

Celebrating amazing spaces

Green Flag Award



Green
Flag
Award[®]

20 YEARS
OF RAISING THE STANDARD



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Welcome to the Green Flag Award

Green space is often the one place that brings people from different backgrounds together, providing them with somewhere to meet and a chance to enjoy a healthy lifestyle.

A report by the Heritage Lottery Fund, *State of UK's Public Parks*, suggests that in the UK 34 million people visit a park regularly. To put this into context, more people visit one in a year than voted in the 2015 General Election.

The Victorian philanthropists who had the vision to create the world's first public parks understood the importance of green space for the health and wellbeing of society. Access to good quality green space is vital if we are to tackle some of the challenges that we face, including the growing problem of obesity, the rise in mental health issues and the feelings of being disconnected from the communities in which we live. Research shows that having well-managed, accessible green space contributes to tackling many of these issues.

This is where the Green Flag Award can help, because it supports organisations that provide quality green spaces.

Parks are only well-used and valued if they feel clean and safe. Fear of crime is one of the biggest barriers to certain groups using a park to exercise or relax and if a park looks unloved and uncared for, this can lead to an increase in anti-social behaviour. Launched in the UK in 1996, the Green Flag Award has transformed our country's green spaces. It was introduced to reverse the decline in the quality of our parks that had happened in the 1970s and 1980s and it has worked.

When it was launched, only seven parks met the standard required to fly a Green Flag Award – today more than 1,600 parks and green spaces have a flag flying.

The Green Flag Award has delivered change in the UK's parks and green spaces and raised standards by setting the standard. It has shown that running a park that is well-used and valued by its community is about more than just cutting the grass. It has established that effective management and the use of skilled staff, along with support of the local community, are key to creating fantastic public parks.

In addition, the Green Flag Award has supported the professionalism of the parks sector. It has provided an opportunity to share good practice through a network of more than 800 volunteer judges that supports new applicants.

For those running our country's parks and green spaces, the Green Flag Award is an invaluable tool, whether the space they are managing is a traditional park, a cemetery, a shopping centre or a university.

The Award helps focus activity on the important elements of management and provides a proven, successful framework. It enables the development of a costed management plan that allows resources to be focused in areas that will have the biggest effect. It also allows managers to demonstrate that resources are being used to their best effect and money is being spent appropriately and delivering value for money.

The aim of the Green Flag Award is to ensure that everyone has access to a quality green space and to enable them to live more healthy lifestyles.

The number of Green Flags Awards flying in Britain – and further afield – today is the proof that many others share that vision.



The Green Flag Award is open to a wide range of publicly accessible green spaces. It delivers benefits to those managing the spaces, and the public that uses them.

Universities

When students make a choice about where to study, the appearance of the university can have a significant influence. The Green Flag Award offers a framework to enable you to provide quality grounds for students, visitors and the local community. Well-managed surroundings demonstrate a university's commitment to providing a safe, clean and appealing place to study.

Benefits

- Achieve an internationally recognised award that is a benchmark for well-managed green space
- Attract more students
- Create a safe, clean place to study and live
- Promote your commitment to environmental issues
- Encourage and strengthen links to the local community

Coventry University

Situated in the centre of the city, Coventry University is a busy public space adjacent to shopping areas and housing. As part of its work to achieve the Green Flag Award, the university transformed a small unused area of land and created an organic garden accessible to students and the local community.

The project has encouraged people to learn more about growing their own food, biodiversity and sustainability, as well as giving them an inspirational place to sit, refresh and recharge.

This area has now become a favourite place to meet. It is also a learning and teaching resource and a valuable asset within the community.

Coventry University



“While we work hard to ensure that we have the best learning facilities at our university, we also believe it’s important to create a pleasant environment for all those who come here. That was the thinking behind the creation of our Edible Campus and we’re really pleased to see that it’s proved popular with students, staff and visitors alike.”

Stephen Beasley, Coventry University

Cemeteries and crematoria

Cemeteries, crematoria and burial grounds are often highly valued by the public. Not only do they provide a spiritual, tranquil place for friends and relatives to come to remember their loved ones, they can also provide communities with accessible green space of cultural, ecological and historic importance. The Green Flag Award recognises the importance of this type of space and rewards good management and provision.

Benefits

- Address the expectations of the public and users of your cemetery by providing a peaceful, appealing and well-managed green space
- Promote the importance of effective management and maintenance
- Retain the historical or ecological significance of a cemetery or burial ground
- Integrate cemeteries and burial grounds into wider green space management strategies
- Reduce incidents of vandalism and other anti social behaviour

Rake Lane Cemetery, Wallasey

Faced with budget cuts, Rake Lane Cemetery in Wirral implemented a number of efficiency measures that not only increased the visual appeal of the cemetery but also attracted bees and butterflies to the site.

Annual bedding was replaced with perennial planting that only needs to be replaced every five to seven years. Starting in just one area of the cemetery, they planted several different types of lavender that require little maintenance, is low-growing to avoid obscuring grave stones and suits the loam soil.

Consultation with the public on the scheme received very positive feedback. So much so that the following autumn, they introduced a number of different types of winter and spring flowering heathers in addition to two types of herbs (3,000 new plants in total).

The change in planting strategy has reduced maintenance costs, but has also meant that all year round at least one area of the site will be in full bloom – attracting biodiversity as well as providing a pleasant display for visitors.



Rake Lane Cemetery

“It’s the best award you can get for a cemetery.”

Terry Bainbridge, Wirral Council

Housing associations

Housing associations provide many people with affordable housing, but the green space between the homes is just as important. Presenting residents with a quality green space allows them to feel safe, provides them with a meeting place and encourages a community atmosphere.

Benefits

- Provide a quality green space on the doorstep of residents' homes
- Gain national recognition for providing great places to live
- Attract residents to the area
- Show value for money
- Provide children with a safe area to play
- Provide an area for communities to get together and support each other and reduce isolation
- Reduce incidents of vandalism and other anti social behaviour
- Reduce the number of empty properties by enhancing the appeal of an area

Left: Lisson Green, CityWest Homes, London

Right: Bournville Village Green, Birmingham

CityWest Homes

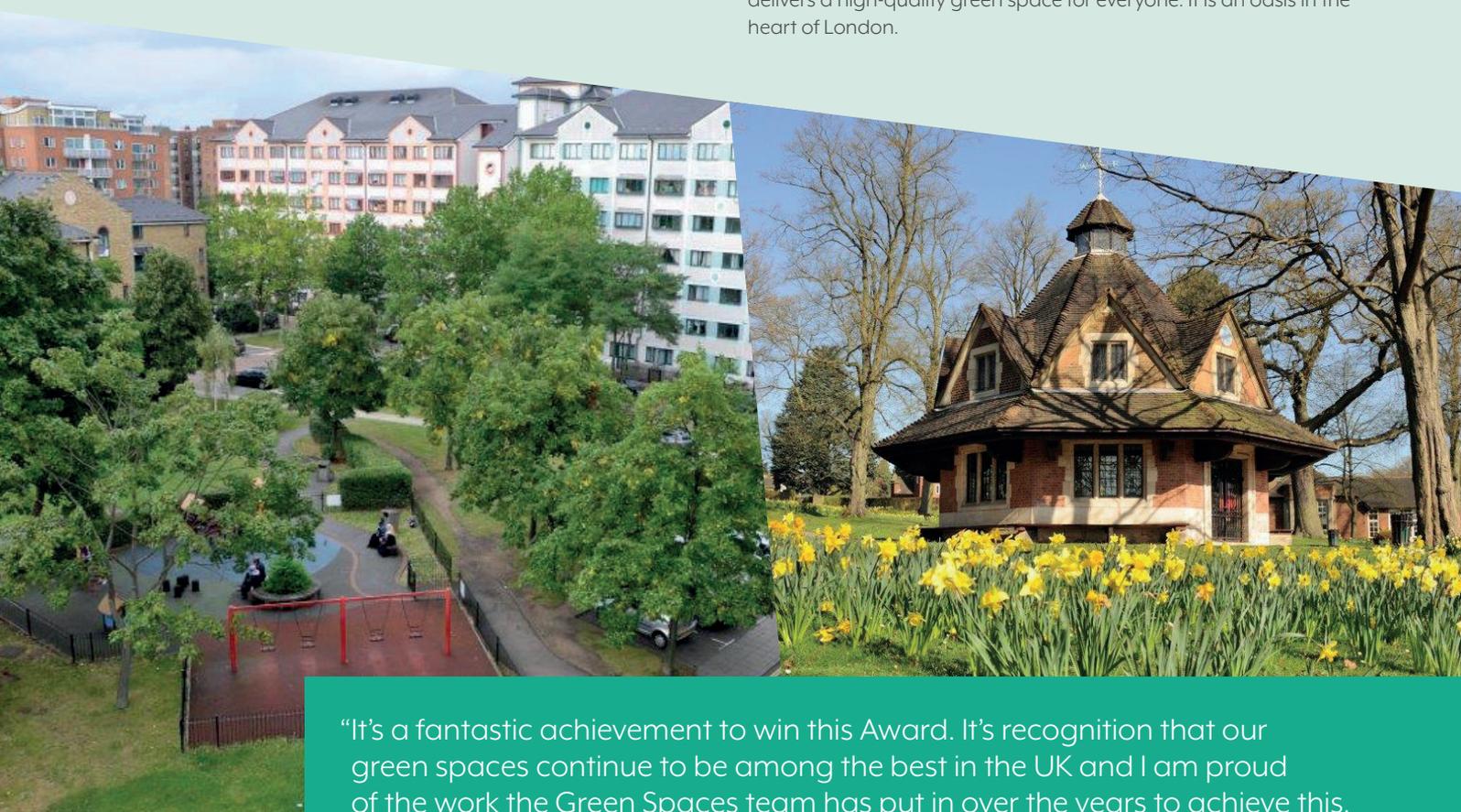
Lillington and Longmoore Gardens is an estate located to the south of Westminster, in Pimlico, and managed by CityWest Homes.

It was felt that there should be no barrier to creativity and the fact that the site is a housing association site should be seen as a challenge to keep coming up with new ideas to use the place and keep it useful for its residents. The gardens were divided into themed areas to create interest and contrast, while providing a variety of habitats to meet the biodiversity commitment.

The management has worked closely with residents over many years to ensure that they are meeting their needs. They created nearly 30 allotment spaces that are given out free of charge, but on a user agreement. There are bee hives that produce honey for sale and two spaces that have been created as children's gardens – one with more formal activities and the other to get muddy and find bugs.

As the estates are open to the public 24 hours a day, planting and lighting have been adapted to combat the risks of rough sleeping, drugs use and antisocial behaviour. An area that once provided a snug sleeping spot in the community garden was attractively bricked up, reclaiming it for the residents.

They have created a space that is financially manageable and delivers a high-quality green space for everyone. It is an oasis in the heart of London.



“It’s a fantastic achievement to win this Award. It’s recognition that our green spaces continue to be among the best in the UK and I am proud of the work the Green Spaces team has put in over the years to achieve this. We will continue to work to meet the many criteria specified by the Award, such as encouraging community participation and bio-diversity.”

Alison Weller, CityWest Homes

The Royal Bournemouth and
Christchurch Hospitals,
NHS Foundation Trust

“With an estimated 800,000 visitors to the hospital each year, we feel very lucky to be able to provide our staff and patients with such a beautiful green space as a sanctuary for rest and recuperation. We look forward to flying our Green Flag with pride at the hospital and feel incredibly privileged to be the first NHS trust to receive this prestigious award.”

*Laura Dale, Sustainability Manager
The Royal Bournemouth and Christchurch Hospitals, NHS Foundation Trust*

Hospitals

Outdoor spaces around hospitals have become increasingly important in recent years. They are seen as an integral part of the healing process for patients, an essential area for them and their visitors to spend time, as well as benefiting staff.

Not only do outdoor spaces help to improve mental health, they can support and aid recovery. Outdoor spaces are as important to health and wellbeing as those indoors. Studies show that patients who are happy with their healthcare environments are easier to care for and return home sooner.

Green space also provides the opportunity for exercise to aid recuperation. Evidence shows gentle exercise in a green space can reduce the risk of heart attacks, strokes and diabetes by 50%, fracture of the femur, colon cancer and breast cancer by 30% and Alzheimer's by 25%.

Benefits

- Improve physical health and recovery times
- Mental stimulation resulting in improved mental health
- Encourage fellow patient/visitor support by bringing people together, avoiding isolation
- Outdoor space can be integrated into the care plan of patients, improving outcomes
- Better staff retention resulting in cost savings in recruitment and training
- Improve patient/visitor experience

The Royal Bournemouth Hospital, Bournemouth NHS Foundation Trust

The Trust recognises the importance of regular access to natural environments for its patients, staff and visitors. It also wants to raise the awareness of the link between green spaces and their positive benefits for mental health and wellbeing.

The site comprises an area dominated by planted mixed woodland, interspersed with patches of amenity grassland surrounding the hospital buildings and a central lake.

The Royal Bournemouth Hospital is home to a range of biodiversity, which has been further encouraged through the continued improvement of its green spaces over the past couple of years.

The hospital lakeside is a popular location for a number of bird species including herons, moorhens, woodpeckers, cormorants and kingfishers. The lake itself harbours a range of coarse fish species such as koi carp, mirror carp, grass carp and ornamental goldfish.

The lake is a relaxed location that staff and patients can enjoy, and supports the benefits that green spaces have been shown to have for patient recovery.



Retail and leisure

A Green Flag Award flying overhead is a sign to visitors that the green space meets the highest possible standards, is well-maintained and has excellent facilities. The Award not only recognises and rewards the best parks in the country, it is also applicable to retail and leisure facilities that provide green space for customers.

Benefits

- Demonstrate environmental commitment to the community, staff and visitors
- Increase footfall by promoting your location as an international award-winner
- Introduce efficiency and cost-saving measures
- Gain a competitive edge by independently verifying the location meets the highest quality standard
- Achieve national recognition for providing a great place to visit
- Easily monitor the maintenance contract for a green space
- Attract retailers and other businesses to the location

Liverpool ONE

Liverpool ONE's Chavasse Park is a landscaped garden that provides a welcome area of tranquillity alongside to the bustling shops, bars and restaurants just a stone's throw away. The green space is also an important link, connecting the main retail area to Liverpool's historic waterfront.

First built in the 1980s, it was recently transformed as part of a major redevelopment scheme. Now a proud holder of the Green Flag Award, the park is often used for impromptu picnics, pop-up events such as fairground rides and an ice festival, which are all a big pull for families. Seasonal events include a new nature trail to highlight the park's diversity.



“The Green Flag Award is an important independent measure and a sign to visitors that the space is well-maintained and has excellent facilities. It underpins a strategy to ensure Liverpool ONE not only provides a good outdoor environment, but one that embraces education, conservation and the local community.”

Janine Ross, Liverpool ONE

Canals and waterways

Many of our canals were built at the height of the Industrial Revolution. Today, they provide a direct connection to our rich heritage, as well as providing a habitat for wildlife and tranquil place to relax and have fun. Living waterways and rivers transform places and enrich lives and the Green Flag Award provides independent verification that they are being maintained to a standard of which everyone can be proud.

Benefits

- Gain national recognition for providing a well-managed waterway for the public
- Encourage increased use of rivers and waterways for leisure activities
- Preserve the historic importance and heritage of an area
- Work to a framework for effective management
- Strengthen your applications for third-party funding

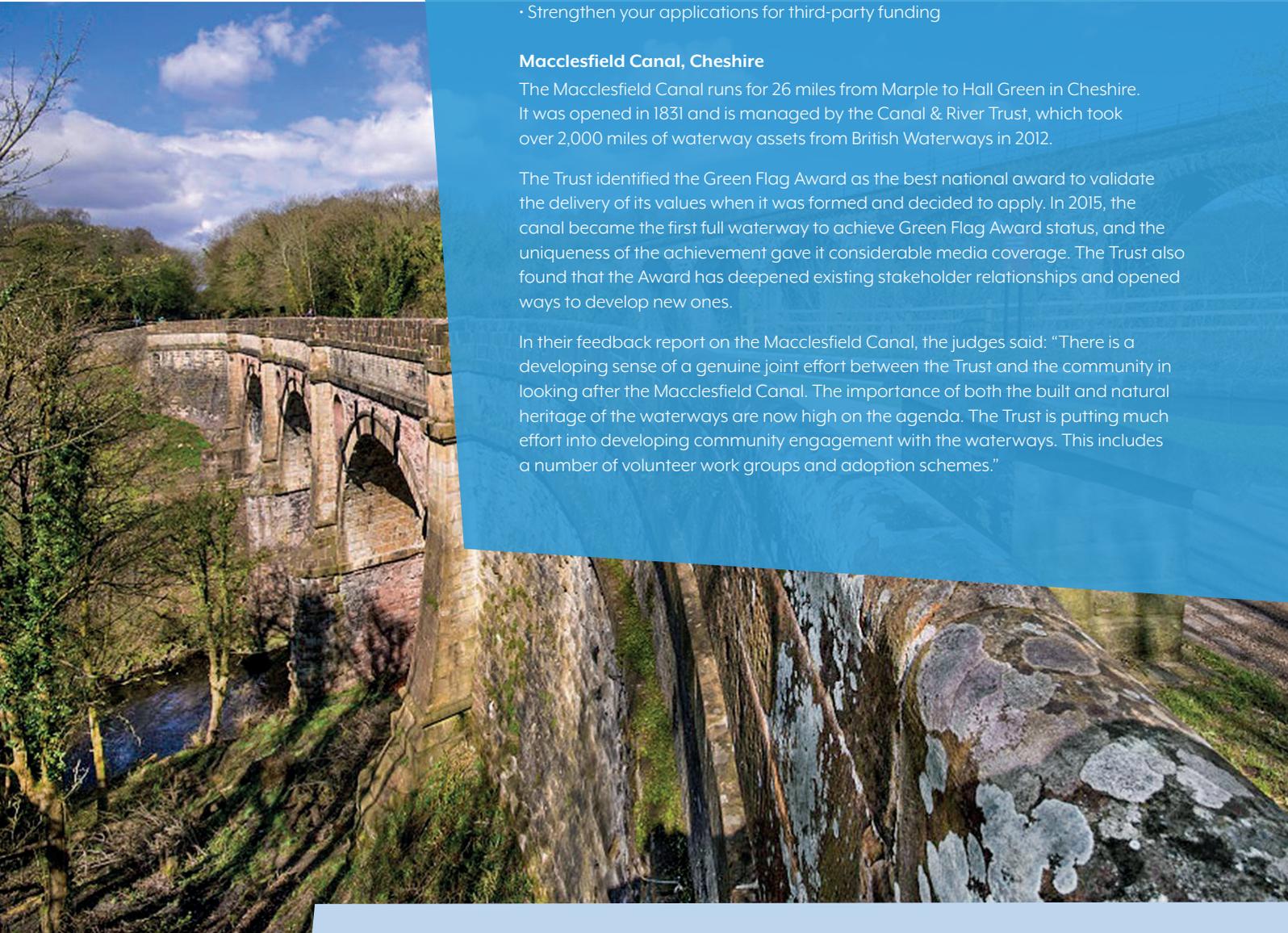
Macclesfield Canal, Cheshire

The Macclesfield Canal runs for 26 miles from Marple to Hall Green in Cheshire. It was opened in 1831 and is managed by the Canal & River Trust, which took over 2,000 miles of waterway assets from British Waterways in 2012.

The Trust identified the Green Flag Award as the best national award to validate the delivery of its values when it was formed and decided to apply. In 2015, the canal became the first full waterway to achieve Green Flag Award status, and the uniqueness of the achievement gave it considerable media coverage. The Trust also found that the Award has deepened existing stakeholder relationships and opened ways to develop new ones.

In their feedback report on the Macclesfield Canal, the judges said: "There is a developing sense of a genuine joint effort between the Trust and the community in looking after the Macclesfield Canal. The importance of both the built and natural heritage of the waterways are now high on the agenda. The Trust is putting much effort into developing community engagement with the waterways. This includes a number of volunteer work groups and adoption schemes."

Peak Forest Canal
Image by Arthur Procter



"This is a fantastic achievement for the Trust and the Manchester & Pennine Waterway Partnership, and helps to set new standards of excellence across our entire canal network. Our aim is to encourage other canals to take up the challenge now and to seek Green Flag Award status via the same rigorous assessment process."

Richard Parry, Canal & River Trust

Nature reserves

Nature reserves are protected areas that are essential for plants and wildlife. In order to manage and maintain a nature reserve, specific care frameworks need to be in place to ensure wildlife is enriched. The Green Flag Award criteria are flexible and, where required, can be adapted for every nature reserve. This ensures the area's specific needs are supported and met.

Benefits

- Ensure the area is protected
- Work to a framework for effective, appropriate management
- Strengthen applications for third-party funding

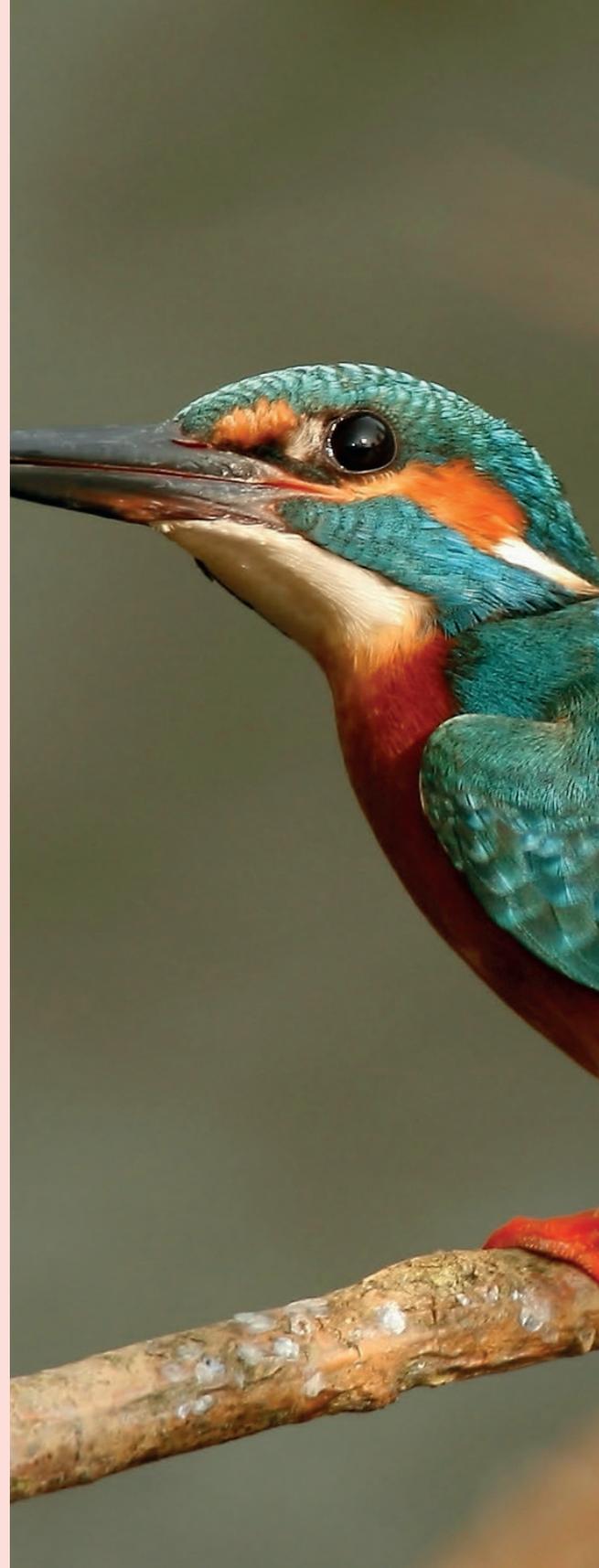
New Ferry Butterfly Park, Wirral

This was an abandoned railway goods yard, but over time wildlife and nature took over the area. A local resident saw the potential that the area had to create a natural place to visit and improve a run-down area.

With the support of Cheshire Wildlife Trust, its local group and other community groups, a committee was set up to create the New Ferry Butterfly Park. Funds were raised and work was organised. Fly-tipping was cleared, trees thinned, hedges planted and a pond was installed. The park provides wildlife with nectar and pollen throughout the year thanks to careful grass management, wild flower planting and trees such as hawthorn and holly.

The park is regularly surveyed, to monitor plants, butterflies, bees, moths, newts and other mini-beasts. The committee has developed two educational trails – a nature trail and an industrial history trail.

A Green Flag Award judge said: "The Wildlife Trust has transformed what was once a discarded industrial railway siding and station into an extraordinary biodiversity site catering for not only butterflies, but a wide selection of other insects and small mammals. The Trust has realised the value of the different soil composition that industry has left to develop plants species that would not naturally be in that location. This, in turn, increases the diversity of invertebrates and other animals on the site. The enthusiasm and the knowledge of the volunteers is excellent and they just want to share it with the visitors."



"This is definitely a regional hotspot for butterflies and a superb example of how a piece of land can be effectively managed for the benefit of our wildlife."

Malcolm Plant, Chair of the Cheshire and Peak Branch of Butterfly Conservation



Traditional Victorian parks

Victorian philanthropists understood the importance of green space for the health and wellbeing of society. Thankfully, they had the vision to create the world's first public parks that proved how vital access to good quality green space was. This remains as important today.

Benefits

- Provide a framework for management and maintenance that enables the park to stay true to its Victorian roots
- Help to preserve the historic importance and heritage of an area
- Give visitors a safe area to enjoy a healthy, balanced lifestyle
- Provide local residents and visitors with a quality green space as a contrast to their busy urban surroundings

Queen's Park, London

The park was initially called Kilburn Recreation Ground, but has been known as Queen's Park since the renaming of the park by Royal Command in the Jubilee year of 1887, in honour of Queen Victoria.

Queen's Park is a 12-hectare park managed by the City of London and has been open to the public since 1887. The City of London aims to provide well-managed surroundings and facilities that remain true to the vision of The Victorian founders and the park welcomes visitors and provides a beautiful green space in one of the most densely populated parts in London.

Queen's Park offers a number of facilities for all the family to enjoy, including tennis courts, pitch and putt, a large play area and a small zoo, all of which are open year-round. A children's paddling pool for under-tens is open during the summer months.

There is also opportunity for a more tranquil experience within the park with a sensory garden and the quiet garden with its perennial planting schemes. The park also has a café, open throughout the year.

There are a number of popular events held in the park, including the outdoor cinema, the Queen's Park Day and a variety of musical performances, held during the summer.



“I'm delighted that Queen's Park has once again been recognised as one of the best run and well-loved green spaces in the UK.

It is testament to the hard work and dedication of the staff and volunteers who work throughout the year to maintain and protect this wonderful site.”

Richard Gentry, City Corporation Park Manager

Recreational parks

Parks and green spaces give people the opportunity to be more active by giving them great places for them exercise regularly. Football pitches, tennis courts, skate parks, outdoor gyms, walking trails and other amenities and programmes are getting people moving and helping them get fit. Research has shown that people who have good access to green space experience greater wellbeing, suffer less illness and are less likely to die from chronic health conditions.

Benefits

- Encourage increased use of parks and green spaces for leisure activities, with health and wellbeing benefits
- Provide children with safe areas to enjoy a healthy and active lifestyle
- Provide areas for individuals and communities to participate in healthy living activities and events
- Promote positive contact between different ethnic groups and open communication in a non-threatening, social atmosphere
- Encourage community involvement in management and development

Willenhall Memorial Park, West Midlands

The focus on health and wellbeing at Willenhall Memorial Park stands out for all to see. Aided by a Heritage Lottery Fund grant, the park has reinstated existing facilities and created new ones, including a bowling green, skate park, outdoor fitness center, tennis courts, multi-use games area and as walking and cycling routes.

A range of events is provided by Walsall Council and partners, and supported by the active Friends' Group. These events include weekly walking groups, fishing and bowling, as well as summertime bandstand concerts. The parks rangers have even been trained as fitness instructors and run gym sessions on the outdoor equipment.

Programmes throughout the summer promote the park, such as sports tournaments, wildlife sessions and fun activities including as leaf printing and building nature dens.

In 2015, the Friends began a voluntary refreshment service during summer events in the park, with all profits reinvested into the park.



“We are absolutely delighted to receive a Green Flag Award from Keep Britain Tidy. This Award recognises and highlights that people in Willenhall are benefiting from a green space of the very highest quality and I'd like to thank all the volunteers who help to make our park the great success that it is.”

Councillor Diane Coughlan, Friends of Willenhall Memorial Park



“Our grounds and landscaping are a wonderful asset for the university and very much enjoyed by our staff and students. We continue to be the only Scottish university to feature on the Green Flag Award listings and this Award is a very welcome recognition of what has been achieved on the campus thanks to the long-term commitment and hard work of all of our estates colleagues.”

Malcolm Deans, Director of Campus Services at Heriot-Watt University

Heritage parks

Heritage parks and gardens are a fragile and finite resource: without careful management, they can easily be damaged beyond repair or lost forever. These parks are valued green spaces often at the centre of local communities, whether in town or in the country, and such places are an important, distinctive and much cherished part of our country.

Benefits

- Preserve the historic importance and heritage of an area through conservation and maintenance of landscape features, buildings and structures
- Attract visitors to the site with appropriate provision
- Retain the historical significance of a site through conservation of natural features, wild fauna and flora
- Provide appropriate educational information for visitors
- Encourage community involvement in the management and development of the site

The Lawn and Central Woodlands, Heriot-Watt University

The Lawn and Central Woodlands of the Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh has achieved a Green Flag Award each year since first entering in 2012, encouraging visitors and recognising the achievements of the university and its partners in sustaining the historic gardens.

The five-year management plan details the maintenance of the 18th-century green space's historical features, such as the 200-year-old lawn and surrounding wooded areas, conservation and bio-diversity, while maintaining a mix of indigenous and exotic plants and supporting wildlife.

Special care has been taken to safeguard the tranquillity of the area and the site conservation committee is consulted on all aspects of landscape maintenance and management.

A grassed Velvet Walk bordered with yews, holly and laurel overlooks three mature woodland areas, stone walls and a private family cemetery. The university has published a series of booklets for visitors outlining the history, sculpture, landscape and tree walks.

The university parks and sports pitches area team includes 17 people who do everything from laying paths, preparing ground for buildings, cutting grass and trimming hedges – 4.5 miles of them every year, mostly by hand.

Tatton Park, Cheshire

Modern parks

The creation of new public parks is vital for our towns and cities. Not only do they offer spaces for existing and new communities to integrate, they can also provide spaces for health and wellbeing to create sustainable communities for the future. Green space is vital for providing opportunities for all sections of society to enjoy the environment whether through play, volunteering or just relaxing. In these days of partnerships and funding bids, the Green Flag Award recognises the achievements of all involved in the creation of new quality green spaces and provides funders with guarantees on good park development, future management and maintenance. It is also physical evidence of the value for money on the investment.

Benefits

- Green Flag Award methodology can be important to consider during the design phase of the park, helping to reduce maintenance issues
- Help considering, building and developing a management framework for a new site
- Ensure that communities are engaged and consulted during design phase
- If management of the site is to be outsourced, the Green Flag Award provides a clear way of assessing the quality of the delivery of the management plan

Centenary Park, Rugby

Centenary Park was created on an allotment site that had not been used for around 15 years and so was inaccessible, unsightly, overgrown and contaminated with litter and fly-tipping.

The council worked closely with the local community group, primary school and residents to create a masterplan for the site.

The first phase of work involved clearing the perimeter of the site to create fence lines and gates for access, separating the new park from the area that was returned to allotment. Around 1.1km of new hedgerows were also planted by staff and volunteers.

The next phase created the circulatory and riverside paths, butterfly bank, two places for animals to hibernate, a sensory garden, an orchard, meadows and a picnic area. A multi-use games area was created for all ages and abilities. An outdoor gym with calisthenics equipment was installed, providing yet more opportunities for free, easy-to-access exercise.

A celebration event took place in spring 2016 to mark the official opening of the site and its dedication as a Fields in Trust Centenary Field, protecting the site as a living memorial to those who lost their lives during the First World War. Pupils from the local school voted for the name of the new park and chose Centenary Park to reflect the commemorations and its Fields in Trust protected status.

“Over a million visitors have enjoyed our wide open spaces, beautiful parklands and children’s’ playgrounds which is why we are delighted to have been awarded a Green Flag for Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park. Our Park is at the heart of the regeneration of east London and is central in helping improve the health and wellbeing of the local communities.”

Dennis Hone, Chief Executive, London Legacy Development Corporation



Country parks

Country parks attract millions of visitors every year and provide areas that have a natural, rural atmosphere. They are the stepping stone between city green spaces and the countryside.

They are also the perfect location for a peaceful walk, a bike ride, picnics, wildlife watching or just enjoying the scenery. They are a great places to escape from our busy everyday lives.

Benefits

- The Green Flag Award complements the Country Park accreditations and demonstrates that the park meets the criteria required
- Measure of the quality of facilities
- Highlights and raises the profile of park to visitors
- Recognises its contribution to conservation of the natural environment
- Recognises commitment and contribution to education

Cudmore Grove Country Park, Essex

This is a 40-hectare grassland and scrub site situated at the eastern end of Mersea Island and has beautiful views across the mouth of the Colne Estuary. Visitors can enjoy the natural beauty of this unspoilt section of the Essex coast, making it the perfect place for walking the sea wall, bird-watching and exploring the shore.

This country park is a place to stretch your legs, take the dog for a walk, enjoy a picnic, kick a ball with family and, on hot days, cool off with a paddle in the sea while watching the yachts sail by.

A daily presence of rangers ensures the park is maintained and kept clean. There is an information room located next to the car park for visitors to find out all they need to know about the park.

Cudmore Grove Country Park has held the Green Flag Award since 2009.



“Achieving Green Flag Award standard is the best way of demonstrating to visitors that Cudmore Grove Country Park is being managed and maintained to the high national standard of excellence.”

*Dougal Urquhart,
Site Manager, Cudmore Grove*



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