

Appendix 2

GREEN FLAG AWARD STATUS

The key criteria for Green Flag Award status are given below:

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.

Appendix 3

Indicator 34 (Contextual)	To assess the richness of local biodiversity and the impact of habitat enhancement measures by monitoring: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The distribution and status of water voles;• The condition of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs);• The distribution and status of farmland birds;• Distribution and status of garden butterflies.
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Brief details about the type of wildlife included in this contextual indicator; their present status; threats and opportunities and the relation of the indicator to local authority activity are given below.

1. DISTRIBUTION AND STATUS OF WATER VOLES

Present status

Water Voles, until fairly recently a common and widespread species in the UK, are the fastest declining mammal in the UK. The Thames area is an important historic stronghold for this species.

In 1989-1990 a national survey found water voles at 73.5% of all sites surveyed in the Thames Region (the second highest frequency of occurrence in the Country). In the 1996-1998 survey water voles were found at only 24% of sites surveyed and recent evidence suggests that they are still declining in the UK.

Threats and opportunities

The decline of this river-bank species is related to habitat loss and change with intensification of agriculture, exacerbated by predation from the non-native American Mink. Change in bank-side management and control of the Mink population can help the Water Vole to recover.

Relation to Local Authority activity

Local Authorities can influence the fate of this species through:

- Development control decisions relating to watercourses and adjacent land;
- Local Authority management of bank-side vegetation through housing estates, playing fields, parks, nature areas etc.;
- Funding and other support for advisory and habitat management projects relating to Water Voles (e.g. Berkshire Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust);
- Promotion and publicity for good bank-side management.

Availability of data

The local Wildlife Trust – BBOWT, organise voluntary recording of water voles in Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire and there is a fairly comprehensive, regularly updated dataset. Copies of this data are held by TVERC who also collate records of Water Voles from a number of other sources. Water vole monitoring by BBOWT is dependent on availability of funding and there should be some contingency to allow for lack of funding or change in BBOWT project priorities.

2. CONDITION OF SSSIs

Present status

SSSIs are compartmentalised into habitat units and the condition of each unit is monitored regularly (every 3-6 years). The present status of SSSI units is as follows (figures from July 2005 English Nature data version):

Table One - % SSSI units in each condition state

South East	Oxfordshire	Berkshire	
45%	58%	51%	In favourable condition
18%	6%	5%	In unfavourable and declining condition
18%	12%	21%	In unfavourable condition with no change
19%	24%	23%	In unfavourable but recovering condition
0.22%	0%	0%	Destroyed
0.41%	0%	0%	Part destroyed

NB the figures in Table One show % of units in each condition state. This is given for context only and has been used because it is quick and easy to calculate. The actual statistic that will be supplied for the AMR will be hectares of SSSI in each condition state.

Threats and opportunities

The major threat to SSSI condition is likely to be land management that is not sympathetic to biodiversity. Development on or adjacent to SSSIs could have an adverse effect.

English Nature are working with land owners to bring SSSI land into sympathetic management and some SSSIs in Oxford are managed by the City Council.

Relation to Local Authority activity

- Development control decisions relating to SSSIs, or adjacent land;
- Local Authority management of SSSI land;
- Funding and other support for other groups advising on land management or directly managing SSSI land;
- Promotion of good land management.

Availability of data

SSSIs are regularly and systematically monitored by English Nature staff and others and this data is freely available. The English Nature data need some manipulation to accurately reflect the hectares of SSSI in each County and District / Unitary because the sites fall across local authority boundaries. The monitoring cycle is 3-6 years.

3 DISTRIBUTION AND STATUS OF FARMLAND BIRDS

Present status

A recent European report¹ states that common farmland birds have declined sharply in number over the last 25 years. In contrast, common generalist birds have increased. Although Oxford is predominantly an urban area, significant populations of farmland birds are found in the City, owing to the presence of large areas of unimproved meadowland.

Threats and opportunities

The decline in farmland birds is largely driven by changing agricultural methods, especially increased specialisation and intensification.

Relation to Local Authority activity

- Development control decisions relating to important bird sites or adjacent land;
- Funding and other support for other groups advising on land management or directly managing land;
- Promotion of good land management.

Availability of data

A great deal of bird data is systematically collected across the UK every year by ornithologists and some of this data is suitable for monitoring purposes. There are County and National breeding bird surveys planned over the next few years in Berkshire and Oxfordshire and these should provide useful data.

4 DISTRIBUTION AND STATUS OF GARDEN BUTTERFLIES

Present status

Around a third of the butterfly species found in the UK are regular visitors to gardens, and additional species can sometimes be found in gardens where conditions are favourable. The butterflies that visit our gardens are generally the more widespread and common species. In many cases their presence in gardens reflects the value and extent of wildlife habitats in the vicinity.

These butterflies do not all have the same status – for instance, some are spreading and others declining. There is evidence that some species are spreading northwards and that this is in reaction to climate change. Others may still be present in their traditional areas (the distribution remains the same) but are declining in numbers (populations are getting smaller).

Threats and opportunities

Many people are starting to manage their own gardens for wildlife and this could be good news for butterflies. Changes in grassland management of parks, road verges, field margins, churchyards, recreation sites, newly developed sites and other green areas could also have a positive effect on 'garden butterflies'.

¹ 8 June 2005 from the Pan-European Common Bird Monitoring (PECBM) scheme – a partnership involving the European Bird Census Council, the RSPB, Birdlife international and Statistics Netherlands that aims to deliver policy relevant biodiversity indicators for Europe.

For many people, garden butterflies (and birds) are their most regular contact with wildlife and this indicator is likely to be of interest to many. It is also useful as a measure of biodiversity in the more urban areas.

Relation to Local Authority activity

- Local authority management of land including grass cutting, hedge trimming, management of recreation areas, road verges, nature areas, parks etc.;
- Development control decisions relating to more houses with fewer / smaller gardens and opportunities to encourage sympathetic design and landscaping of business premises, new housing and new local parks and other recreational areas;
- Promotion of gardening for wildlife, composting schemes, safe use of garden chemicals, native species and wildlife planting on development sites;
- Funding and other support for advisory and direct work to manage gardens and other green spaces for wildlife.

Availability of data

A great number of people record butterflies in the UK and generate a wealth of data for use by conservationists and others.

One very significant potential source of data is the Butterflies for the New Millennium Project. This is a national recording project that generates data year by year. The project is based on a concern for butterflies and their habitats and the need for up-to-date information on all species as many continue to decline. It is managed in the UK by Butterfly Conservation and the Biological Records Centre through a sub-regional network of local recorders and data managers.