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## **Green spaces are in great shape!**

Record numbers of parks in England and Wales are set to be awarded the Green Flag Award for quality this summer.

And the new custodians of the awards scheme - Keep Britain Tidy - claim parks could offer an unlikely lift to cash-strapped day-trippers this summer.

Last year 743 parks and green places received a Green Flag Award, a further 73 community managed spaces won Green Pennant Awards.

But this year the number of sites receiving the top accolade is set to rise substantially and could reach close to the 1,000 mark.

Paul Todd, from Keep Britain Tidy, said: "Green Flag Parks in England and Wales are in great shape and we believe that doctors should prescribe park visits to people who feel down because of the recession.

"We have received a record number of park applications this year which means more people than ever before will have quality green space within easy access of where they live or work.

"With all the doom and gloom around, parks provide glorious sights and smells to sooth the senses and chill the mind."

Green Flag Awards recognise and reward the best parks and green spaces in the country. Judges are busy assessing the quality of parks and green spaces across the country.

And this year green spaces in more obscure places such as allotments, hospital grounds and shopping centres are also being considered.

Paul Todd added: "We have exciting plans for Green Flag Award and we want to push and promote parks in England and Wales as much as possible. We have some fantastic green spaces on our doorstep and it's time that the nation embraced them."

A partnership of Keep Britain Tidy, GreenSpace and environmental volunteering charity BTCV took over the Green Flag Award in March. Green Flag had previously managed by The Civic Trust.

The winning Green Flag parks are set to be announced in July. TV star Michaela Strachan is set to present the awards to winning park managers in Bournemouth on July 22nd/23rd.

Some of our finest Green Flag parks include:

- Wynn Gardens, Conwy, Wales: A peaceful and attractive urban park set in the centre of Old Colwyn. The park has ornamental lawns dissected by paths and island plantings. A Sensory Garden completed in 2005 is designed to stimulate the senses by including aromatic and textural plantings, a peaceful water feature and a bamboo and grass plant stimulate hearing.
- Blaise Castle Estate, Bristol, England: A magnificent 120 hectare Grade 2 listed parkland and with over 5000 years of history. With a deep wooded limestone gorge, dramatic scenery and ancient monuments steeped in folklore, this estate is one of the most magical and romantic landscapes in the west country.
- Connaught Gardens and Peak Hill Slope, East Devon, England: A 1930s 'Arts and Crafts Movement' garden which has been maintained in its original form since 1934. The gardens were designed and constructed by the famous arts and crafts centre at Dartington Hall near Totnes and consist of a series of small secluded 'garden rooms', each with its own character.
- Gillespie Park Local Nature Reserve, Islington, London, England: Gillespie Park is a high quality natural green space in an urban setting. The nature reserve boasts 500 different plants, 90 species of bird and 20 kinds of butterfly. It is a place to relax, watch wildlife, spend time with friends and explore the outdoors.

To find out more about the Green Flag, please visit <http://www.greenflagaward.org.uk>.

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**-Notes to Editors-**

- The Green Flag Award scheme, launched in 1996, is managed by a consortium consisting of Keep Britain Tidy, BTCV and GreenSpace on behalf of Communities and Local Government. It is supported by Communities and Local Government, English Heritage, Natural England and in Wales by the Countryside Council for Wales, Welsh Assembly Government, The Design Commission for Wales and Environment Agency Wales.
- Green Flag is for public-run open spaces. Green Pennant is for community/charity run public places.
- Green Flag is the benchmark national standard for parks and spaces in England and Wales. The scheme was set up in 1996.
- Sites for Green Flag are judged against eight criteria: a welcoming place, healthy safe and secure, clean and well-maintained, sustainability, conservation and heritage, community involvement, marketing, management.
- For more information call Dickie Felton at the The Keep Britain Tidy press office 01942 612 617, email [dickie.felton@keepbritaintidy.org](mailto:dickie.felton@keepbritaintidy.org)