

PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL**Environment Committee - 26 May 2010****GREEN FLAG PARKS AND GREENSPACE SITES****Report by the Depute Director (Environment)**

This report provides details of the Council's current commitment to the Green Flag Award scheme and recommends that selected sites are entered during 2011 to 2014 period.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to:

- (i) Note the Council's current commitment towards The Green Flag Award Scheme
- (ii) Approve the continued entry of selected principal greenspace sites for the Award.

BACKGROUND

1. In 2008, a commitment was made in The Environment Service's Business Management Improvement Plan (BMIP) to ensure that Principal Parks meet Green Flag Standards. Reference to the Green Flag scheme has been made in the following reports to The Environment Committee: 3 September 2008 - MacRosty Park Management Plan 2008 – 2013; 28 January 2009 - Larchan Park Management Plan 2008 – 2013 and 27 January 2010 Victoria Park (Aberfeldy) Management Plan 2010 – 2015.
2. The Green Flag Award® Scheme was launched in 1996 to recognise and reward the best green spaces and since 2009 has been administered by Keep Britain Tidy. It has become the national standard for parks in England and Wales and over 900 parks and green spaces are currently flying a Green Flag. In recent years it has developed a European dimension with the scheme operating in Northern Ireland, Ireland and the Netherlands, and development work is ongoing in other European countries. In response to strong interest from Scottish local authorities, Greenspace Scotland, in partnership with Dundee City and City of Edinburgh Councils, piloted the Green Flag Award Scheme at 6 sites in 2007 and 2008. As part of the pilot, 20 Scottish judges were trained. Greenspace Scotland actively encourages local authority staff involved in the management of greenspace to become Green Flag judges. This provides an excellent opportunity to benchmark and exchange ideas with other park managers and a suitable candidate from the Community Greenspace section of The Environment Service is to be considered for this.

3. In 2008, a survey was undertaken of all Scottish Councils, on the need for and use of, Green Flag in Scotland. There was unanimous support for extending Green Flag into Scotland from the 18 Councils who responded. The survey indicated that many Councils are already using Green Flag criteria for auditing, quality assessment and developing standards for their greenspace sites.
4. The scheme was opened to all Scottish Parks in February 2009. Kinnoull Hill Woodland Park in Perth and Larghan Park in Coupar Angus were entered and successfully achieved Green Flag Awards for 2009/10. MacRosty Park, which was entered to provide a pre-regeneration benchmark, did not achieve a Green Flag. However it is expected that, following the completion of the range of improvements that are to be implemented this year, a Green Flag will be awarded.
5. As awards are given on an annual basis and winners must apply each year to renew their Green Flag status, Kinnoull Hill Woodland Park and Larghan Park were re-entered in January this year. An application was also submitted for Victoria Park in Aberfeldy for the first time. The outcome of these three applications will be announced in July 2010.
6. For a detailed description of the Green Flag criteria and the requirements that need to be met in each criterion see Appendix 1. The Green Flag judges prepare a report for each park that has been entered, covering strengths and recommendations for improvements against each of the above criteria. The judging criteria acknowledge that each park or green space will offer different kinds of facilities, and will be managed and developed to varying opportunities and constraints. Innovation in the way facilities offered are tailored to the needs of the community, is also taken into account.
7. The Green Flag scheme aims to demonstrate the wider benefits of greenspace and ensure that it is embedded within local outcome frameworks and Single Outcome Agreements. The scheme is committed to building capacity among Local Authorities, green space sector practitioners and communities, to encourage continued improvements in the standard of green space. The Green Flag objectives are therefore compatible with the strategic direction that has been established within Community Greenspace, for managing the Council's greenspace sites for local communities.
8. Winning a Green Flag Award generates excellent publicity for a park or green space and can boost its popularity. It also provides tangible recognition to local communities of the successful outcome of their efforts. A shared commitment by Scottish local authorities to participate in the Green Flag scheme by entering their principal greenspace sites over the coming years, will ensure that it eventually gains the level of public recognition it currently enjoys in the rest of the UK.

Proposed Green Flag applications over the 2011 to 2014 period

9. It is proposed that Kinnoull Hill Woodland Park, Larghan Park, Victoria Park and MacRosty Park are entered for Green Flags in 2011. The Council is now committed to enter MacRosty Park for this Award each year between 2011 and 2015 as this is a condition of Heritage Lottery Fund Grant awards from the 'Parks for People' programme. The Green Flag scheme also includes 'Green Heritage Site' accreditation to distinguish sites that have local or national historic interest. Due to the heritage significance of MacRosty Park, it is proposed that this additional award is also sought.
10. In subsequent years, it is proposed that more sites are added to the above for submission to the Green Flag scheme. In particular: Kirkgate Park in Kinross, which has the potential to be combined with the Loch Leven Heritage Trail; The Birks of Aberfeldy; Perth's Riverside Park (which incorporates Norie-Miller and Rodney Garden) and both the North and South Inches. A continued commitment to the preparation of Management Plans and community engagement associated with these sites will be required.

CONSULTATION

11. The Head of Legal Services and the Head of Democratic Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

12. The annual application fee in Scotland for each site is currently £675. The total cost of £2025 for the three sites entered in January 2010 was met from the existing 2009/10 Community Greenspace revenue budget. It is intended that the same budget is utilised for the proposed 2011 submissions. The Council will be reimbursed 62% of the cost of MacRosty Park Green Flag applications by HLF.
13. In future years, the application fees may be reduced to the lower rate of £175 that currently applies in England, where the Communities and Local Government organisation subsidise the cost of the Green Flag scheme. The Scottish Government has been approached for assistance in resourcing Green Flag however they consider that, at this stage, it should be led by CoSLA, in partnership with Greenspace Scotland.

COUNCIL CORPORATE PLAN OBJECTIVES 2009-2012

14. The Council's Corporate Plan 2009-2012 lays out five objectives which provide clear strategic direction, inform decisions at a corporate and service level and shape resources allocation.

15. The report impacts on the following:-
- (i) A Safe, Secure and Welcoming Environment
 - (ii) Healthy, Caring Communities
 - (iii) A Prosperous, Sustainable and Inclusive Economy
 - (v) Confident, Active and Inclusive Communities

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EqIA)

16. An equality impact assessment needs to be carried out for functions, policies, procedures or strategies in relation to race, gender and disability and other relevant protected characteristics. This supports the Council's legal requirement to comply with the duty to assess and consult on relevant new and existing policies.
17. The function, policy, procedure or strategy presented in this report was considered under the Corporate Equalities Impact Assessment process (EqIA) with the following outcome:-
- (i) Assessed as **relevant** and the following positive outcomes expected following implementation:
 - The Green Flag Award is a nationally recognised best practice benchmark for Park Management in the UK. To be awarded it requires evidence of extensive and inclusive community and stakeholder engagement and a robust, customer focussed Park Management and Action Plan. This needs to be a holistic document which identifies all the key issues facing park users and sets out how their needs and priorities will be met within available resources. It must also ensure the park has equal access for all members of the community. All parks in Perth and Kinross which have or will be entered for a Green Flag will have such management plans all of which will have Committee approval and an individual EqIA.

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

18. Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a legal requirement under the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 that applies to all plans, programmes and strategies, including policies (PPS).
19. The matters presented in this report were considered under the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 and no further action is required as it does not qualify as a PPS as defined by the Act and is therefore exempt.

CONCLUSION

20. The Green Flag Award sets a benchmark of excellence for recreational green areas. It is a positive way of encouraging a continued commitment to the high environmental standards for which the Perth and Kinross area has become recognised. The success of Kinnoull Hill Woodland Park and Larghan Park in achieving Green Flags in the first full year of the awards in Scotland is an endorsement of the considerable planning and hard work, combined with the strong support and involvement of local communities, that has gone into the management and care of these sites. Aiming for Green Flag status at other principal parks and greenspace sites will confirm our commitment to delivering excellent quality greenspace for local communities and visitors using these sites.

JIM VALENTINE
DEPUTE DIRECTOR (ENVIRONMENT)

NOTE

The following background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (and not containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to a material extent in preparing the above Report; (list papers concerned) The Environment Committee: 3 September 2008 -MacRosty Park Management Plan 2008 – 2013; 28 January 2009 - Larghan Park Management Plan 2008 – 2013 and 27 January 2010 Victoria Park (Aberfeldy) Management Plan 2010 – 2015

Contact Officer: Michael Messenger, Principal Parks Development Officer
extn75275.

Address of Service: Pullar House, 35 Kinnoull Street, Perth, PH1 5GD
Date of Report 18 May 2010

If you or someone you know would like a copy of this document in another language or format, (On occasion only, a summary of the document will be provided in translation), this can be arranged by contacting
Alma Murray, Equalities Assistant
on
01738 476558 or TESEqualities@pkc.gov.uk



Council Text Phone Number 01738 442573

Green Flag Award applications are judged against the following eight criteria:

- A welcoming place
- Healthy, safe and secure
- Clean and well maintained
- Sustainability
- Conservation and heritage
- Community involvement
- Marketing and
- Management.

Green Flag Award® Assessment Criteria

1. A welcoming place

When approaching or entering the park/green space, the overall impression for any member of the community - regardless of the purpose of their visit - should be positive and inviting. There should be:

- Good and safe access
- Good signage to and in the park/green space
- Equal access for all members of the community

2. Healthy, safe and secure

The park/green space must be a healthy, safe and secure place for all members of the community to use. Any issues that have come to light must be addressed in the management plan and implemented on the ground. New issues that arise must be addressed promptly and appropriately.

- Equipment and facilities must be safe to use
- It must be a secure place for all members of the community to use or traverse
- Dog fouling must be adequately addressed
- Health and safety policies should be in place, in practice and regularly reviewed
- Toilets, drinking water, first aid, public telephones and emergency equipment where relevant (e.g. life belts by water) should be available in or near the park/green space, and be clearly signposted.

3. Clean and well maintained

For aesthetic as well as health and safety reasons, issues of cleanliness and maintenance must be adequately addressed, in particular:

- Litter and other waste management
- The maintenance of grounds, buildings, equipment and other features
- A policy on litter, vandalism and maintenance should be in place, in practice and regularly reviewed.

4. Sustainability

Methods used in maintaining the park/green space and its facilities should be environmentally sound, relying on best practices available according to current knowledge. Management should be aware of the range of techniques available to them, and demonstrate that informed choices have been made and are regularly reviewed. Parks/green spaces should:

- Have an environmental policy or charter and management strategy in place, which is in practice and regularly reviewed
- Minimise and justify pesticide use
- Eliminate horticultural peat use
- Recycle waste plant material
- Demonstrate high horticultural and arboricultural standards
- Have energy conservation, pollution reduction, waste recycling, and resource conservation measures

5. Conservation and heritage

Particular attention should be paid to the conservation and appropriate management of:

- Natural features, wildlife and fauna
- Landscapes
- Buildings and structural features
- These should serve their function well without placing undue pressure on the surrounding environment

6. Community involvement

The park/green space management should actively pursue the involvement of members of the community who represent as many park/green space user groups as possible. The following should be demonstrated:

- Knowledge of user community and levels and patterns of use
- Evidence of community involvement in management and/or developments and results achieved
- Appropriate levels of provision of recreational facilities for all sectors of the community

7. Marketing

- A marketing strategy should be in place, which is in practice and regularly reviewed
- There should be good provision of information to users, e.g. about management strategies, activities, features, ways to get involved
- The park/green space should be promoted as a community resource

8. Management

- A management plan or strategy should be in place which reflects the aspirations of Local Agenda 21
- This should clearly and adequately address all of the above criteria and any other relevant aspects of the park/green space's management
- The plan must be actively implemented and regularly reviewed
- A financially sound management of the park/green space must also be demonstrated