

PRESS RELEASE – For Immediate Release

Leading Pesticides Campaigner wins 2nd major award for her tenacious and fearless campaign on the health risks of pesticides

Leading pesticides campaigner, Georgina Downs has won a second major award for her tenacious and fearless campaign against the Government over pesticides. Georgina was awarded the Heroine Award at Cosmopolitan magazine's inaugural Fun Fearless Female Awards with Olay. The glittering awards ceremony took place last night (7th November 2006) at the Bloomsbury Ballroom, hosted by Fearné Cotton.

Ms. Downs, who runs the UK Pesticides Campaign (www.pesticidescampaign.co.uk), decided to take on the Government in early 2001 after she discovered that there was no legal protection for people in the countryside from exposure to pesticides.

Ms. Downs, who has lived next to pesticide sprayed fields for over 22 years, was the first to identify serious fundamental flaws in the Government's "*bystander risk assessment*," and immediately started campaigning for an overhaul of the regulations and legislation governing agricultural spraying. This included the call for an immediate ban on crop-spraying and the use of pesticides near to people's homes, schools, workplaces and any other places of human habitation and for direct public access to the information on the chemicals sprayed on crops.

Ms. Downs' campaign led to considerable political activity including two Government Consultation's on crop-spraying, followed by a year long investigation by the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution (RCEP).

The RCEP's conclusions overturned previous Government assertions over the safety of pesticides, as the RCEP concluded that the current policy is completely inadequate.

However, the UK Government has continued to assert that the current system for pesticides is adequate and provides full reassurance.

This is in stark contrast to a statement recently made by the European Commission which acknowledged that, "*Long term exposure to pesticides can lead to serious disturbances to the immune system, sexual disorders, cancers, sterility, birth defects, damage to the nervous system and genetic damage.*"

Ms. Downs has recently lodged amended grounds in the High Court to continue her Judicial Review challenge regarding the Government's fundamental failure to protect rural residents and others in the countryside from exposure to pesticides.

The Cosmopolitan Fun Fearless Female Awards with Olay celebrate smart, passionate and inspirational women, from a variety of backgrounds, who are not afraid to make a difference. The judges included Jenni Murray, June Sarpong, Irma Kurtz, Fearne Cotton, Dame Kelly Holmes, Observer editor Roger Alton and Cosmopolitan's editor Sam Baker.

Ms. Downs states, *"I feel very honoured to have won this award and I am very grateful to all those who have supported the campaign. The last 5 years have been a real battle, as successive Government's have continued to deny the evidence and have done nothing to protect people in the countryside from pesticides which is an absolute scandal. Therefore I will continue to fight on until the Government stop exposing people to these poisonous chemicals and start making the protection of public health and the environment the number one priority, instead of simply protecting industry interests. The Government must be held accountable for its actions."*

Notes to Editors:-

- The Cosmopolitan Fun Fearless Female Awards with Olay took place last night at the Bloomsbury Ballroom, WC1. It was hosted by Fearne Cotton. The awards honoured a mixture of high profile and real Cosmo women leading exceptional and inspirational lives. For further information see <http://cosmopolitan.co.uk/index.php/cat/10886>
- Ms. Downs will be in London on 8th November 2006 and is available for any interviews
- Pictures of all award winners, including Georgina Downs, are available from Anna Garret at Talk PR on 0207 544 3895 or by emailing annag@talkpr.com
- Georgina Downs lodged amended grounds in the High Court on 25th October 2006 seeking permission for a Judicial Review. The application will be studied by a Judge who will decide whether it should go to a full High Court hearing. This decision is likely in approximately 6 weeks
- The Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution's report entitled "*Crop Spraying and the Health of Residents and Bystanders*" is available at:- http://www.rcep.org.uk/cropspraying.htm_
- The Government's response to the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution's report can be found at:- <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/rcep/pdf/rcepcropspray-response.pdf>
- Georgina Downs runs the UK Pesticides Campaign (www.pesticidescampaign.co.uk) to highlight the adverse health and environmental effects of pesticides. It is the only campaign that solely represents the interests of rural residents and communities and the public in general. Ms. Downs has lived next to regularly sprayed fields for 22 years. She was the first to identify serious fundamental flaws regarding the "*bystander risk*

assessment” and for the last 5 years has presented a case to the Government for a change in the regulations and legislation governing crop spraying. She has called for an immediate ban on crop-spraying and the use of pesticides near to people's homes, schools, workplaces and any other places of human habitation and for direct public access to the information on the chemicals sprayed on crops. Ms. Downs has produced 2 videos *"Pesticide Exposures for People in Agricultural Areas – Part 1 Pesticides in the Air; Part 2 The Hidden Costs"* to illustrate chemical exposure and the effects on people in rural areas

- For the last 5 years Ms. Downs has received thousands of emails, letters and calls from rural residents, not only from all over the UK, but from all over the world, reporting acute and chronic long-term illnesses and diseases in rural communities near to fields that are regularly sprayed with pesticides. The acute ill-health effects that are commonly reported to Ms. Downs include sore throats, burning eyes, nose, skin, blisters, headaches, dizziness, nausea, flu-type illnesses, amongst other things. The most common chronic long-term illnesses and diseases reported include clusters of various cancers, leukaemia, non-Hodgkins lymphoma, neurological conditions, including Parkinson's disease and ME, asthma, allergies, along with many other medical conditions. (NB. Under the existing regulatory system there is no monitoring or collection of data on chronic effects, so the full extent of ill-health related to pesticides is currently not known)
- Georgina Downs won the prestigious Andrew Lees Memorial Award at the 2006 British Environment and Media Awards (BEMAs), on Wednesday 22nd March 2006 www.bemas.org.uk
- Ms. Downs is also a nominee in the Campaigning category of the Morgan Stanley Great Britons Awards 06 see http://www.greatbritons.org/Nominations/Biographies/Georgina_Downs/

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