

Transport and Environment Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 12 January 2016

Green Flag Award and Park Quality Assessments

Item number	8.1
Report number	
Executive/routine	
Wards	All

Executive summary

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 Park Quality Assessments (PQAs) are carried out annually on all Council parks and main green spaces to ensure quality across all of the Council's greenspace estate. In 2015, a record 29 parks were awarded a Green Flag, and 129 of Edinburgh's 137 parks and green spaces met or exceeded Edinburgh's parks quality standard.

Links

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

Green Flag Award and Park Quality Assessments

Recommendations

- 1.1 It is recommended that Committee notes the content of this report and recognises the value that parks play in making Edinburgh an attractive, vibrant and sustainable city.

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, and exercise. Awards are given on an annual basis and winners must apply each year to renew their Green Flag Award status.
- 2.2 The Park 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 inform management 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 29 of the 65 Green Flag Awards awarded in Scotland in 2015, and is ranked second amongst UK local authorities with regards to the number of successful applications in 2015.
- 3.2 In 2015, Ferniehill Community Park, Rosefield Park and Starbank 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.
- 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, obtaining user views on a regular basis, exploring how communities are involved in the assessments, and to management improvement.
- 3.4 The last peer review Assessment was undertaken in November 2014 and resulted in a successful judgement, with judges highlighting community involvement and the

use of Park Quality Assessments and Landscape Quality Standards as particular strengths.

- 3.5 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.
- 3.6 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.
- 3.7 Since 2008, 136 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 2015, 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 the 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.
- 3.8 A minimum standard score for each park type was agreed in 2008, when 55% of Edinburgh's parks met or exceeded this standard. In 2015, 94% met or exceed the Edinburgh Minimum Standard.
- 3.9 The assessment results reveal that, overall, the quality of Edinburgh's parks continues to improve. Analysis of the results indicates that, out of 138 parks assessed in 2015, 132 parks are classed as "good" or better. A total of 86 parks increased their quality score from 2014, including 29 which improved sufficiently to move up a bandwidth. In 2008, the average parks quality score was 49. It is now 62.
- 3.10 Most improvements require a site-by-site approach. Consequently, assessors propose 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. Since 2014, 500 park improvement actions have been carried out, and following the 2015 assessments a further 400 improvements have been recommended by judges.
- 3.11 The 2015 assessments also identified a number of trends relevant across most of the Council's parks and green space estate, and 21 out of the 26 criteria improving

in average score from 2014. Litter Management and Grounds Maintenance saw the biggest increases whilst only “information provision” dropped in score. 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.

- 3.12 All sites will be subject to an annual re-assessment during April to July 2016. 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 number of parks meeting or exceeding the Edinburgh Minimum Standard.

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.
- 7.2 Both the Green Flag Award and Park Quality Assessment scheme take into consideration the accessibility of sites, provision of facilities and personal security. In addition, it is well documented that high quality parks deliver health benefits to those in the local community and visitors.

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 and council officers.
- 9.2 Community involvement is a central principle of the Green Flag Award scheme, 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.keepsotlandbeautiful.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
Appendices	Appendix 1: Green Flag Award Parks 2015 Appendix 2: Percentage of parks meeting or exceeding the Edinburgh minimum standard Appendix 3: Average park quality scores Appendix 4: Park results list Appendix 5: Classification of Edinburgh’s Parks

Appendix 1: Green Flag parks

<u>Green Flag Award Park</u>	<u>Neighbourhood</u>	<u>Year first achieved</u>
Hopetoun Crescent Gardens	City Centre & Leith	2009
London Road Gardens	City Centre & Leith	2010
Princes Street Gardens	City Centre & Leith	2011
Craigmillar Castle Park	East	2010
Figgate Burn Park	East	2010
Lochend Park	East	2012
Portobello Community Park	East	2010
Rosefield Park	East	2015
Inverleith Park	North	2010
King George V Park – Eyre Place	North	2014
Ravelston Park & Woods	North	2012
Starbank Park	North	2015
Victoria Park	North	2011
Braidburn Valley Park	South	2007
Burdiehouse Burn Valley Park	South	2010
Ferniehill Community Park	South	2015
Hermitage of Braid & Blackford Hill	South	2011
Morningside Park	South	2011
Prestonfield Park	South	2012
Easter Craiglockhart Hill	South West	2009
Hailes Quarry Park	South West	2011
Harrison Park	South West	2007
Muir Wood Road Park	South West	2011
Pentland Hills Regional Park	South West	2008
Spylaw Park	South West	2014
Back Braes & Ferry Glen	West	2012
Corstorphine Hill	West	2010
St Margarets Park	West	2011
Station Road Park	West	2010
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	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	92% Target Met
City Centre & Leith	19	67%	79%	79%	74%	79%	No
East	22	80%	76%	91%	91%	95%	Yes
North	15	86%	93%	100%	93%	100%	Yes
South	23	87%	96%	91%	100%	100%	Yes
South West	30	81%	90%	93%	90%	93%	Yes
West	29	89%	100%	96%	93%	97%	Yes
Citywide	138	82%	90%	92%	91%	94%	Yes

Appendix 3: Average Park Quality Scores

Neighbourhood	No of Parks	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
City Centre & Leith	19	56%	57%	57%	58%	58%
East	22	55%	55%	58%	59%	60%
North	15	57%	60%	62%	61%	63%
South	23	59%	60%	62%	65%	67%
South West	30	54%	56%	58%	58%	61%
West	29	56%	57%	58%	59%	61%
Citywide	138	56%	57%	59%	60%	62%

Appendix 4: 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	V. Good
Dunbars Close Garden	Garden	Excellent
Gayfield Square	Garden	Good
Granny's Green	Garden	Good
Henderson Gardens Park	Community Park	Fair
Hillside Crescent Gardens	Garden	Good
Hopetoun Crescent Gardens	Garden	Excellent
Keddie Park	Community Park	Good
Leith Links	Premier Park	Fair
London Road Gardens	City Park	V. Good
Montgomery Street Park	Community Park	Excellent
Pilrig Park	Community Park	Good
Princes Street Gardens	Premier Park	Good+
Redbraes Park	Community Park	Good
Regent Road Park	Community Park	V. Good
St Mark's Park	Community Park	Good
Taylor Gardens	Garden	Good

East Neighbourhood

Park Name	Classification	Bandwidth
Abercorn Park	Community Park	Excellent
Baronscourt Park	Community Park	V. Good
Bingham Park	Community Park	Good
Brighton Park	Community Park	V. Good
Brunstane Mill	Natural Park	Good+
Cairntows Park	Community Park	Good
Craigmillar Castle & Hawkhill Woods	Natural Park	V. Good
Figgate Burn Park	Community Park	Excellent
Hays Park	Community Park	Fair
Hunter's Hall Park	City Park	Good
Jewel Park	Community Park	Good
Joppa Quarry Park	Community Park	V. Good
Lochend Park	Community Park	Excellent
Magdalene Glen	Community Park	V. Good
Meadowfield Park	Community Park	V. Good
Meadows Yard	Natural Park	V. Good
Newcraighall Park	Community Park	V. Good
Portobello Community Garden	Community Park	Excellent
Rosefield Park	Community Park	Excellent

Seafield Recreation Ground	Recreation ground	Good
Sir Harry Lauder Garden	Garden	V. Good
Straiton Place Park	Community Park	V. Good

North Neighbourhood

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

South Neighbourhood

Park Name	Classification	Bandwidth
Bauk's View	Natural Park	V. Good
Braid Hills	Natural Park	V. Good
Braidburn Valley Park	Community Park	Excellent
Burdiehouse Burn Valley Park	Natural Park	V. Good
Deaconess Garden	Garden	V. Good
Drum Park	Community Park	Excellent
Ferniehill Community Park	Community Park	Excellent
Fernieside Recreation Ground	Recreation ground	V. Good
Gracemount Community Park	Community Park	V. Good
Hermitage of Braid & Blackford Hill	Natural Park	V. Good
Inch Park	City Park	V. Good
Liberton Park	Community Park	Excellent
Moredun Park	Community Park	V. Good
Morgan Playing Fields	Recreation ground	Excellent
Morningside Park	Community Park	Excellent
Mortonhall Community Park	Community Park	V. Good
Nicholson Square	Garden	V. Good
Prestonfield Park	Community Park	Excellent
Prestonfield War Memorial	Garden	Excellent
Seven Acre Park	Community Park	Excellent
St Katharine's Park	Community Park	Excellent

St Patrick's Square	Garden	V. Good
The Meadows & Bruntsfield Links	Premier Park	Good+

South West Neighbourhood

Park Name	Classification	Bandwidth
Blinkbonny Park	Community Park	V. Good
Bloomiehall Park	Community Park	Excellent
Campbell Park	Community Park	V. Good
Colinton & Craiglockhart Dells	Natural Park	V. Good
Colinton Mains Park	City Park	Good
Dovecot Park	Community Park	Good
Easter Craiglockhart Hill	Natural Park	Excellent
Fairmilehead Park	Community Park	V. Good
Gardener's Crescent	Garden	V. 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	V. Good
Malleny Park	Recreation ground	Good
Marchbank Park	Community Park	Good
Meadowspot Park	Community Park	Good
Muirwood Road Park	Community Park	Excellent
Murieston Park	Community Park	V. Good
Paties Road Recreation Ground	City Park	Good
Pentland Regional Park	Regional park	Excellent
Pentland View Park	Community Park	V. Good
Ratho Park	Community Park	V. Good
Redford Wood	Natural Park	Fair
Redhall Park	Community Park	V. Good
Saughton Park	Premier Park	Good
Sighthill Park	Community Park	V. Good
Spylaw Park	Community Park	Excellent
Stenhouse Place East Park	Community Park	Good
Whinhill Park	Community Park	V. Good
White Park	Community Park	V. Good

West Neighbourhood

Park Name	Classification	Bandwidth
Allison Park, Kirkliston	Community Park	V. Good
Balgreen Park	Community Park	V. Good
Buttercup Farm Park	Community Park	V. Good
Cammo Estate	Natural Park	V. Good
Clermiston Park	Community Park	V. Good
Corstorphine Hill	Natural Park	V. Good
Cramond Foreshore	Natural Park	V. Good

Cramond Walled Garden	Garden	Good
Davidsons Mains Park	City Park	V. Good
Drumbrae Park	Community Park	V. Good
Dundas Park, South Queensferry	Community Park	V. Good
Fauldburn Park	Community Park	V. Good
Ferry Glen & Back Braes, South Queensferry	Natural Park	Good+
Glendevon Park	Community Park	V. Good
Gyle Park	City Park	V. Good
Haugh Park	Community Park	V. Good
Inchcolm Park, South Queensferry	Community Park	V. Good
King George V Park, South Queensferry	Community Park	V. Good
Lauriston Castle	Garden	V. Good
Parkside, Newbridge	Community Park	Good
Pike's Pool, Kirkliston	Natural Park	Good
Ratho Station Park	Community Park	V. Good
Ratho Station Recreation Ground	Recreation ground	Good
River Almond Walkway	Natural Park	Good+
Riverside Park	Community Park	V. Good
Roseburn Park	City Park	V. Good
St Margaret's Park	Community Park	Excellent
Station Road Pk, South Queensferry	Community Park	Excellent
Union Park	City Park	Good

Appendix 5: 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 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 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: Areas used specifically for sporting activities.