starting the process all over again.

This is why our maxim is

“No plant must Flower”

This photo shows the consequence of leaving one plant to flower. Each of these little germinated seedling plants is a Giant Hogweed plant.



This year we will continue to bring forward our “green Tick” inspection to late May rather than early June as we had done in the earlier years. This makes final removal of any missed and budded plants easier; so next year it would again be helpful, for **all landowners to try to get their final spraying all complete by 2nd week in May.** This will ensure that any sprayed plants are dying by end of May before we carry out our “green tick” inspection.

Any missed plants, or plants sprayed far too late after flowering has commenced, are still potentially able to produce a viable seedhead so the heads need to be removed and disposed of safely. Roundup can be sprayed down the cut stem to kill the plant, or alternatively by digging out the root.

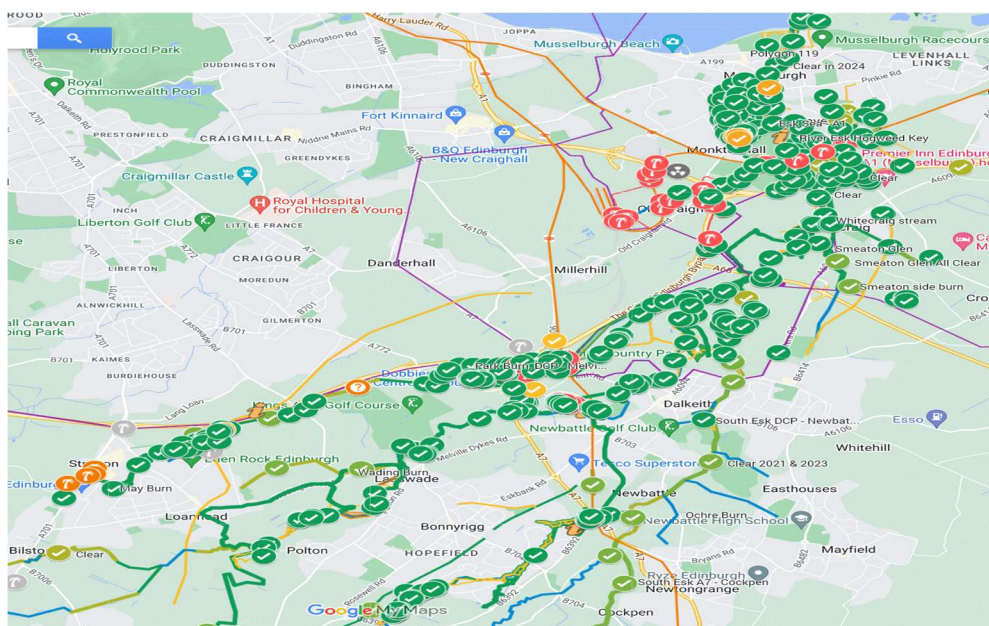
Because of this, plants left to flower create a huge amount of work compared to timely spraying at the leaf stage.

While the main target of our project is Giant Hogweed, I know that many have been successfully treating Japanese Knotweed and Himalayan Balsam, I would encourage you to continue to spray these other plants as you pass by as my guess is that in 6 years time you will wish you had done it from the start of this project.

We would like all farming, industrial and development landowners anywhere in East Lothian, Mid Lothian and West Lothian to start to remove any isolated pockets of Giant Hogweed to reduce the risks to clean areas and to avoid being accused of being a bad neighbour.



Developers need also be aware that transportation of the top 100 mm of soil containing Giant Hogweed seeds from one site to another site except for specialist disposal is an offence. and makes any future soil removal very expensive.



This map shows the position of eradication of Giant Hogweed on the River Esk at the end of August 2024.

You will see that the vast majority of areas have been cleared properly and are given a “green tick”. Red spots showing problem areas by certain landowners

This has been a great achievement following a lot of hard work by a lot of people.

I would like to say thanks for the support from all the landowners, spotters and especially Julia and Dave for organising and training the spotters and to Bayer UK for their continuing support with donation of some Roundup.

I look forward to your continuing support and look forward to seeing the map once again populated by green ticks at the end of July 2025

You can contact me by email james.wyllie@ruchlawproduce.co.uk or telephone 07836 246 858.

Yours

James

James Wyllie

Co-ordinator

River Esk Giant Hogweed Eradication Project