Transport and Environment Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 13 January 2015

Green Flag Award and Parks Quality Assessments

Item number	7.12
Report number	
Executive/routine	Routine
Wards	All

Executive summary

In 2014, a record 26 parks were awarded a Green Flag, and 124 of Edinburgh's 137 parks and green spaces met or exceeded the parks quality standard, established to ensure quality across all of the Council's greenspace estate.

Links

Coalition pledges	P48
Council outcomes	CO19
Single Outcome Agreement	SO2, SO4

Report

Green Flag Awards and Parks Quality Assessments

Recommendations

1.1 It is recommended that the Committee notes the content of this report.

Background

2.1 The Green Flag Award is the UK's national standard for parks and green spaces. It aims to recognise and celebrate high quality green spaces. The award strives to ensure that everyone has access to a safe, clean, and pleasant space where they can relax, meet, play, or exercise. Awards are given on an annual basis and winners must apply each year to renew their Green Flag Award status.

2.2 The Parks Quality Assessments (PQAs) are carried out annually on all Council parks and main green spaces. Each park is given a score, and the information from this score is used to manage better and improve parks

2.3 The Green Flag Award and PQAs provide robust mechanisms for monitoring the quality of city parks, and directing future resources.

Main report

3.1 The City of Edinburgh Council initially took part in the Green Flag Award scheme in 2007, achieving two Green Flags. The Council now has 26 of the 59 Green Flag Awards awarded in Scotland in 2014, and is ranked second amongst UK local authorities with regards to the number of successful applications in 2014.

3.2 In 2014, King George V Park (Eyre Place) and Spylaw Park were successful in achieving Green Flag Awards for the first time. In addition, the Friends of Corstorphine Hill successfully retained their Green Flag Community Award for the Corstorphine Walled Garden, in recognition of its high quality.

3.3 Edinburgh is involved in the Green Flag Group Award, where the Council's green space strategies, management policies, and practices are peer reviewed by qualified Green Flag Award judges. Judges expect to see evidence that self assessments of parks and green space are undertaken using the Green Flag Award criteria. They also expect to see a commitment to promoting and

developing Green Flag thinking throughout the parks estate, to obtaining user views on a regular basis, to exploring how communities are involved in the assessments, and to management improvement.

3.4   The Group Award status means that, although the Council still requires newly proposed sites to be judged externally, self assessments can be done on those sites that have already secured a Green Flag Award. Where the standard continues to be met, the site can automatically be awarded a Green Flag Award. Although the sites are self assessed, they are also subject to an external mystery shopping assessment to ensure that standards are not slipping. Should a mystery shopping assessment show this to be the case, the Council will be given information on matters requiring improvement.

3.5   The criteria used to assess parks and green spaces for the Green Flag Award is considered suitably robust to be used as the basis for a quality assessment of all the city's parks and green spaces. Criteria used to assess the quality of a park or green space includes consideration of the following:

- how 'welcoming' the site is;

- provision of good and safe access;

- equipment and facilities;

- levels of litter/waste and dog-fouling;

- quality of grounds maintenance;

- arboricultural management;

- condition of buildings, infrastructure and facilities;

- whether the site benefits biodiversity and landscape; and

- how site information and interpretation is provided.

3.6   Since 2008, 130 people from across the Council, external partners, and Parks 'Friends' group members, have been trained in Park Quality Assessments (PQAs). Each park was surveyed between April and July 2014, and the scores used to provide a baseline Parks Quality Score, which is placed into a bandwidth appropriate to the type of site being assessed. For example, a "good" Premier Park requires a score of between 65 - 69% whereas a "good" Community Park only requires 45 – 54% to reflect their relative status. Detail on the classification of Edinburgh's parks (e.g. what constitutes a Premier Park or a Community Park) can be found in Appendix 5.

3.7 A minimum standard score for each park type was agreed in 2008, when 55% of Edinburgh's parks met or exceeded this standard. In 2014, 91% now meet or exceed the Edinburgh Minimum Standard.

3.8 The assessment results reveal that Edinburgh's parks have varied quality. Analysis of the results indicates that out of 137 parks assessed in 2014, 126 parks are classed as "good" or better. A total of 72 parks increased their quality score from 2013, including 22 which improved sufficiently to move up a bandwidth. In 2008, the average parks quality score was 49% but this score has now risen to 60%.

3.9 Most improvements require a site-by-site approach. Consequently, assessors propose three improvement recommendations for every park based on their assessment. These recommendations are incorporated into Park Improvement Plans which have been developed for a number of parks. This identifies and implements improvements to the way each site is maintained.

3.10 The 2014 assessments also identified a number of trends pertinent across most of the Council's parks and green space estate. For instance "signage", "dog fouling" and "conservation of flora & fauna" all improved from 2013. Although "educational & interpretative provision" and "information provision" have also improved, they still scored poorly. Consequently, there is continuous effort to identify ways to improve any low scoring criteria, and a number of recommendations for each site have been agreed to improve the scores.

3.11 All sites will be subject to an annual re-assessment during April and July 2015. This will enable the changing quality of parks to be monitored effectively, further site management requirements identified, and priorities for action agreed. The number of trained assessors will also be widened further to raise awareness and understanding of parks quality criteria amongst ground maintenance staff and local communities, in order to develop 'ownership' of parks improvement across all relevant service areas.

Measures of success

4.1 An increase in the number of Green Flags awarded since the start of the scheme in 2007.

4.2 An increase in the percentage of parks meeting or exceeding the Edinburgh Minimum Standard Score.

Financial impact

5.1 There is no direct financial implication from this report.

Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact

6.1   The Green Flag Award and PQA schemes are robust mechanisms to ensure the ongoing quality of parks and greenspace.

6.2   There are no risk, compliance or governance impacts associated with this report.

Equalities impact

7.1   There is no relationship between the matters described in this report and the public sector general equality duty. There is no direct equalities impact arising from this report.

Sustainability impact

8.1   The impacts of this report in relation to the three elements of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 Public Bodies Duties have been considered, and the outcomes are summarised below.

- The update outlined in this report will have no impact on carbon emissions.

- The update outlined in this report will increase the city's resilience to climate change impacts because maintaining quality green spaces will maximise the use of urban green space.

- The update outlined in this report will help achieve a sustainable Edinburgh because maintaining a minimum standard for parks across the city will help to meet the diverse needs of people in existing and future communities, and will promote personal wellbeing as a result of access to quality green space, ensuring a strong, healthy and just society.

- The update outlined in this report will help achieve a sustainable Edinburgh, as maintaining quality green space impacts positively on local residents and encourages visitors, achieving a healthy and resilient economy.

- The update outlined in this report will help achieve a sustainable Edinburgh by impacting positively on natural resources and by promoting and enhancing biodiversity through encouraging interaction with the city's parks and green spaces.

Consultation and engagement

9.1 PQAs are carried out with members from Friends of Parks groups, council officers and external organisations such as Keep Scotland Beautiful.

9.2 Community involvement is a central part of the green flag award, and community groups are involved with assessments and judging, as well as contributing to physical improvements in their local parks.

Background reading/external references

Green Flag Award   http://www.greenflagaward.org/

Keep Scotland Beautiful   http://www.keepscotlandbeautiful.org/parks

Parks Quality Assessment Results
http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/info/20177/park_awards_and_competitions/363/green_flag_parks

http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/downloads/file/4196/parks_quality_report_2014

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Links

Coalition pledges	**P48**	Use Green Flag and other strategies to preserve our green spaces
Council outcomes	**CO19**	Attractive Places and Well Maintained – Edinburgh remains an attractive city through the development of high quality buildings and places and the delivery of high standards
Single Outcome Agreement	**SO2**	Edinburgh's citizens experience improved health and wellbeing, with reduced inequalities in health
	SO4	Edinburgh's communities are safer and have improved physical and social fabric

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Green Flag Award Parks 2014
Appendix 2: Percentage of parks meeting or exceeding the Edinburgh minimum standard
Appendix 3: Park results list
Appendix 4: PQA Trends
Appendix 5: Classification of Edinburgh's Parks

Appendix 1: Green Flag Award winning parks 2014

Green Flag Award Park	Neighbourhood	Year first achieved
Braidburn Valley Park	South	2007
Harrison Park	South West	2007
Pentland Hills Regional Park	South West	2008
Easter Craiglockhart Hill	South West	2009
Hopetoun Crescent Gardens	CC&L	2009
Burdiehouse Burn Valley Park	South	2010
Corstorphine Hill	West	2010
Craigmillar Castle Park	East	2010
Figgate Burn Park	East	2010
Inverleith Park	North	2010
London Road Gardens	CC&L	2010
Portobello Community Park	East	2010
Station Road Park	West	2010
Hailes Quarry Park	South West	2011
Hermitage of Braid & Blackford Hill	South	2011
Morningside Park	South	2011
Muir Wood Road Park	South West	2011
Princes Street Gardens	CC&L	2011
St Margarets Park	West	2011
Victoria Park	North	2011
Back Braes & Ferry Glen	West	2012
Lochend Park	East	2012
Prestonfield Park	South	2012
Ravelston Park & Woods	North	2012
King George V Park – Eyre Place	North	2014
Spylaw Park	South West	2014
Green Flag Community Award (formerly Green Pennant Award)		
Corstorphine Walled Garden	West	2009

Appendix 2: Percentage of Parks meeting or exceeding the Edinburgh Minimum Standard

Neighbourhood	No of Parks	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	91% Target Met
City Centre & Leith	19	64%	67%	79%	79%	74%	No
East	22	67%	80%	76%	91%	91%	Yes
North	15	67%	86%	93%	100%	93%	Yes
South	23	68%	87%	96%	91%	100%	Yes
South West	30	69%	81%	90%	93%	90%	No
West	28	69%	89%	100%	96%	93%	Yes
Citywide	**137**	**68%**	**82%**	**90%**	**92%**	**91%**	**Yes**

Appendix 3: Park Results

City Centre & Leith Neighbourhood

Park Name	Classification	Bandwidth
Bellevue Crescent Gardens	Garden	Fair
Calton Hill	Premier Park	Fair
Dalmeny Street Park	Community Park	Very Good
Dunbars Close Garden	Garden	Excellent
Gayfield Square	Garden	Good
Granny's Green	Garden	Fair
Henderson Gardens Park	Community Park	Good
Hillside Crescent Gardens	Garden	Good
Hopetoun Crescent Gardens	Garden	Excellent
Keddie Park	Community Park	Fair
Leith Links	Premier Park	Fair
London Road Gardens	City Park	Very Good
Montgomery Street Park	Community Park	Very Good
Pilrig Park	Community Park	Very Good
Princes Street Gardens East & West	Premier Park	Good+
Redbraes Park	Community Park	Very Good
Regent Road Park	Community Park	Very Good
St Mark's Park	Community Park	Very Good
Taylor Gardens	Garden	Good

East Neighbourhood

Park Name	Classification	Bandwidth
Abercorn Park	Community Park	Excellent
Baronscourt Park	Community Park	Good
Bingham Park	Community Park	Good
Brighton Park	Community Park	Very Good
Brunstane Mill	Natural Park	Good+
Cairntows Park	Community Park	Good
Craigmillar Castle Park inc Hawkhill Woods	Natural Park	Very Good
Figgate Burn Park	Community Park	Excellent
Hays Park	Community Park	Fair
Hunters Hall Park (JKC)	City Park	Fair
Jewel Park	Community Park	Very Good
Joppa Quarry Park	Community Park	Very Good
Lochend Park	Community Park	Excellent
Magdalene Glen	Community Park	Very Good
Meadowfield Park	Community Park	Excellent
Meadows Yard	Natural Park	Very Good
Newcraighall Park	Community Park	Very Good
Portobello Community Garden	Community Park	Excellent
Rosefield Park	Community Park	Excellent
Seafield Recreation Ground	Recreation Ground	Good
Sir Harry Lauder Garden	Garden	Very Good
Straiton Place Park	Community Park	Very Good

North Neighbourhood

Park Name	Classification	Bandwidth
East Pilton Park	Community Park	Very Good
Easter Drylaw Park	Community Park	Very Good
Granton Crescent Park	Community Park	Very Good
Gypsy Brae Recreation Ground	City Park	Good
Inverleith Park	Premier Park	Good
King George V Park (Eyre Place)	City Park	Very Good
Muirhouse Millennium Linear Park	Community Park	Good
Orchard (Brae) Park North & South	Community Park	Very Good
Ravelston Park	Community Park	Excellent
Ravelston Woods	Natural Park	Very Good
Rocheid Path	Natural Park	Very Good
Silverknowes Park	Recreation Ground	Very Good
Starbank Park	Community Park	Very Good
Victoria Park	City Park	Very Good
West Pilton Park	Community Park	Good

South Neighbourhood

Park Name	Classification	Bandwidth
Bauks View	Natural Park	Very Good
Braid Hills (inc golf courses)	Natural Park	Good+
Braidburn Valley Park	Community Park	Excellent
Burdiehouse Burn Valley Park inc Moredun Wood	Natural Park	Good+
Deaconess	Garden	Very Good
Drum Park	Community Park	Very Good
Ferniehill Community Park	Community Park	Excellent
Fernieside Recreation Ground	Recreation Ground	Very Good
Gracemount Community Park	Community Park	Good
Hermitage of Braid inc Blackford Hill & Pond	Natural Park	Excellent
Inch Park	City Park	Very Good
Liberton Park	Community Park	Very Good
Moredun Park (Gilmerton Park)	Community Park	Good
Morgan Playing Fields	Recreation Ground	Excellent
Morningside Park	Community Park	Excellent
Mortonhall Community Park	Community Park	Very Good
Nicholson Square	Garden	Very Good
Prestonfield Park	Community Park	Excellent
Prestonfield War Memorial	Garden	Excellent
Seven Acre Park (Alnwickhill)	Community Park	Excellent
St Katharine's Park (Liberton Gardens)	Community Park	Excellent
St Patrick's Square	Garden	Good
The Meadows and Bruntsfield Links	Premier Park	Good+

South West Neighbourhood

Park Name	Classification	Bandwidth
Blinkbonny Park	Community Park	Very Good
Bloomiehall Park	Community Park	Excellent
Campbell Park	Community Park	Good
Colinton & Craiglockhart Dells	Natural Park	Very Good
Colinton Mains Park	City Park	Very Good
Dovecot Park	Community Park	Good
Easter Craiglockhart Hill	Natural Park	Excellent
Fairmilehead Park	Community Park	Very Good
Gardner's Crescent	Garden	Good
Gorgie/Dalry Community Park	Community Park	Good
Hailes Quarry Park	Community Park	Excellent
Harrison Park	Community Park	Excellent
King George V Park (Currie)	Community Park	Very Good
Malleny Park	Recreation Ground	Good
Marchbank Park	Community Park	Very Good
Meadowspot Park	Community Park	Good
Muir Wood Park	Community Park	Excellent
Murieston Park	Community Park	Very Good
Paties Road Recreation Ground	City Park	Good
Pentland Hills Regional Park	Natural Park	Excellent
Pentland View Park	Community Park	Good
Ratho Park	Community Park	Very Good
Redford Wood	Natural Park	Fair
Redhall Park	Community Park	Good
Saughton Park	Premier Park	Fair
Sighthill Park	Community Park	Very Good
Spylaw Park	Community Park	Very Good
Stenhouse Place East Park	Community Park	Fair
Whinhill Park	Community Park	Good
White Park	Community Park	Very Good

West Neighbourhood

Park Name	Classification	Bandwidth
Allison Park, Kirkliston	Community Park	Very Good
Balgreen Park	Community Park	Very Good
Cammo Estate	Natural Park	Very Good
Clermiston Park	Community Park	Very Good
Corstorphine Hill	Natural Park	Very Good
Cramond Foreshore	Natural Park	Very Good
Cramond Walled Garden	Garden	Good
Davidsons Mains Park	City Park	Very Good
Drumbrae Park	Community Park	Very Good
Dundas Park, S Queensferry	Community Park	Good
Fauldburn Park	Community Park	Very Good
Ferry Glen & Back Braes	Natural Park	Good

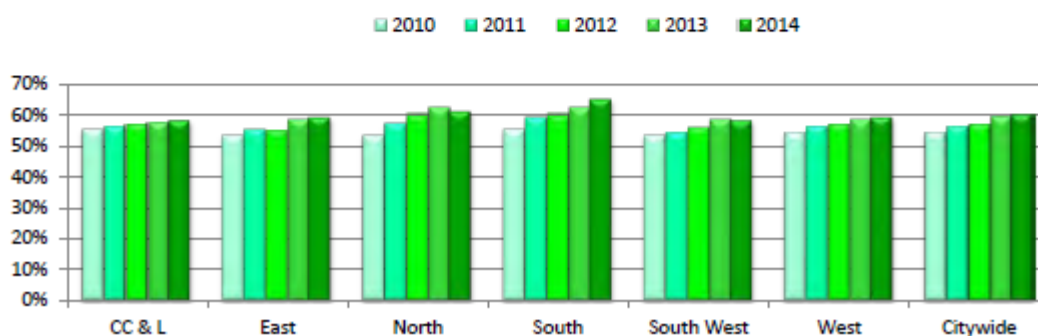|		
Glendevon Park	Community Park	Very Good
Gyle Park	City Park	Very Good
Haugh Park	Community Park	Very Good
Inchcolm Park, S Queensferry	Community Park	Very Good
King George V Pk, S Queensferry	Community Park	Good
Lauriston Castle	Garden	Good
Parkside, Newbridge	Community Park	Very Good
Pikes Pool	Natural Park	Poor
Ratho Station Park	Community Park	Good
Ratho Station Recreation Ground	Recreation Ground	Good
River Almond Walkway	Natural Park	Good+
Riverside Park	Community Park	Very Good
Roseburn Park	City Park	Very Good
St Margaret's Park	Community Park	Excellent
Station Road Pk, S Queensferry	Community Park	Excellent
Union Park	City Park	Good

The tables and graph below and overleaf show the average PQS score over the last five years.

Classification

Classification	No of Sites	2010 Avg PQS	2011 Avg PQS	2012 Avg PQS	2013 Avg PQS	2014 Avg PQS	Trend
Premier Parks	6	63%	65%	65%	67%	66%	↓
City Parks	12	52%	58%	60%	61%	59%	↓
Comm. Parks	79	52%	54%	56%	58%	59%	↑
Rec. Grounds	6	46%	48%	49%	50%	52%	↑
Gardens	15	56%	57%	58%	58%	59%	↑
Natural Parks	19	60%	63%	65%	64%	65%	↑
Citywide	137	54%	56%	57%	59%	60%	↑

Neighbourhood Areas

Neighbourhood	No of Sites	2010 Avg PQS	2011 Avg PQS	2012 Avg PQS	2013 Avg PQS	2014 Avg PQS	Trend
CC & Leith	19	55%	56%	57%	57%	58%	↑
East	22	53%	55%	55%	58%	59%	↑
North	15	54%	57%	60%	62%	61%	↓
South	23	55%	59%	60%	62%	65%	↑
South West	30	53%	54%	56%	58%	58%	→←
West	28	54%	56%	57%	58%	59%	↑
Citywide	137	54%	56%	57%	59%	60%	↑

Classification of Edinburgh's Parks

Premier Parks: A small number consisting of high quality parks, offering a wide range of facilities aimed at international and national visitors as well as local and city-wide users. These will often be areas with significant resources of cultural or natural heritage and may themselves be of historical importance. Design quality should be optimal and unique to each park. Standards of maintenance should be very high thus dictating the need for designated site-based maintenance teams. The overall impression should bear comparison with the best regarded parks anywhere in the world.

Natural Heritage Parks: These are generally large areas, the functions of which are determined by topography and ecology. In the main, these parks will tend to be dominated by woodland but also include coastal areas with topographical features such as hills and river valleys. The semi-natural character of these parks means that management for biodiversity is of fundamental importance, many of which are designated or proposed Local Nature Reserves, Urban Wildlife Sites or Sites of Interest for Nature Conservation as defined in the Edinburgh Urban Nature Conservation Strategy and Local Plans. Therefore, these areas are well suited to informal environmental education. Access is likely to be via car hence they will generally include designated car parking areas within their boundaries.

City Parks: Parks providing facilities that are used by people who may live anywhere in the city. These are likely to be larger in size and the facilities provided will be more specialised, with many including sports pitches and other formal facilities. However, these parks may also function as the Community Park for some people by virtue of their location and the absence of other smaller areas. Access will be by car, bus, bicycle or on foot.

Community Parks: Parks serving chiefly the people of a defined local area. These are generally smaller in area and the facilities provided are likely to be relatively simple. Functions should be determined as a far as possible by consultation with users and potential users. Access to these parks will be mainly on foot or by cycle.

Gardens: generally small areas subject to intensive horticultural input, with some provision for passive recreation (generally seats) but no provision for other forms of recreation. Generally used for quiet enjoyment and relaxation.

Recreation Grounds: Area's used specifically for sporting activities.

Cemeteries