

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No.

meeting date: TUESDAY 4TH NOVEMBER 2008
 title: CLITHEROE CASTLE GROUNDS – GREEN FLAG AWARD
 submitted by: JOHN C HEAP - DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES
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1. PURPOSE

1.1 To give consideration to the issues involved in seeking a Green Flag Award for Clitheroe Castle Grounds

1.2 Relevance to the Council's Ambitions & Priorities.

Council Vision shared with the Local Strategic Partnership:-

An area with an exceptional environment and quality of life for all; sustained by vital and vibrant market towns and villages acting as thriving service centres meeting the needs of residents, businesses and visitors.

Council Ambitions:-

To protect and enhance the existing environmental quality of our area
 To help make people's lives safer and healthier

Core Values:-

Strive to achieve excellence

Citizen's Charter:-

We will:

Cut the grass in our parks and open spaces regularly
 Maintain children's play area's so that they are safe to use

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 At the meeting of this Committee held on Tuesday 9th September 2008 amongst a number of issues it was resolved at minute 373 that:-

2.1.1 A future report to this Committee addresses issues of how the ongoing management of the Castle and it's grounds including the museum area can be carried out holistically;

2.1.2 A future meeting of this Committee give consideration to the issues involved in seeking a Green Flag Award for the Castle Grounds.

2.2 What is the Green Flag Award Scheme?



The Green Flag Award is the national standard for parks and green spaces in England and Wales. The award scheme began in 1996 as a means of recognising and rewarding the best green spaces in the country. It was also seen as a way of encouraging others to achieve the same high environmental standards, creating a benchmark of excellence in recreational green areas. Awards are given on an annual basis and winners must apply each year to renew their Green Flag status. Each site is judged on its own merits and suitability to the community it serves. Experienced trained judges assess all sites. The assessment is based upon the site Management Plan and a Field Assessment. There are 196 parks which won an award in 2008 in the North-West. Nationally 65% of all Local Authorities have one or more award winning sites.

2.3 What is the site judged on?

A Green Flag Award is granted to a park or green space that can meet the scheme's criteria to a sufficiently high standard. There are eight criteria:

1. A Welcoming Place
2. Healthy, Safe and Secure
3. Clean and Well Maintained
4. Sustainability
5. Conservation and Heritage
6. Community Involvement
7. Marketing
8. Management

Further information on these criteria can be found in Appendix A. These criteria will be marked by way of an assessment of the site's management plan and also a site visit by the judges assigned to the site.

2.4 What are the Benefits?

i. **Promotion**

Winning a Green Flag Awards brings excellent publicity. Both the media and the public are becoming increasingly aware that a site flying a Green Flag is a high quality green space. Management of award winning green spaces may use the Green Flag Award logo on stationary, promotional literature, vehicles, uniforms, and in other appropriate situations for the duration for which the green space holds the award.

ii. **Best Value & Service Improvement**

A Green Flag Award visibly demonstrates to the local community and local councillors a clear improvement to that park or green space. Widespread coverage of green flags raise the standards within a local authority and meets the needs of best value for the council and the community. The Green Flag Award scheme is included in the local performance indicators as set up by the Audit Commission.

iii. **Regeneration**

Regeneration of a park or greenspace benefits whole communities and raises the profile of a particular area. It is a vehicle for community involvement and a means of securing funding, not least from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

iv. **Beacon Status**

Beacon councils get noticed and are praised by the government as examples of good practice. The first winners of Beacon Council status for green spaces were announced in 2002. Four of them are also successful Green Flag Award winners.

v. **Good Community Facilities**

Improvements to community facilities and the engagement of local people will improve health & education, reduce crime and be a visible benefit to an area.

vi. **Revenue Opportunities**

The Green Flag Award scheme is a lever for obtaining external funding through improvement grants and is also a means of maximising revenue opportunities from within. People will visit award winning parks from afar and successful venues for events bring repeat business. The Green Flag Award makes a statement as to the quality of the experience the visitor can expect and word of mouth is a very effective marketing tool.

vii. **Part of a National Standard**

The Green Flag Award is the national standard for parks and green spaces.

viii. **Civic Pride**

Pride is important. Our Victorian forefathers knew it and positively promoted the best of their parks and green spaces as examples of civic achievement. It is still relevant today.

ix. Green Heritage Award

If the site is successful it may also be worth considering applying for a Green Heritage Award. Green Heritage Site status is sponsored by English Heritage and promotes the value of, and best practice in, the care and upkeep of parks and green spaces in England that are of local or national historic interest. There are 42 Green Heritage Award winning sites nationally.

2.5 In Lancashire the following Local Authorities have Green Flag Awards:-

Local Authority	No. of Green Flag Sites
Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council	4
Blackpool Borough Council	3
Burnley Borough Council	5
Chorley Borough Council	1
Fylde Borough Council	3
Hyndburn Borough Council	3
Lancaster City Council	2
Pendle Borough Council	2
Preston City Council	4
South Ribble Borough Council	3
West Lancashire District Council	2
Wyre Borough Council	1

3. ISSUES

- 3.1 If this Committee is minded to make progress towards achieving a Green Flag Award for the Clitheroe Castle Grounds or any other park or area of open space in the Borough, the first step would be to prepare a draft management plan for the site which both reflects the aspiration of Local Agenda 21 and adequately addresses the criteria set out in Annex A of this report.
- 3.2 It is likely that the management plan will identify issues where improvement and investment is necessary in order to achieve the award and where our current ways of working would benefit from being changed. The plan would need to be actively implemented and regularly reviewed. Financially sound management of the park will have to be demonstrated to both achieve and retain the Award in subsequent years. The benefits will be however a positive and inviting impression to anyone entering the park and grounds that compliment the significant improvements being made to the museum, keep and other buildings.
- 3.3 A mock inspection by an experienced Green Flag Judge has been arranged for Thursday 30th October following which a draft management plan can be prepared for consideration by this Committee at it's next meeting to be held on Tuesday 13th January 2009.
- 3.4 In the Ribble Valley Citizens Panel survey of Summer 2008 the Castle Grounds was the most visited Council-provided leisure/recreation facility.

4. RISK ASSESSMENT

4.1 Resources

The draft management plan will be prepared using existing staff resources but until that has been done it is not possible to identify any financial resource issues that might arise.

4.2 Technical, Environmental and Legal

At this stage all technical issues can be arranged in house. There is expected to be an environmental benefit arising out of any work done on part of achieving a Green Flag Award. There are no legal issues that arise out of this report.

4.3 Political

There are no political issues arising out of this report.

4.4 Reputation

The achievement of a Green Flag Award for the Castle Grounds will enhance the Council's reputation.

5. RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE

5.1 Decide whether or not to seek to achieve a Green Flag Award for Clitheroe Castle Grounds and

5.2 Whether or not to extend the principle to other parks and open spaces in Ribble Valley.

JOHN C HEAP
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

Background Papers - None
Appendices - A – Green Flag Award Criteria Information.

For further information please contact Martin Kersey on 01200 414530.

Appendix A.

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 signed.

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.