

Green Flag Award Scheme

Introducing the scheme and encouraging people from ethnic communities to become judges.

Karen Lewis

The Aim of the Green Flag Award Scheme is to be the national standard for public parks and green spaces and to raise standards across the UK.

So what is the aim of the Green Flag Award scheme? It aims to raise the standards in freely accessible parks and green spaces and in doing so improve the quality of this type of environment for all users. It represents the national standard for parks and green spaces and provides a practical benchmark against which the quality of these areas can be measured. The award is only available in England and Wales at present.

The Green Flag Standards

- | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. A welcoming place | 5. Conservation and heritage |
| 2. Healthy, safe and secure | 6. Community involvement |
| 3. Clean and well maintained | 7. Marketing |
| 4. Sustainability | 8. Management |

And what are the Green Flag standards? There are 8 criteria which are shown here representing all aspects of good management within a park. They were developed in consultation with a wide range of organisations to reflect safer environmental qualities and management along with recognising the social value of a park or green space to its' locality.

Judges

They are:

- Independent
- Volunteers
- Valuable asset

Experts in:

- Park and Countryside Management
- Landscape Design
- Horticulture and Forestry
- Nature Conservation
- Environmental Science

Applications for a Green Flag Award are judged by independent volunteers who are dedicated to improving parks and green spaces. They are experts, recruited from all types of backgrounds that are relevant to the scheme and we try to match the judges background to the type of park they are being asked to judge.

We operate a mentor scheme whereby new judges are paired with more experienced judges and this rolling programme ensures that our strength in experience continues to grow each year.

We provide training to our judges but also learn from them in our annual debriefings.

We continually seek new judges so if anyone in this audience is interested in becoming a judge please contact me for more information.

Where are we now?

The Awards are in their 6th year and in 2001 there was a 30% increase in applications.

| Year | Total number of applications | Number of new applications | Number of re-applications | Number of winners |
|---------|------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|
| 1997/8 | 16 | 16 | 0 | 7 |
| 1998/9 | 23 | 16 | 7 | 16 |
| 1999/00 | 46 | 31 | 15 | 35 |
| 2000/01 | 79 | 51 | 28 | 55 |
| 2001/02 | 102 | 56 | 46 | 81 |

So what is the current position on the green flag award scheme. Well it has grown in England over the last 6 years from a standing start with an initial 16 applications in 1997 to 102 in 2001 from which we have had 81 winners. I am anticipating a 100% growth in 2002 with around 200 applications and we expect growth to continue as publicity surrounding the award starts to impact and organisations become more aware of its existence. Also many organisations test the water with one park and having achieved success extend their winning formula to others within their area.

Green Pennant Award

A new award for 2002 to reward community managed parks and green spaces

- For voluntary & community groups
- Criteria similar to main Green Flag Award
- Simpler application & judging process
- Rewarding quality sites

We know that not all parks and green spaces are managed by local authorities but that many nowadays are looked after by voluntary or community groups especially those in the middle of regeneration areas. This new award will recognise and reward their hard work in managing these spaces to high standards. It will be launched in April and we hope to be celebrating our first Green Pennant winners in the Autumn.

Finally

- Universal appeal
- Free
- Links to countryside
- Benefits to health
- Links to education
- Use the Green Flag Award as the goal

Parks and green spaces represent areas that have something for everyone - the old, the young, families, single people, able bodied people, disabled people, sports lovers, peace seekers, dog walkers, cultural groups and so on.

They are free and frequently offer the only peace of countryside for those in inner city areas, particularly in deprived areas. The health benefits are enormous and as yet have not been fully explored. Parks offer an educational resource with wide potential.

The Green Flag Award is the initiation factor and the catalyst for improvement. It is backed by the government who see good quality parks and green spaces essential to their liveability agenda and it is achievable as our 81 winners can demonstrate.