

Management of Green Flag Gardens



Weymouth & Portland
Borough Council

Introduction

This document details the management of Green Flag gardens in Weymouth & Portland with the overall aim of maintaining and improving, where required, the quality of the gardens in terms of both physical features and the psychological benefits people gain from them.

Historically there were three management plans and during the life time of the plans significant resources were used in an overhaul of the Green Flag gardens. The Council is now focused on a period of refinement in line with emerging needs.

To do this, it is necessary to consider how the gardens fit within the priorities and policies of the Local Authority and to see how they are used and valued by the local and wider communities.

Weymouth & Portland Borough Council has chosen to focus on the Green Flag Award as a means of raising and maintaining the standards of green spaces within the borough. The structure of this document follows Green Flag criteria.

The shared aspects of garden management aims are:

- To promote the application of Green Flag standards across the borough thereby raising standards overall.
- To streamline the Green Flag Award application process in order to maximise resources available for consultation and the implementation of garden improvements.
- To enable, as a result, an increase in the number of green spaces that Weymouth & Portland Borough Council can put forward for a Green Flag Award.

Supporting Information

For the purpose of the Green Flag desk top evaluation, an evidence folder containing further background information will be provided on the day of the site visit. The folder will contain information relating to operations, improvements, events, etc. carried out in the Green Flag gardens. Judges will be advised on the content of the evidence folder in advance of their visit.

Local Government Reorganisation

In mid-2016 the settlement offered by Government would be significantly reduced and, to meet that very challenging scenario, work was set in motion to determine the practicality of forming unitary authorities within Dorset. In September 2018 it was announced that the current Weymouth & Portland Borough Council will become part of a wider Western Dorset Unitary Authority and a Weymouth Town Council will be formed from 1 April 2019. The priorities and policies may change once the new authority has taken over the ownership and management of the gardens.

The document is therefore intended to be flexible so that as changes occur in policies, resources, maintenance regimes, methodologies, work schedules, standards, etc. the plan can be adapted and developed.

A Welcoming Place

Announcing the Garden

Gardens are assessed for initial visual impact to ensure that first impressions are positive and that the park is inviting to users/visitors.

The approach to a garden is also assessed to make sure that entrances are clearly signposted, in good condition and free from vandalism or graffiti.

Information signs at garden entrances provide orientation and detail on the facilities within the garden. Phone and email/internet information for the Council is displayed within noticeboards. Where there is more than one sign in a garden, they are co-ordinated to add to the character of the garden. Vandal-proof materials are typically used.



Information panel



Noticeboard



'Welcome' signs standard within our gardens

Physical and Social Access

All Green Flag gardens are served by local bus routes or are within reasonable walking distance from a bus stop.

All Green Flag gardens have good quality pathways that are suitably accessible for wheelchair users. Consultation with volunteers from the Weymouth & Portland Access Group would be sought if there were any major changes that needed to be made.

Inclusion in use of gardens is a priority at the design stage and in the ongoing maintenance. Consultation is essential in identifying barriers to use. Methods of addressing different age groups are used, such as events in gardens or consultation at local Friends Group public meetings to identify areas of improvement that would increase garden use.

Aspect of Design

Each Green Flag garden in the borough has distinct characteristics:

Greenhill Gardens are situated on a Victorian sea front, sloping up from the beach and promenade adjacent to the town centre. The gardens provide some of the best views across Weymouth Bay and can be enjoyed for a multitude of reasons be it to sit back and relax, to have fun on the putting green or to get active on the tennis courts.

Easton Gardens is set in the hub of Easton Square. Surrounded by mature trees, it's a great place to sit and watch village life unfold. The improvement of these gardens was as much to alleviate problems of anti-social behaviour as well as create character.

Sandsfoot Gardens are rich in heritage and enjoy some of the most spectacular views across Portland Harbour. These small but beautiful gardens are made up of seasonal flowers, herb beds and herbaceous borders, which surround an ornamental pond in the centre of the grounds. The nationally unique Castle dates back to 1539 and was built during the reign of Henry VIII to prevent an invasion from the French.

Healthy, Safe and Secure

Health and Well-being

Weymouth & Portland Borough Council recognises the improvement role that parks and gardens play in the health and well-being of residents.

Our aim is to maximise scarce resources to ensure that residents and visitors within parks, gardens and open spaces feel safe and can enjoy the many benefits that an attractive and secure environment brings to their health and well-being.

Within our parks, gardens and open spaces we provide a wide range of outdoor recreational leisure, sporting pursuits and facilities that promote equality of opportunity, social inclusion, cultural experiences and healthy lifestyles, including allotments, sports pitches, tennis courts, pitch and putt course, bowling green, recreational facilities for young families and older children, bandstand, green gym, healthy walking, cycle routes and cycling.

We are responsible for the development and management of children's play areas and outdoor facilities for young people ensuring they are well maintained, safe and secure for people to use.

We offer advice and support for community projects aimed at improving the local environment.

We promote and facilitate a programme of special events aimed at encouraging the maximum use of parks, gardens and open spaces for the whole community.

There is a year round programme of events in the parks and gardens of Weymouth & Portland.

EVENTS 2016 PARKS & GARDENS

MAY

- 22 Music in the gardens with Replay, Greenhill Gardens (2pm)
- 28 Egdon Easy 10k run, Lodmoor Country Park (7pm)
- 29 Dorset Tour vintage & classic car rally, Lodmoor Country Park (2-4pm)
- 29 Music in the gardens with the Ukuleleans, Greenhill Gardens (2pm)

JUNE

- 5 Music in the gardens with the Decadettes, Greenhill Gardens (2pm)
- 11 Queen's birthday garden party, Victoria Gardens (2pm)
- 12 Music in the gardens with Replay, Greenhill Gardens (2pm)
- 19 Music in the gardens with the Silhouettes, Greenhill Gardens (2pm)
- 25 It's a Knockout for Diverse Abilities, Lodmoor Country Park (2pm)
- 26 Rock & R & B in the Gardens, Greenhill Gardens (2pm)

JULY

- 3 Walk for Wards, Lodmoor Country Park (10am)
- 3 Music in the gardens with the Decadettes, Greenhill Gardens (2pm)
- 9 Macmillian Jurassic Coast Hike, Lodmoor Country Park (6am)
- 10 Music in the gardens with the Silhouettes, Greenhill Gardens (2pm)
- 17 Music in the gardens with the Ukuleleans, Greenhill Gardens (2pm)
- 22 Teddy Bear's Picnic, Victoria Gardens (11am-1pm)
- 24 Cyclecino Charity Sportive, Easton Gardens (9am)
- 24 Music in the gardens with the Decadettes, Greenhill Gardens (2pm)
- 25 RNLI Fundraising Event, Nothe Gardens (6pm-10.45pm)
- 30 Island Artist's Art in the Park, Easton Gardens (10am - 4pm)
- 31 Music in the gardens with the Silhouettes, Greenhill Gardens (2pm)
- 31 Songs of Praise, Greenhill Gardens (6pm)

AUGUST

- 7 Summer Fayre, Greenhill Gardens (2-4pm)
- 7 Party in the park, Lodmoor Country Park (12-6pm)
- 13 Easton Community Group Summer Fete, Easton Gardens (10-4pm)
- 14 Music in the gardens with Tony Lowe, Greenhill Gardens (2pm)
- 16-23 Circus Berlin, Lodmoor Country Park (tickets)
- 17 Carnival Music in the gardens, Greenhill Gardens
- 21 Music in the gardens with the Silhouettes, Greenhill Gardens (2pm)
- 28 Music in the gardens with Tony Lowe, Greenhill Gardens (2pm)
- 28 Songs of Praise, Greenhill Gardens (6pm)

SEPTEMBER

- 3 Picnic Celebrations, Radipole Park Gardens (1-4pm)
- 4 Music in the gardens with the Ukuleleans, Greenhill Gardens (2pm)
- 10 Baptist Church Community Fun Day, Nothe Gardens (12-4pm)
- 11 Iron Man Weymouth, Lodmoor Country Park (6am)
- 18 Must be Barking!, Lodmoor Country Park (12-4pm)

NOVEMBER

- 27 Sparkle in the Park, Lodmoor Country Park (3.30pm)

DECEMBER

- 4 Carols in the Park, Greenhill Gardens (4pm)

**Sparkle in the Park
Lodmoor Country Park
3.30pm**

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Equipment and Facilities

The Parks & Open Spaces team are responsible for ensuring that parks, gardens and open spaces are well maintained, accessible, safe and secure for people to use. In order to promote safe use of parks, gardens and open spaces, all infrastructure, facilities and equipment are inspected on a monthly basis. An assessment of the condition of paths, fencing, gates, seating, information boards, hard surfacing, etc. on a schedule, reflects the usage of the open space.

Play area equipment and surfacing all conform to the relevant British/EN standards and are visually inspected by one of three play area inspectors at the middle of each

month. A playground inspector undertakes a detailed inspection of all play areas at the start of each month. Repairs are identified on a risk basis as high (repair immediately), medium (schedule for repair) or low (monitor).



Each play area is also inspected on an annual basis by an independent specialist company, which subsequently sends a detailed report to the council.

All works are prioritised and supervised by a play area inspector and are carried out by them. All inspections are recorded, as are all details of major and minor works undertaken.

In terms of on-site security, toddler areas are fenced, with areas for older children assessed on an individual basis.

Play areas display pictorial signs for no dogs and no smoking signs are displayed in play areas.



In terms of additional reporting and response, the public are able to notify the Council of health, safety and other concerns via several mechanisms:

- The FEEDBACK facility on the Council's website.
- Telephone calls, emails and letters directly to the Parks team.
- Call and emails received via police community support officers.
- Call and emails received via Friends and other park user groups.

Site noticeboards display police contact details and, where appropriate, specific emergency contact information.

Security and Safety in Parks and Gardens

As well as an inspection and maintenance programme, there are other aspects of site security that are addressed by Weymouth & Portland Borough Council.

All council staff working in parks and gardens (gardeners, dog wardens and arborists, cleansing crew) are clearly identifiable by their Council uniform and this helps establish the sense of a 'presence' in the gardens and helps members of the public to identify people who can assist them.

Child Protection

In terms of child protection, all personnel likely to come into contact with children and vulnerable adults as a key part of their role are DBS checked.

On-site Security

There are several initiatives which have been set up to improve safety and security within parks and open spaces. Council staff and Friends work closely with the Police Community Support Officers.

The notice boards display information about how to contact the local police and how to contact the council by telephone, email or via the website to report damage and incidents.

CCTV

Closed circuit television cameras operate in some of the gardens, which give real time high quality evidentially acceptable film that is monitored by the Authority's control room.

Council Enforcement Team

A pioneering pilot enforcement scheme to target dog fouling and littering was launched by Weymouth & Portland Borough Council in March 2017 to help clean-up the borough.

A dedicated team of officers are patrolling and have the power to issue fixed penalty notices to anyone caught dropping litter, spraying graffiti or allowing their dogs to foul.

The patrol officers are employed by a specialist environmental enforcement company, 3G. If approached by a patrol officer, offenders are asked to provide their name, address and proof of identity. Failure to comply can result in a criminal

prosecution, which carries a fine of up to £1,000, together with a criminal conviction. The officers will wear body cameras.

Friends Groups

The council has worked with local residents and open space users to create Friends Groups.

The level and type of contact with these groups varies and there is a tailored approach depending on the needs of the garden and the group. The Friends groups are well established and, in the main, operate fairly independently, organising events and litter picks, raising funds and liaising on garden development.

FOGG – Friends of Greenhill Gardens - focus their attention on events and fund raising to invest in improvement projects. In 2014, the funds they raised financed the opening of a bandstand for the array of artists who perform in the gardens throughout the summer time. Their current fundraising project will see an impressive archway at the main entrance into the gardens from the esplanade. The group is in regular contact with the Parks team.



FOGG opening event for the new bandstand 2014

Friends of Rodwell Trail & Sandsfoot Gardens split their time between promoting the gardens by way of events and organising litter picks and vegetation clearance projects along the Rodwell Trail, national cycle network, 26 adjacent to the gardens. The Friends are the eyes and ears of the gardens, quick to report any incidents of antisocial behaviour to both the Parks team and the Police.



Friends of Rodwell Trail & Sandsfoot Gardens host a Tudor Picnic

Friends of Easton Gardens concentrate their time on fund raising and liaise regularly with the gardener who is responsible for maintaining the gardens on Portland. The group invests in improvement/maintenance projects that are carried out with Easton Gardens and, again, are the eyes and ears of the site, ensuring that any problems are reported to the Parks team and the Police.



Friends of Easton Gardens host a Celebration of the Sea

Health & Safety Policies

Weymouth & Portland Borough Council takes a proactive and comprehensive risk assessment approach to the management of health and safety in gardens:

- All Parks & Open Space staff has a personal copy of the section's Health & Safety Codes of Practice and a Health and Safety section in their employee file.

Training needs are identified via the induction and appraisal systems and copies of certificates are kept in the file.

- All Parks' staff undertake a health check covering hand arm vibration and hearing tests.
- Monitoring and managing hand arm vibration using HAV meters and HAV wear, with a cloud based reporting platform, to assess HAVs risk to tool exposure by employees.
- There are known procedures for all activities regularly carried out by staff in the Parks team and for reporting incidents.
- There is a lone worker policy and a mobile phone is provided to all Parks staff.
- The Property Services team has undertaken an extensive audit of water safety within the borough's open spaces – speak to Bob?

Control of Dogs

The Weymouth and Portland Dog Warden service provides advice, educates and may take formal action, including the serving of fixed penalty notices and prosecution in appropriate cases. Dog fouling, stray and lost dogs can be reported online.

Land to which dogs are excluded at all times that the Parks team is responsible for, include:

All land within the administrative areas of the Council which comprises any fenced (and/or hedged and/or walled) children's play area, children's pool and/or sand pit, skate board park, tennis courts, basketball court, bowling green or putting green or any other fence (and/or hedge and/or walled) park, sporting or recreational facility signed at its entrances) as a 'dog exclusion area' (where the sign uses those particular words or uses a word and/or symbols having a like effect).

Land to which dogs shall be kept on a lead at all times, which the Parks & Open Spaces team are responsible for, include:

All land in municipal cemeteries, allotments and/or formal public gardens (including Greenhill, Easton and Sandsfoot Gardens).

Police Community Support Officers

Through site specific consultation and work with Friends Groups, we have found that there is little fear of actual crime in the gardens but there is a wariness of anti-social behaviour, which causes a nuisance to other users and engenders fear in older aged users.

Anti-social and nuisance behaviour tends to be associated with rough sleepers/vagrants and youths/children causing damage to or climbing on structures.

PCSO's patrol within the gardens as part of a patch approach; the frequency and timing are based on information received about specific nuisances or incidents. The policy is one of education and persuasion in the initial stages.

The PCSO officers actively work with the Parks staff and attend Friends Group meetings to obtain information and listen to users' concerns.

Disability Discrimination Act/Accessibility

A disability discrimination act audit was carried out on the gardens in December 2005 by Martin Affleck RIBA, NRAC, a Disability Access Consultant, on behalf of the Authority. His audit was wide reaching and produced many findings which were then prioritised for improvements to be carried out.

As a result of the audit, seats and bins have been re-positioned to facilitate correct use or prevent accidents. Accessible notice boards have been installed. New hand railings on steps have been introduced. Contrast nosing strips on steps, etc. are re-painted annually.

This audit has been adopted as a minimum standard to be used whenever improvements and/or re-developments are carried out.

Garden Byelaw Revisions

The byelaws covering the gardens were revised in 2005/6, the revision allows for action to be taken against more modern activities that can cause nuisance to other users of the gardens.

Well Maintained and Clean

All three Green Flag gardens in the borough are litter picked and the bins emptied daily. The only exception is Christmas when no operations take place on bank holidays but will occur every other day between 27th to 31st December.

Recycling bins enable the streaming of recyclables into paper, glass, plastic bottles and cans/tins, which are then collected and recycled in line with country wide domestic recycling.



Fly tipping, graffiti and broken glass are dealt with on a response basis and are dealt with immediately, as this has been found to be the most effective way of preventing an escalation or recurrence of the problem.

In all three Green Flag gardens, Friends Groups are actively involved in assisting with litter picking.

Parks staff make a point of picking up litter when they are in a garden as this helps to set an example. Litter bins are located throughout the gardens.

All relevant Parks cleansing and grounds maintenance staff have up to date training on the safe handling of discarded hypodermic needles.

In terms of the recycling of horticultural waste, all green waste is taken to the local Civic Amenity site and composted for use as green waste compost.

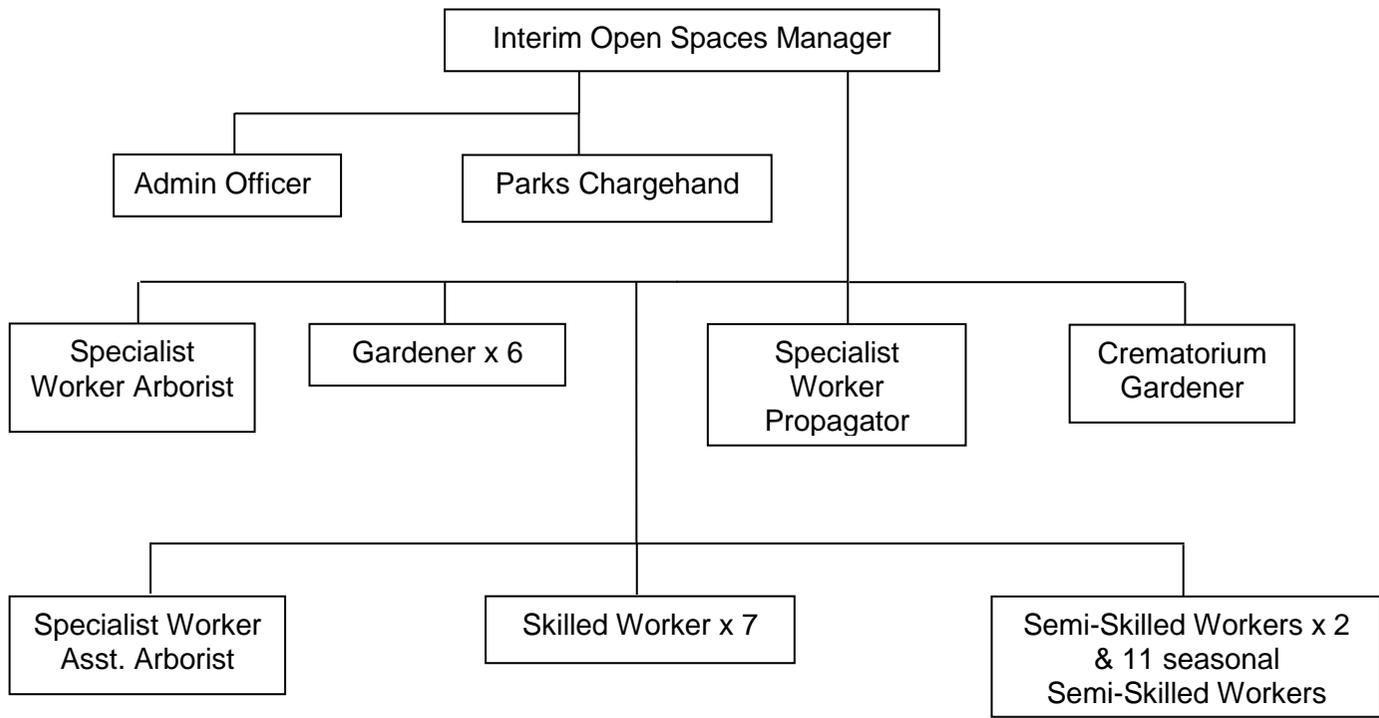


Community Litter Picks

Personnel

There are 22 full time staff and 11 seasonal staff.

The staff are located at Crookhill Depot. Daily meetings and discussions ensure the practicalities of landscape maintenance are taken into consideration in Parks development work.



Staff Development

Authority wide there is a staff development process which is based around an annual staff appraisal interview. All staff in the team has a part to play in service delivery but they are also considered as individuals in terms of training and any other issues that are personal to them rather than the team.

Training

Training needs are established and a specific budget allocation used to support them. All gardeners are to be trained to at least NVQ level 3. Please note, some staff will have older qualifications but they are still required to be “of equivalence” to the aforementioned.

Each year there are also specific section wide training directives which apply equally to all staff and usually cover corporate priorities and health and safety updating.

2016

Manual handling refresher training
NPTC cert pesticides application

2017

Renewals of plant operator certificates
Renewal of first aid certificates

Grounds maintenance

Maintenance teams have responsibility for all maintenance operations within our Green Flag gardens.

The team comprises a skilled gardener and a skilled worker who are assisted by temporary labour throughout the summer.

Maintenance Team Responsibilities

The gardener has responsibility for arranging works to be carried out and the teams to do them. In addition, they design and quantify all the bedding displays. The gardener at Greenhill also produces the carpet bedding display from artwork supplied by the Parks Manager.

The skilled worker is capable of working alone or with temporary employees in the absence of the gardener.

Seasonal temporary labourers are usually accompanied by a full time member of staff and are selected at the start of the season; an essential requirement being previous experience and/or training in horticulture.

Any one-off or ad hoc minor works of a grounds maintenance nature are also attended to by the on-site staff. Any serious vandalism or damage that cannot be repaired by the on-site staff is reported back to the Parks Manager.

The specific work programmes for the Green Flag gardens are located in the site documents.

Infrastructure and other facilities

Green Flag gardens are inspected on a monthly basis for infrastructure and facilities. Easton Gardens play area is inspected fortnightly (visual inspection and a thorough equipment inspection) plus an annual inspection by an independent inspector.

Reports of problems via the web, Friends, staff, the public and PCSO's ensure that issues are quickly identified and remedied.

The Parks team undertakes minor repairs immediately to maximise availability of facilities. This applies to removal of graffiti and making safe broken glass.

Hard surfaces, paths and so on are included in the inspection and maintenance regimes.

Any fault/hazard is clearly identified or cordoned off so that members of the public are kept clear of the area until the repair can be carried out.

The paths, including steps, are also inspected annually by one of the Authority's inspectors. A report is prepared and any minor work attended to. If major works are identified, these are put forward as capital funding items to Full Council for inclusion in the next year's budget or, if works are an immediate safety risk, for immediate remedial funding. A copy of a path inspection report is included in the evidence folder.

Details of site specific buildings, their use, condition and maintenance and/or repair requirements are given in the individual Green Flag garden action plans.

Equipment Maintenance

The inspection regime to ensure the cleanliness, maintenance and safety of equipment used by the public has already been described. Please refer to the section on Equipment and Facilities in the Healthy, Safe and Secure section.

Cleanliness

A clean garden is often perceived as a safe garden. All efforts are made to maintain to excellent standards, specifically:

- Instances of graffiti, flyposting and fly-tipping are removed as soon as possible. The use of fixed penalty notices is used to deter future occurrences.
- Enforcement of dog fouling by fixed penalty notices and patrolling.
- Prompt repairs to any vandalised equipment.

Sustainability and Conservation

Environmental management

Bio-diesel at the highest acceptable organic ratio is used in all diesel powered service vehicles. The use of two stroke engine powered machines is kept to a minimum where possible. Electrically powered service vehicles have been trialled but the inability to garage the vehicles overnight on site and the current limited range makes their use inappropriate at the current time. We will continue to evaluate options.

Watering

Whilst artificial irrigation is essential for bedding plants at our Green Flag gardens, our water consumption has fallen due to the significant reduction of numbers of bedding plants used, consumption continues to be monitored and controlled.

To enable a reduction in the amount of water applied, a deep digging and organic matter incorporation programme was commenced in 2006. It is anticipated that this has improved water retention capacity in the soil and, by removal of former cultivation pans that were present, allowing for deeper water and root penetration in the soil profile.

Electricity

Electricity use is monitored and controlled and use is maintained at a practical minimum. Use is low and is limited to mess facilities and lighting. Time switches apply to the decorative lighting. Energy saving light bulbs in buildings have been phased in since 2008.

Materials

Materials purchased for use on site are, whenever possible, sourced locally to reduce carbon emissions due to transport and, where available, products are used from sustainable sources, ie. all new seats are made from FSC approved softwood/ hardwood.

Any soil excavated during digging operations is reused within our gardens or as near as possible to the site.

Bedding plants are sourced from the Authority's own nursery within Weymouth to reduce carbon emissions due to transport, as much as possible. The nursery has climatic zones so that energy use is reduced significantly in the winter and a grant was secured for a biomass boiler to heat the facility using waste wood and woodchip produced by the Authority's tree maintenance gang.

The nursery has significantly reduced its production of bedding plants and they are now used in Green Flag gardens only but even here the amount of bedding being used has been reduced. All bedding plants are grown in peat free compost.

Selected beds, previously planted with annuals, were changed over to perennial planting in Green Flag gardens during 2016 to provide year round interest. The driver for this change was to achieve a reduction in the cost of energy/water relating to the production process and also a reduction in the cost of transportation in bedding plants, it has also reduced carbon emissions even further. The deep root systems of most perennial plants reduce the need for artificial watering throughout the growing season and, as perennial plants require less care than annuals, our gardeners can now concentrate on other grounds maintenance operations within the gardens.

Green Waste

All green waste is taken to the Authority's composting facility at Lodmoor, Weymouth. The material is processed and returned for use on the site as both a soil conditioner and mulch. The soil is also improved by the use of well-rotted farmyard manure.

Wood chippings/eco piles

Where possible materials generated from work within the gardens, such as tree works, are left on site for use in the vicinity either chipped or eco habitat.

Pesticides and Herbicide use

Pesticide use has been reduced year on year and no residual herbicides are used in soft landscape applications. Path edge applications are limited to one application per year, using the least harmful chemical available having carried out a COSHH assessment. This is only applied by trained staff.

Herbicide application to annual beds has been limited to the use of non-hazard rated Glyphosate products. Due to infestations of both Celandine and Oxalis, Glyphosate is used on annual beds at the end of the bedding season and through the winter (where possible within application guidelines) on beds that are not planted out or only have bulbs planted in them. This is in conjunction with the programme of deep hand digging and organic matter incorporation. A residual herbicide treatment to shrub beds has been discontinued.

Horticultural and Arboricultural Management

The Council's tree stock is inspected, maintained and managed by the Parks & Open Spaces arborists.

Detailed inspections of trees are undertaken using, EzyTreevz, a software package that facilitates easy management of all tree related enquiries. It enables a comprehensive on-site tree data collection, surveying and re-inspection to be transferred onto a Desktop PC, making it readily accessible for interrogation and analysis. Information relating to Tree Preservation Orders is also registered.

Any maintenance work required to the Council's tree stock is prioritised and work is carried out by the Council's arborists.

Trees are sourced locally and from within the UK, depending on requirements. Some gardens have fruit orchards as part of community led projects. The majority of trees planted are native and all come from licensed and approved sources.

Where hedgerows are planted or gapped up, native species such as hawthorn and blackthorn are used to provide a food source for wildlife.

All new trees are furnished with watering systems, cages rabbit or strimmer guards.

Standing dead wood is a rare commodity and the council has adopted a policy of assessing on a case by case basis the suitability for tree turns to be left in situ, either standing or prone.

Pollution reduction

The following precautions for minimising pollution have been adopted:

- Fuel stores are bunded to contain spillage.
- All chemicals are stored in weatherproof, secure facility away from surface water drain.

- Waste clearly marked and properly disposed of.
- Bonfires avoided.
- Noise kept to a minimum on vehicles and machinery and mufflers used.
- Records kept of pollution incidents.

Water and energy efficiency

The mains water consumed in all parks buildings is metered and the Property Services team monitors the bills for unaccountable increases and possible leaks are then investigated.

There is a focus on naturalistic planting that requires no irrigation long term. Irrigation is limited to the establishment of recent plantings and the use of mulch aids the reduction in water loss.

Electricity use is monitored and controlled and use is maintained at a practical minimum. Time switches apply to the decorative lighting of the castle.

Low energy lighting is used in all parks buildings.

Conservation

Woodland and Trees

The tree management regime for Green Flag gardens is to leave trees to take their natural shape and minimise pruning unless there is a safety issue. Tree management is undertaken by an in-house team of professionals who carry out maintenance work required for health and safety reasons with the ultimate aim of preserving and enhancing the existing landscape.

Examples of tree inspections and species lists are found in the site specific evidence folders.

The Council's arborists periodically undertake educational tree walks. The events usually attract 20-30 people.

Conservation of landscape

Each Green Flag garden has its own character, landscape and historical features and there is an emphasis on the conservation of natural, landscape and structural features.

In Sandsfoot Gardens a Heritage Lottery grant supported the renovation of the castle, adding an internal walkway with floodlighting in order to give free, inclusive public access and conserve the castle for future generations.

On the orders of Henry VIII, Sandsfoot Castle was built in 1539 on a cliff overlooking Portland Roads. Bought by the local authority in 1902, it remained ever popular for visitors to explore until about 1930 when it was permanently fenced off to the public for safety reasons due to its crumbling walls.

Greenhill Gardens offers active and quiet areas with some interesting historical features, including a floral clock that was built in 1936 by Richie and Sons of Edinburgh at a cost of £200.

The clock has a “cuckoo” type chime which is two-tone and powered by leather bellows. This is believed to be one of only two mechanically driven floral clocks still working in the country and is of national interest as a result.

A carpet bedding display is still provided. It takes over 5000 plants to make up the carpet bedding design each year and these are all grown in the Council’s nursery.

Easton Gardens has a Grade II listed jubilee clock tower, which is a prominent feature in the square. The structure was designed by R. Stevenson Henshaw and was built by Wakeham Brothers, who had constructed the Portland Bill Lighthouse the previous year. The Wakeham Whitbed stone used for the clock was worked by Mason Hibbs and Bower, and was taken from Cottonfields Quarry. In 1907 the clock was officially unveiled in front of a large crowd of on-lookers.

Marketing

Ensure that the improvements made have been advertised widely and that the public are aware of other events and activities designed to make the best use of the parks for health and well-being, sports development, play development and educational opportunities and more.

Information Provision and Interpretation

The parks team, the Friends Groups and the local media work together to ensure that the gardens and the events taking place within them are well advertised and that people are informed about developments.

Event details are provided to the public and staff via publicity posters, through local media and via web pages (Friends and the Councils), the intranet.

Friends Group newsletters and ‘word of mouth’ also work well to disseminate relevant information.

The notice boards at all Green Flag gardens are used to advertise the facilities available in the park and highlight the forthcoming events and activities.

All Green Flag gardens have interpretation panels giving historic information.

The Council maintains pages on its website about Green Flag (and other) parks and gardens (Dorsetforyou.com). The Friends Groups also have websites, which includes information about the gardens and the activities that take place there. (www.greenhill-gardens.co.uk and www.sandsfootcastle.org.uk)

Weymouth & Portland Parks, Gardens Trails and Community Spaces facebook page.

Press releases go to the local media.

Events and Special Events

Many events and activities are organised by the Friends Groups and external organisations wishing to use council open space as an event venue. Parks and open spaces are actively promoted as event venues and there are guidelines that cover all elements, such as insurance, risk assessments, setting up, clearing up, etc.



Bird box building



Building a bug hotel



Planting a community orchard

Promotion

Informative interpretation panels and notice boards furnish each Green Flag garden. Events are promoted using site notice boards, additional poster, butterfly walks and children's play events.

The Green Flag logo is used for marketing material relating to Green Flag gardens, as it is emblematic of the quality and standard of the garden.

The extremely high use of, and good attendance at park events suggests that marketing for Green Flag parks is effective and is achieving its aims.

It appears the Green Flag Award is not widely recognised by the public so Green Flag park press releases include background information.

Parks Photo Competition

In 2017 a Parks Photo Competition was introduced to promote parks and gardens.

Campaign Objective

- Promote Weymouth and Portland's parks and gardens by holding a photography competition.
- Encourage people to go to the park to boost their mental and physical health (in line with the objectives set by Weymouth and Portland's Health and Wellbeing Board, who were consulted).

Communications Objectives

- Publish beautiful photos on social media to promote Weymouth and Portland's parks and gardens.
- Build up a photo library to promote Weymouth and Portland's parks and gardens.
- Build good relations with volunteers from the parks friends groups (who were involved and invited to judge).

Target Audience

Weymouth & Portland residents and visitors, especially younger people who may traditionally engage less readily with the council.

Preparation (input activities)

- Drew-up a communications plan.
- Produced posters and graphics for social media promotion.
- Agreed competition terms and conditions.

Outputs

- Promoted on social media, mainly Twitter and Instagram, entries liked and reissued through different channels.
- Posters put up in parks and gardens across Weymouth and Portland.
- News releases published.
- Featured in newsletters.
- Online, featured in Newsroom on dorsetforyou.com.
- Cllrs, parks friends groups and photography clubs involved and asked to share details.
- Held a judging event for the parks friends groups.

- Made a film of the entries: (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ng_N9CkQkuM)

Outtakes

A total of 114 photographs were entered into the #loveweyportparks2018 photography competition, mostly via Instagram and email, but also through Twitter.

Outcomes

- We exceeded our target of achieving 100 entries and exceeded the 80 entries received in 2017.
- These photographs can be used for promotional purposes (eg/ Visit Dorset have already asked to share them).
- On Twitter we achieved 335 clicks and a reach of 119, 282. We don't have access to these analytics from Instagram, but the top post achieved 50 likes.
- A total of 31 clicks achieved from enewsletters.
- Campaign achieved positive media coverage locally and was also included in the regional newsletter from 'Visit South West England'
- Film of entries (link above) has so far achieved 443 views.

What we've learned (Evaluation Insight)

We have learned that this is an effective and low-cost way of promoting Weymouth and Portland and its parks and gardens.



Management

Corporate Plan 2016-2019

The Corporate Plan summarises the Council's vision for the future of Weymouth & Portland. The priorities take account of the needs of Weymouth and Portland and its communities, as well as what the council needs to do internally to make sure our services are delivered.

In order to deliver on the vision and address the particular issues facing Weymouth and Portland, the Corporate Plan has been based around 4 major corporate priorities.

Our Green Flag gardens have a direct link to all four priorities:

Building a Stronger Local Economy

Enhancing our green environment by supporting the tourism industry, attracting new visitor markets and encourage the relocation of businesses to the town.

Empowering Thriving and Inclusive Communities

Friends and Community Groups provide advice, support & guidance to enable garden projects, litter picking events, grant applications and fund raising activities to proceed, which contributes towards the upkeep and improvement of open spaces.

Events in parks and gardens provide a programme of free events held throughout the year by Friends or Community Groups and Charity Organisations, which encourages use of open spaces by as large a number of people as possible. Funds raised are invested in projects to enhance the borough's parks and gardens.

Improving Quality of Life

National excellence recognition via Green Flag, three borough gardens meet the national standards of excellence.

Provision of good quality gardens, open spaces, allotments and play facilities for public use:

- All assets will comply with health & safety regulations.
- Provision is appropriate for all.
- A good quality environmental service to enhance health & well-being.

Developing Successful Partnerships

Friends and community groups:

- Active management of the Council's parks, gardens, open spaces and play areas
- Carry out garden projects, litter picking, organise events, submit grant applications and undertake fund raising activities, which contributes towards the upkeep and improvement of open spaces.

The Management Plan is available to staff at all levels. The team holds daily meetings to agree work programmes and inform on projects. On a day to day basis, the teams currently work within the same site which promotes ease of communication.

Review, Quality and Audit Systems

- Green Flag Award provides a method for self-assessment and determines the action plan for each garden, which is monitored on an on-going basis and reviewed annually.
- On-going feedback from garden users feed into decisions and actions for the gardens.
- Complaints, comments and compliments: listening to customer's views to constantly review and improve services.

- Working with and listening with the Friends Groups.
- KMC performance management system assesses the quality of service provision, the value of the open space to the community, resource allocation and customer satisfaction. It enables the Parks & Open Spaces team to measure improvements and introduce the concept of community involvement in the management of open spaces.

Financial Management

In mid-2016 the settlement offered by Government was significantly reduced and work is underway to determine the practicality of forming unitary authorities within Dorset. Indications are that the current Weymouth & Portland Borough Council will become part of a wider Western Dorset Unitary Authority and a Weymouth Town Council is likely to be formed.

The majority of major works have been completed in all three Green Flag gardens so there will be little or no major capital investment in the near future. The emphasis is now on maintaining the facilities installed and the standards reached.

Given the above situation, it is necessary to consider future developmental and maintenance plans carefully and to bear in mind the requirement to find alternative funding, where possible, and to secure stakeholder participation in any projects that are appropriate.

The Council can secure funding through the planning process via section 106 payments, whereby legal agreements with developers to obtain contributions towards the improvement of facilities, eg. play areas, and other projects within the borough's gardens. The Green Flag gardens have already benefitted from several such contributions.

Annual Work Plan

An annual work plan review combined with a review of the management plan and Green Flag feedback will be used to inform action plans for each of the Green Flag sites as well as day to day management of all parks and open spaces. The review will also evidence progress each year and set priorities for the coming year.





