

# National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces

## GREEN FLAG STANDARDS – CAMPAIGNING STRATEGY

### 1. Aim and mission

To aspire towards and seek the achievement of the Green Flag standards for all the UK's open green spaces

### 2. Measuring Green Space Quality

At the moment, there are no standard or national criteria to assess the quality of parks and green space. However the Green Flag Award standard, which was launched in 1996 and has proved immensely popular, offers a really useful minimum benchmark for green spaces on a national basis.

### 3. The Green Flag Award

The Green Flag standard sets out eight criteria. To obtain the Green Flag Award, your park needs to demonstrate the following:

- It must be a welcoming place
- It must be healthy, safe and secure
- It needs to be well-maintained and clean
- It has to demonstrate sustainability
- It must address conservation and heritage issues
- It has to draw on community involvement
- There has to be a proper marketing strategy in place
- It has to have an appropriate management structure

### 4. The significance of the Green Flag Award

The introduction of the Green Flag Award has helped to raise national quality standards considerably. Indeed, many local authorities pride themselves on the fact that they have been able to increase the number of parks which have successfully obtained a Green Flag Award. It has become a means of assessing the commitment of local politicians, irrespective of their political party, to the well-being of their constituents, given the central importance of parks and green space to health, leisure and social cohesion.

### 5. The current crisis

Following the financial crisis of 2008 and the commitment of the coalition government to cut public spending, local authority budgets have suffered a considerable contraction and savings targets will continue to influence resource allocation for parks

and green space for the foreseeable future. Because of the absence of any statutory protection, your parks are often an easy target for local politicians who fail to understand their wider cultural, economic, health and social significance. Instead of seeing them as assets which need to be protected and improved further, they are often treated as areas of public space of secondary importance.

## **6. Raising the quality threshold of parks**

This is the moment to campaign for the future of your parks and green spaces. No-one wants to return to the 1970s and 1980s which were decades of disinvestment in the country's parks and resulting deterioration and neglect. Instead, we need capitalise on the gains which have been made in the recent past when many parks have benefited from new sources of funding and a revival of local pride in community green space.

## **7. What Friends Groups, area/regional Forums and the NFPGS can do**

To achieve the above objective, we need to argue for the continued funding of local parks; we need to campaign for a continued commitment to raise the number of successful Green Flag awards; and we need to persuade local councillors and other stakeholder groups that the Green Flag Standard should remain the benchmark for improving all our local parks and green spaces.

In particular members of Friends Groups can get involved in a number of ways eg:

- Ensure that their Friends Group is involved in all stages of the Green Flag process
- Become Green Flag judges
- Become Green Flag 'mystery shoppers' to check standards are being maintained

The National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces will, for example:

- Join the Green Flag Awards advisory and monitoring process
- Support the greater involvement of Friends Groups at the local and regional level
- Support moves to establish 'Green Flag Council' Awards, with the criteria that each such Council aspires to, and takes active steps, to achieve Green Flag standards for all its green spaces