



City of Westminster

## **Westminster's Green Flag Parks, Gardens and Open Spaces**

### **How we meet the standards**





# Green Flag – The Guiding Principles

There are eight criteria that all Green Flag sites must meet:

## 1. A Welcoming Place

The overall impressions for any member of the community approaching and entering the park or green space should be positive and inviting, regardless of the purpose for which they are visiting. Features of particular importance are:

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

## 2. Healthy, Safe, and Secure

The park or green space must be a healthy, safe and secure place for all members of the community to use. Relevant issues must be addressed in management plans and implemented on the ground. New issues that arise must be addressed promptly and appropriately. Particularly important issues are:

- Equipment and facilities must be safe to use.
- The park or green space must be a secure place for all members of the community to use or traverse.
- Dog fouling must be adequately addressed.
- Health & 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 or green space, and clearly sign posted.

## 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 issues must be adequately addressed.
- Grounds, buildings, equipment and other features must be well maintained.
- A policy on litter, vandalism and maintenance should be in place, in practice and regularly reviewed.

#### **4. Sustainability**

Methods used in maintaining the park or 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. Specifically:

- An environmental policy or charter and management strategy should be in place, in practice and regularly reviewed.
- Pesticide use should be minimised and justified.
- Horticultural peat use should be eliminated.
- Waste plant material in the park or green space should be recycled.
- High horticultural and arboricultural standards should be demonstrated.
- Energy conservation, pollution reduction, waste recycling, and resource conservation measures should be used.

#### **5. Conservation and Heritage**

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

- Natural features, wildlife and fauna.
- Landscape features.
- Buildings and structural features.

These features should serve their function well without placing undue pressure on the surrounding environment.

#### **6. Community Involvement**

Management should actively pursue the involvement of members of the community who represent as many park or green space user groups as possible. Management should be able to demonstrate:

- 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**

- Marketing strategy in place, in practice and regularly reviewed.
- Good provision of information to users, e.g. about management strategies, activities, features, ways to get involved.
- Promotion of the park or green space as a community resource.

## **8. Management**

A Green Flag Award application must have a management plan or strategy in place which reflects the aspirations of Local Agenda 21 and clearly and adequately addresses all the above criteria and any other relevant aspects of the park or green space's management. The plan must be actively implemented and regularly reviewed. Financially sound management of the park or green space must also be demonstrated.

## Westminster's Green Flag Sites:

Westminster has been awarded eight Green Flags and these are for:

1. Paddington Recreation Ground
2. Victoria Embankment Gardens – Main Garden
3. St. Johns Wood Church Grounds
4. Queens Park Gardens
5. Mount Street Gardens
6. Rembrandt Gardens
7. St. Anne's Churchyard
8. East Finchley Cemetery

Paddington Recreation Ground and Victoria Embankment Gardens were the first sites in Westminster to win a green flags followed by St. Johns Wood church grounds two years later. Queens Park Gardens followed on a year after St. Johns Wood. The remaining four sites of which one is a cemetery have been awarded a Green flag in 2007.

Over the next two years Westminster's Parks Service will be seeking to achieve a minimum of 16 Green Flag's by 2010 with a view to gaining 20 Green Flags by 2012. By the end of the judging session in 2012 we believe that we will have exhausted the pool of sites that could reasonably be expected to gain Green Flags.

Although not unique Westminster's Cemeteries have already gained one Green Flag for a Cemetery in 2007. We will be looking to achieve Green flag status for all three cemeteries by 2009.

In the 2007 / 08 judging round we will be entering in addition to the above:

1. St. Georges Square Gardens
2. Paddington Street Gardens
3. St. Johns Garden (Horseferry Road)
4. Mill Hill Cemetery or Hanwell Cemetery or both.

In the 2008 / 09 judging round we will be entering the additional sites listed below:

1. Westbourne Green P.O.S.
2. Violet Hill Gardens
3. Ebury Square Gardens
4. The remaining cemetery if not already entered.
5. St. Mary's Churchyard / Paddington Green / St. Mary's Open Space as a single application because they are managed as a single entity.

# Green Flag and the Grounds Maintenance Contract:

When the grounds maintenance contract came up for renewal in 2006 / 07 the decision was taken that the new contract starting in April 2007 would have at its heart the basic principles of the Green Flag standard and these would apply to all sites irrespective of whether or not they were entered for the Green Flag award.

## How we meet the standards:

### A Welcoming Place -

1. As part of the contract we have re-introduce the concept of Park Keepers part of whose role is to get to know the park and it users and provide a point of contact for users.
2. All of our gardens are accessible except for a very few, such as St. Anne's Churchyard where access for all is not yet possible, are accessible to all users.
3. The signage within our parks and gardens is constantly under review and we have an ongoing capital project to completely overhaul our existing signage with the introduction of the new byelaws later this year.

### Healthy, Safe, and Secure –

1. All equipment used in the parks is thoroughly inspected by both the client side and also the contractors to ensure it is safe and does not pose a hazard to the users of the facilities
2. All bar a few sites are locked and secured at night and as above during the day we have patrol staff to ensure that user have a point of reference if they feel threatened.
3. Under the contract the contractor is responsible for the removal of all dog fouling if dog owners do not do this. The byelaws do require that all dog owners clean up after their dogs.
4. Both the contractor and the client side have Health and Safety policies in place to deal with all expected eventualities.
5. The contract sets out the standard of cleanliness in those public toilets that come under our control (some toilets associated with the parks are not under our control).

### Clean and Well Maintained –

1. The contract sets out the required standards for litter and waste management. In most cases the contractor is required to clear litter at least three times a day and in the West End gardens this may be continuously. Litter and rubbish is removed from site daily by the Councils Cleansing contractor Veola.
2. All structural features with the parks are maintained by to a high standard with a designated client officer being responsible for overseeing their maintenance. A mixture of contractors depending on the work required is used.
3. The management plan set out the policy as far as litter, vandalism and graffiti are concerned. As above litter is removed frequently and graffiti has to be removed as and when it appears. Vandalism although present within our parks does not cause us a major problem since most can be dealt with as and when it occurs and also

with patrol staff now present there has been a reduction in the levels of vandalism since the start of the new contract.

#### Sustainability –

1. The Councils Environmental Charter forms part of the management plan for each of the Green Flag sites along with other environmental issues that may not be covered in the charter.
2. Pesticide use is severely restricted and under the contract all other horticultural methods must have been tried and shown to have failed first.
3. Use of horticultural peat is restricted to the bedding plants that are grown for us by nurseries and even here we have been able to reduce this down by about 30% over the last five years. Interestingly one of our plant suppliers is obtaining their peat from Finland where it is a by-product of their power generation industry.
4. All Green Waste is now recycled wherever possible on site. The contract requires that no green waste should leave the city and we and our contractor, Continental Landscapes, decided at the start of the contract that we would wherever possible compost and recycle all green waste on site.
5. The Grounds Maintenance contract has a very high standard of maintenance built into it already and our contractor is also working with the client officers to raise this standard even higher with dedicated teams of gardeners covering all the parks, gardens and open spaces.
6. During 2006 we started to experiment with water recycling by installing water butts at key locations where we have sufficient runoff from the roofs of buildings to make this possible and we are now in the process of extending this across the city wherever we have parks buildings. This will help reduce our water bills.

#### Conservation and Heritage –

1. Westminster has one of the first inner city Local Nature Reserves at St. Johns Wood Church Grounds, a wild flower meadow at Westbourne Green and a new Wildlife area and study centre at Paddington Recreation Ground. This along with the Bio-diversity Action Plans currently being put in place make Westminster one of the leaders in this area.
2. The client side has strived to ensure that all landscape features, including such things as trees and flower beds etc., are carefully and rigorously maintained.
3. Westminster parks are rich in historical features especially those parks that are located in the south of the city such as Victoria Embankment Gardens. All these features are carefully maintained on an annual rolling program. All statues and monuments are cleaned annually which also gives us a chance to check for any deterioration which can then be dealt with and corrected quickly.

#### Community Involvement –

Westminster's main way of involving users is through the area forums that are run across the city. Over and above this we also have other formal and informal groups such as:

1. The Soho Green Society who have raised the money for the Wall of Light and the "toilet pod" at St. Anne's Churchyard.
2. The Queens Park friends group who are actively involved in the development of Queens Park Gardens.
3. The St. George's Square Garden Committee
4. The St. Johns Wood Society who take an interest in Violet Hill Gardens and St. Johns Wood Church Grounds.



5. The Marylebone Association and The St. Marylebone Society who take a keen interest in the works to Paddington Street gardens and the St. Marylebone Parish Church Grounds.

At Paddington Recreation Ground the client side have installed people counters which are regularly recoding over a million visitors a year. We are currently planning to install a similar system at other sites to determine the current usage.

The Open Space Strategy which has recently been adopted by the City Council will guide our decisions in future on the type of facilities that should be provided and this will be backed up by user surveys and consultations when any major works are planned such as new or refurbished playgrounds.

#### Marketing –

Because of the quality and high standards maintained in Westminster's park and gardens marketing in the true sense of the word is unnecessary. Community events are actively encouraged as demonstrated by the ones held at Queens Park Garden, Mount Street Gardens, St. Anne's Churchyard and St. Georges Square.

The client side management team are planning to introduce an information handout for each of the major parks and gardens such as Victoria Embankment, St. Johns Wood Church Grounds and Paddington Recreation Ground. There is already an information leaflet for the Nature reserve at St. Johns Wood which was reviewed and reprinted in 2006.

#### Management –

Each Green Flag site has a management plan that details how the site will be managed for a period of 5 years. The plan details proposed works with costing's which also includes any proposed capital works.