



# Committee report

Committee	<b>POLICY AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR NEIGHBOURHOODS AND REGENERATION</b>
Date	<b>5 SEPTEMBER 2019</b>
Title	<b>BLUE FLAG BEACHES AND GREEN FLAG PARKS</b>
Report of	<b>COUNCILLOR JOHN HOBART, CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE</b>

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## **BACKGROUND**

The Committee on 4 July 2019 requested that a report be submitted to this meeting on the implications of seeking Blue Flag status for beaches and Green Flag status for green spaces on the Island.

Details of the Blue and Green Flag award schemes are set out in items 1 and 2 of the appendix to this report. The council currently satisfies a large number of the qualifying criteria for both green and blue flag awards. However, given the reduction in overall resources in the respective teams since 2010, the council is not in a position to achieve these awards in full on an annual basis.

Both of these respective awards recognise excellence in the way that parks and beaches are operated and managed and require a significant additional resource to meet the requirements. They also rely on a team to complete the process and to then manage the awards process. A relatively high level of investment is required to achieve the minimum level of requirements for each scheme. The scheme requirements are also subject to change on an annual basis with the introduction of additional requirements.

Previously, we have achieved Blue Flag status for 4 beaches and we made 3 applications for Green Flag status. Presently we still provide high standards for our green spaces and beaches on the Island and measure this using internal and external criterion. In addition, every year we have received national awards for our parks through our Ground Maintenance Contractor.

A decision was taken to reduce this service activity in recognising the savings required overall by the council over the last 8 years. The present policy is to direct its limited resources to maintaining and operating parks and beaches to a high standard rather than gaining awards. However, such awards such as Seaside Awards and other Parks

awards will be applied for where the additional resources can justify the additional work.

### **Blue Flag and Seaside Awards**

Following a decision taken in 2009/10 the beaches team that supported the previous Blue flag awards scheme was removed and there are currently no Blue Flag beaches on the Island. We currently meet the award criteria on most beaches in the following areas:

- Information about bather water quality is displayed
- Complies with regulations affecting the location of the beach
- Bins must be made available and be emptied regularly
- Toilet facilities must be provided
- During the bathing season dogs must be excluded

It is a requirement of a Blue Flag award on resort beaches to provide a beach safety service, namely lifeguards. A decision was taken in 2010 not to provide this service which achieved a saving to the council of £100,000 per annum. In addition, the council no longer funds the marker buoy service and seaweed removal, and now provides the minimum level of beach safety equipment. The council now only fulfils the responsibilities of a statutory litter authority rather than meet the higher standard set out in the Blue Flag award.

There are currently four beaches who have the Seaside award; Sandown, Shanklin, Seagrove and Springvale. These awards which satisfy much of the criteria set out in the Blue Flag award have been obtained by the Town and Parish Councils with the support of IWC. Details of the Seaside award criteria can be found as item 3 in the appendix.

### **Green Flag And Parks Standards**

There are currently no Green Flag areas on the IoW. There is now one member of staff in the Parks area who is fully engaged in managing the grounds and parks maintenance contract. Some of the main criteria set out in the award continue to be met, namely:

- Safe Equipment and Facilities
- Control of Dogs/ Dog Fouling
- Horticulture Maintenance
- Partial Litter and Waste Management Compliance

Previously the team consisted of 5 individuals, there is now only 1 member of staff and there is no budget to fund the additional costs for signage, marketing, access issues and further waste and recycling measures, as well as writing and creating the policies for such awards.

We are considering a Green Flag application for Northwood Cemetery as part of satisfying the Heritage Lottery submission criteria.

### **Conclusion and Summary**

In conclusion despite not being in a position to apply for the Green and Blue Flag Awards, the council continues to offer the best level of service possible. We continue to encourage and support the local Town and Parish Councils too obtain Seaside awards and we can continue to maintain high standards in our parks through our management plans and the high quality of service provided through our grounds and parks maintenance contractor.

Contact Point: Alex Minns, Assistant Director Neighbourhoods, ☎ 821000 ext 8713  
e-mail [alex.minns@jow.gov.uk](mailto:alex.minns@jow.gov.uk)

COLIN ROWLAND  
*Director of Neighbourhoods*

JOHN HOBART (CLLR)  
*Cabinet Member for Environment & Heritage*

# APPENDIX 1

## 1. Green Flag Awards

*The Green Flag Award Scheme is awarded by UK Government “Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government” who licence Keep Britain Tidy to deliver the Scheme in the UK and licence the Scheme outside the UK.*

### Purpose and Aims

- To ensure that everybody has access to quality green and other open spaces, irrespective of where they live
- To ensure that these spaces are appropriately managed and meet the needs of the communities that they serve
- To establish standards of good management, and to promote and share best practice amongst the green space sector
- To recognise and reward the hard work of managers, staff and volunteers

### Criteria

A successful Green Flag Award site demonstrates through a sound management plan and a well-run site that the management understand:

**Their users** – who they are, who they could be, what they want, how they are informed and involved

**Their site** – what is special about its history, biodiversity, landscape, social and physical setting, and what it is trying to achieve

**Their management strategy** – that what is there is safe, in line with legislation and policy, well maintained and that there are plans for the future

### Section 1: A welcoming Place

This section recognises the culmination of everything done well. A welcoming place is one that invites and draws people into it. This means creating a space which, through its visual appearance, range of facilities, standards of maintenance and ease of access, makes people feel that they are in a cared-for place.

- Welcome
- Good and Safe Access
- Signage
- Equal Access for All

### Section 2: Healthy, Safe and Secure

This section looks at how well managers understand their users' needs, encouraging them to enjoy healthy activities using appropriate, safe-to-use facilities and activities, and to feel personally safe and secure.

- Appropriate Provision of Quality Facilities and Activities
- Safe Equipment and Facilities
- Personal Security
- Control of Dogs/Dog Fouling

### Section 3: Well Maintained and Clean

For aesthetic as well as health and safety reasons, issues of cleanliness and maintenance must be addressed, in particular:

- Litter and other waste management issues must be adequately dealt with;
- Grounds, buildings, equipment and other features must be well maintained;
- Policies on litter, vandalism and maintenance should be in place, in practice, and regularly reviewed.
- Litter and Waste Management
- Horticultural Maintenance
- Arboricultural Maintenance
- Building and Infrastructure Maintenance
- Equipment Maintenance

### Section 4: Environmental Management

This section seeks to ensure that the way the site is managed has a positive impact on the environment, locally and globally, both now and for the future. Where choices can be made for future procurement, landscaping or buildings, they should aim to minimise energy and resource consumption and waste, and design in benefits to the local and global environment. Policies should seek to eliminate the use of peat and chemicals to control pests and as fertilisers. Horticultural and arboricultural decisions should reflect an understanding of the impacts of climate change.

- Managing Environmental Impact
- Waste Minimisation
- Chemical Use
- Peat Use
- Climate Change Adaption Strategies
- Management of Natural Features, Wild Fauna and Flora
- Conservation of Landscape Features
- Conservation of Buildings and Structures.

### Section 5: Community Involvement

This section examines the extent to which the managing organisation:

- Understands the community it seeks to serve;
- Actively and appropriately involves members of the community in making decisions about the site's development;

- Provides opportunities for active participation in site projects; and
- Ensures that there is appropriate provision of recreational facilities and activities for all sectors of the community.
- Community Involvement in Management and Development
- Appropriate Provision for Community

## Section 6: Marketing and Communication

This section seeks to examine the ways that managers understand the key benefits of the site and how they use this information to promote it appropriately. They should understand who the main user groups are, could be or should be, and use a fitting range of interpretation and engagement techniques to communicate with them. This basis ensures that appropriate facilities, events and activities can be offered and most effectively promoted and forms a solid foundation for development now and in the future.

- Marketing and Promotion
- Appropriate Information Channels
- Appropriate Educational and Interpretational Information

## Section 7: Management

This section evaluates how well the management plan is implemented on site.

- Implementation of Management Plan

## **2. Blue Flag Awards**

The Blue Flag and Seaside Awards are aimed at improving the quality of England's coastline and promoting England's best beaches.

Blue Flag and Seaside Awards is managed by Keep Britain Tidy on behalf of the Foundation for Environmental Education.

Sites are assessed for safety and services, environmental management, water quality and information. In addition, Blue Flag beaches are assessed for their environmental education activities.

### Criteria

#### Environmental Education and Information

- Information about the Blue Flag must be displayed at the beach.
- Environmental education activities must be offered and promoted to beach users.
- Information about bathing water quality must be displayed.

- Information relating to local eco-systems and environmental phenomena must be displayed.
- A map of the beach indicating different facilities must be displayed.
- A code of conduct that reflects appropriate laws governing the use of the beach and surrounding areas must be displayed.

### Water Quality

- The beach must fully comply with the water quality sampling and frequency requirements.
- The beach must fully comply with the standards and requirements for water quality analysis.
- No industrial, waste-water or sewage-related discharges should affect the beach area.
- The beach must achieve 'excellent' water quality as set out in the Bathing Water Directive.

### Environmental Management

- The local authority / beach operator should establish a beach management committee.
- The local authority / beach operator must comply with all regulations affecting the location and operation of the beach.
- The beach must be clean.
- Algae vegetation or natural debris should be left on the beach (exceptions apply).
- Bins must be available at the beach and they must be regularly emptied.
- Facilities for the separation of recyclable waste materials should be available at the beach.
- Toilet facilities must be provided.
- The toilet or restroom facilities must be kept clean.
- The toilet or restroom facilities must have controlled sewage disposal.
- There should be no unauthorised camping, driving or dumping of waste on the beach.
- During the bathing season dogs must be excluded from the award area of the beach.
- All buildings and beach equipment must be properly maintained.
- Coral reefs in the vicinity of the beach must be monitored.
- A sustainable means of transportation should be promoted in the beach area.

### Safety and Services

- If appropriate, an adequate number of lifeguards and/or lifesaving equipment must be available at the beach.

- First aid equipment must be available on the beach.
- Emergency plans to cope with pollution risks must be in place.
- There must be management of beach users and events to prevent conflicts and accidents.
- There must be safety measures in place to protect beach users.
- A supply of drinking water should be available at the beach.
- Wheelchair access and accessibility features must be in place for at least one Blue Flag beach in each municipality.

### **3. Seaside Awards**

Keep Britain Tidy's Seaside Award, formerly called the Quality Coast Award, is the nationwide standard for the best beaches across the UK. While Seaside Award beaches can be vastly different, the flag is a symbol of quality which ensures visitors are guaranteed to find a clean, safe, attractive and well-managed coastal stretch.

#### Seaside Award Criteria (England)

##### Information

- Information about the Seaside Award must be displayed at the beach.
- If applicable, information about bathing water quality must be displayed.
- A map of the beach indicating different facilities must be displayed.
- A code of conduct, that reflects appropriate laws governing the use of the beach and surrounding areas, should be displayed.

##### Water Quality

- The beach must fully comply with the water quality sampling and frequency requirements.
- The beach must fully comply with the standards and requirements for water quality analysis.
- No industrial, waste-water or sewage-related discharges should affect the beach area.
- At designated bathing waters from 2016 the water quality should be graded as 'sufficient' as set out in the Bathing Water Directive. (In 2015, bathing beaches should of mandatory standard.)
- At non bathing beaches, there should be no promotion of water based activities such as swimming, surfing, etc

##### Environmental Management

- The local authority / beach operator should establish a beach management committee.



- The local authority / beach operator must comply with all regulations affecting the location and operation of the beach.
- The beach must be clean.
- Algae vegetation or natural debris should be left on the beach (exceptions apply).
- Bins must be available at the beach and they must be regularly emptied.
- Facilities for the separation of recyclable waste materials should be available at the beach.
- If appropriate, toilet facilities should be provided.
- If provided, the toilet facilities must be kept clean and have controlled sewage disposal.
- There should be no unauthorised camping, driving or dumping of waste on the beach.
- At resort style beaches dogs must be excluded from the award area of the beach during the bathing season.
- If a dog ban is not in force during the bathing season, a clear dog control policy must be in place before an award can be made.
- All buildings and beach equipment must be properly maintained.

### Safety and Services

- If appropriate, an adequate number of lifeguards and / or lifesaving equipment must be available at the beach.
- If appropriate first aid equipment must be available on the beach.
- Emergency plans to cope with pollution risks must be in place.
- The beach should be subject to an up-to-date risk assessment and any recommendations should be acted upon.
- Recycling facilities located within the award area