**17/11/2021**

**PRESS RELEASE**

**\*\*\*Embargoed until 00:01 17th of November 2021\*\*\***

**The 2021 Green Flag Awards were announced today by An Taisce Environmental Education, acknowledging Ireland’s best public parks and gardens.**

**At Malahide Castle the Minister of State with responsibility for Community Development and Charities; Joe O’Brien, stated that he is delighted to participate in the announcement of the 2021 Green Flag Awards for Ireland, before going on to raise the new 2021 Green Flag for Malahide Demesne.**

**International accreditation for public park excellence in Ireland has increased again this year, to reach over 100 accredited public green spaces. Ireland was today awarded a total of 103 Green Flag sites, comprised of 84 formal public Green Flag Park sites, along with 19 volunteer run Green Community Sites.**

**Today, another significant milestone was announced for 2021, with the successful roll-out of Green Heritage Site Accreditation across Ireland. With the support of the NPWS and the Department of Housing, Local Government, and Heritage, 7 Irish Green Flag sites have now also been accredited to Green Heritage Accreditation standard. Green Heritage Site Accreditation is awarded to public green spaces of historical and cultural significance.**

**Minister of State with responsibility for Heritage; Malcolm Noonan, commended the Green Heritage Accreditation and offered the following statement of support:**

***“I am delighted that the National Parks and Wildlife Service of my Department supports and co-funds the Green Heritage Site Accreditation Programme. This scheme is a welcome and important complement to the existing Green Flag Award.***

***The Green Heritage Accreditation widens the pool of sites that can participate in the programme and highlights the multifaceted nature of our green spaces. The scheme brings together the human and natural aspect of a place. It celebrates best practice in engagement with multi-layered heritage and reminds us all of our responsibility to appreciate and preserve richness and diversity of the green spaces that surround us”.***

The number Green Flag Awards for the best parks and gardens to visit in Ireland have surged again this year, with 32 local authorities and park operators now partnering with An Taisce in delivering the international scheme. New green flag parks and gardens, accredited by teams of trained volunteer judges, include for the first-time sites from Counties Carlow, Meath, and Galway, as well as from Cork City.

Only awarded for exceeding tough environmental standards in green space management, and excellence of visitor attractions – **the Green Flag Award Scheme** is the mark of a quality park or green space and is recognised throughout the world. This year over 2,300 public sites in 16 countries around the World have achieved Green Flag or Green Flag Community Award status.

Once again more Green Flag Awards have been secured by Irish Parks and Gardens than by any country, other than the UK where the scheme originated in 1996.

This year participating countries include;

Australia, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Mexico, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Portugal, Republic of Ireland, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, and the United States of America.

The Green Flag awards are available to public town parks, country parks, gardens, cemeteries, nature parks and green spaces from across the whole country.

This year has also seen the number of **Green Flag Community Award** sites in Ireland continue to increase. Additional community run parks and gardens were accredited in Counties Fingal - North County Dublin, Kildare, Kilkenny, Louth, Mayo, and Roscommon. Across Ireland 19 community groups are being acknowledged for the excellence of their volunteer run community green spaces this year.

The Green Flag Community Award extends the Scheme to include community initiatives such as Community Gardens, Community Parks, and Tidy Towns Projects. By providing our community green spaces with access to Green Flag Award best practice we empower community groups to improve their local community and environment.

In Ireland the Green Flag Community Award Scheme is supported by the **Department of Rural and Community Development**.

The **Minister of State for Community Development and Charities; Joe O’Brien** stated that:

***“Since 2018 the Department of Rural and Community Development has supported An Taisce with the expansion of the Green Flag into our community run spaces. By doing this we have been able to leverage the Green Flag Award values and standards for the benefit of our communities and their voluntary work.***

***I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the hard work put in by park staff, and community volunteers, across the country. Not only in achieving this Green Flag Success for Ireland today, but in maintaining the many parks, gardens, and greens across the country for our mutual benefit. It is a great credit that they largely remained open and well managed at this difficult time.”***

The Green Flag Awards are judged every year by a peer jury of green space experts, who volunteer their time to visit applicant sites and assess them against eight strict criteria, including horticultural standards, cleanliness, sustainability, and community involvement.

***“I think that the collaborative aspect of the Green Flag Award Scheme is of huge benefit. Not only for the free flow of knowledge, experience, and solutions, but also because it builds trust and understanding between community groups and local authorities when they are working together to achieve green flag status for their green spaces ”*** said Robert Moss, the Green Flag Award for Parks Manager for the Republic of Ireland.

Robert Moss also noted that the Green Flag Community Award element of the scheme is supported by the Department of Rural and Community Development because ***“it builds a very constructive conduit for information, knowledge and skill share between the professional and voluntary green space management sectors within our society”.***

Three of the 2021 Green Flag Award winning parks were also identified by the National Biodiversity Data Centre for an additional **Pollinator Plan Award.** This award is specifically for those Green Flag Parks or Gardens that have made an effort to support their local pollinating insects, or to promote their importance. The Pollinator Plan Award is jointly run with An Taisce Environmental Education to support the **All Ireland Pollinator Plan**, and is kindly sponsored by Young’s Nurseries. While there are pollinator project awards across different park categories it was **Kilbarry Nature Park**, operated by Waterford Council, that was the overall winner. This nature park is located upon the site of a rehabilitated landfill site, so it is great to see that a former environmental problem has evolved into an environmental asset.

For high resolution images see: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/92752519@N06/albums/72157720186870270>

For further information please make contact using the details below.

If you are interested in finding out further information about the Green Flag Award or other programmes run by An Taisce Environmental Education please e-mail us at [rmoss@eeu.antaisce.org](mailto:rmoss@eeu.antaisce.org) or telephone: **087 4623302.**

**ENDS**

**Note to Editors:**

**To view the promotional video of the 2021 Green Flag Raising event at Malahide Castle, and the message of support from Minister of State for Community Development and Charities; Joe O’Brien, please visit the following link:**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T9NEueMgBKc&t=1s](https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.youtube.com%2Fwatch%3Fv%3DT9NEueMgBKc%26t%3D1s&data=04%7C01%7C%7C5dd78635cd08422b4e4c08d9a914cf53%7C9b3403b7a34f4d1fbb4111c343a1fcc7%7C0%7C0%7C637726729101863907%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000&sdata=q1Jx522xglGZ8NxLg0u91PCJGRtJlz582jFzSXlz8ac%3D&reserved=0)

**To view the promotional video of the 2021 Green Heritage Site Accreditation pilot introduction to Ireland, please visit the following link:**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-HJAT96SBNc](https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.youtube.com%2Fwatch%3Fv%3D-HJAT96SBNc&data=04%7C01%7C%7C5dd78635cd08422b4e4c08d9a914cf53%7C9b3403b7a34f4d1fbb4111c343a1fcc7%7C0%7C0%7C637726729101873871%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000&sdata=hY37ZIamaGzmiTua4xDPCm4b44kvpKWlTO54ccnQ3%2Fk%3D&reserved=0)

The Green Flag Award is an international benchmarking standard for parks and green spaces.

The Green Flag Award scheme operates across Australia, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Mexico, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Portugal, Republic of Ireland, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, and the United States of America.

The green Flag Award scheme aims to encourage the provision of good quality public parks and green spaces that are managed in environmentally sustainable ways.

The Green Flag Award Scheme encourages high environmental performance and good management. Parks and green spaces are judged against eight key criteria. Where certain criteria are not met, applicants can provide justifications that may be taken into account. What's more, if management practice changes are in progress but not yet fully implemented, transitional phases will be acknowledged and viewed positively.

The Green Flag Community Award extends the Green Flag Award Scheme to our volunteer run community green space projects.

The Green Heritage Site Accreditation is awarded to public green spaces of historical importance, that actively understand, manage, and promote their heritage which makes them unique.

The judging criteria also considers the fact that each park/green space will offer different kinds of facilities and will be managed and developed to varying opportunities and constraints. Innovation and the way facilities offered are tailored to the needs of the community will also be taken into account.

In November 2021 the Central Statistics Office published a report indicating that “Three-quarters of urban households visit urban green spaces most weeks” and that “Almost €46 million was spent by households on their most recent visit to nature areas for recreational purposes”.

The full list of the 2021 Green Flag Award winning parks within the Republic of Ireland is as follows:

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**2021 Green Flag Awards:**

* Abbeyfeale Community Leisure Ltd Páirc Cois Féile

/ Abbeyfeale Park

* Cavan County Council Cavan Burren Park
* Clare County Council John O’Sullivan Park
* Clare County Council Shannon Town Park
* Clare County Council Tim Smythe Park
* Clare County Council Vandeleur Walled Gardens
* Cork City Council Fitzgerald’s Park
* Cork City Council Shalom Park
* Donegal County Council Barrack Hill Town Park
* Dublin City Council Albert College Park
* Dublin City Council Blessington Street Park
* Dublin City Council Bushy Park
* Dublin City Council Father Collins Park
* Dublin City Council Herbert Park
* Dublin City Council Markievicz Park
* Dublin City Council Poppintree Park
* Dublin City Council Saint Anne's Park
* Dublin City Council Saint Audoen's Park
* Dublin City Council Saint Patrick's Park
* Dublin City Council Weaver Park
* Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council Blackrock Park
* Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council Cabinteely Park
* Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council Deansgrange

Cemetery

* Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council Deerpark
* Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council Marlay Park
* Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council People’s Park
* Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council Shanganagh

Park

* Fingal County Council Ardgillan Demesne
* Fingal County Council Malahide Demesne
* Fingal County Council Millennium Park
* Fingal County Council Newbridge House and Farm
* Fingal County Council Santry Demesne
* Fingal County Council Saint Catherine’s Park
* Galway City Council Children’s Millennium Park
* Galway City Council Quinncentennial Park
* Galway County Council The Palace Grounds
* Kerry County Council Childers Park & Woodlands
* Kerry County Council Tralee Bay Wetlands
* Kerry County Council Tralee Town Park
* Kildare County Council Liffey Linear Park Newbridge
* Laois County Council Páirc an Phobail Portlaoise
* Laois County Council Peoples Park Portarlington
* Limerick Council The Peoples Park Limerick
* Limerick Council Lough Gur Lakeshore Park and Visitor Centre
* Longford County Council The Mall
* Louth County Council Blackrock Community Park
* Louth County Council Ice House Hill Park
* Louth County Council Saint Helena Park
* Louth County Council Saint Dominic’s Park

* Maynooth University/Saint Patrick’s College Maynooth Campus
* Mayo County Council Jackie Clarke Collection Heritage Garden
* Mayo County Council Turlough Park

* Midland Amenity Park Dún na Sí Amenity & Heritage Park
* National Parks and Wildlife Service Connemara National Park
* National Parks and Wildlife Service Glenveagh National Park
* National Parks and Wildlife Service Killarney House and Gardens
* National Parks and Wildlife Service Ballycroy Visitor Centre –

Wild Nephin National Park

* National University of Ireland Galway National University of Ireland Galway Campus
* North Mayo Heritage Centre Enniscoe
* Offaly County Council Lloyd Town Park Tullamore
* Office of Public Works Altamont House and Gardens
* Office of Public Works Battle of the Boyne Visitor Centre
* Office of Public Works Castletown Demesne
* Office of Public Works Derrynane Historic Park
* Office of Public Works Fota Arboretum & Gardens
* Office of Public Works Garinish Island
* Office of Public Works Grangegorman Military Cemetery
* Office of Public Works Irish National War Memorial Gardens
* Office of Public Works The Iveagh Gardens
* Office of Public Works The Phoenix Park Victorian Walled Garden
* Office of Public Works Saint Stephen's Green
* Sport Ireland National Sports Campus Sport Ireland Campus
* South Dublin County Council Corkagh Park
* South Dublin County Council Rathfarnham Castle Park
* South Dublin County Council Sean Walsh Park
* South Dublin County Council Tymon Park
* South Dublin County Council Waterstown Park
* Waterford City and County Council Kilbarry Nature Park
* Waterford City and County Council Waterford Greenway
* Waterford Institute of Technology Waterford Institute of

Technology Sports Campus

* Westmeath County Council Mullingar Town Park
* Wexford County Council Pearse Park - New Ross
* Wexford County Council The New Ross Library Park
* Wicklow County Council Glendalough Cemetery

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**2021 Green Heritage Site Accreditation:**

* Maynooth University/Saint Patrick’s College Maynooth Campus
* Mayo County Council Turlough Park
* National Parks and Wildlife Service Connemara National Park
* National Parks and Wildlife Service Killarney House and Gardens

* North Mayo Heritage Centre Enniscoe
* Office of Public Works Battle of the Boyne Visitor Centre
* Office of Public Works Irish National War Memorial Gardens

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**2021 Green Flag Community Awards:**

* County Carlow Bagenalstown Town Park
* County Donegal The River Walk Dungloe
* Fingal (North County Dublin) The Rock Garden
* Fingal (North County Dublin) Santry Community Garden
* County Kildare Community Sensory Garden Maynooth
* County Kildare Zero Waste Community Garden
* County Kilkenny Thomastown Food Garden
* County Louth Dromiskin Heritage Park
* County Mayo Balla Woodlands and Parks
* County Mayo Ballina Karen Community Garden
* County Mayo Ballyhaunis Community Garden
* County Mayo Kilmaine Community Garden
* County Meath Julianstown Community Garden
* County Galway Ballyglunin Railway Restoration Project
* County Galway Headford Community Garden
* County Galway Headford Community Orchard

* County Roscommon Ballaghaderreen Community Garden
* County Roscommon Cloontuskert Community Orchard
* County Roscommon Knockvicar Organic Garden

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**2021 Pollinator Plan Award:**

OVERALL WINNER:

Kilbarry Nature Park: Waterford City and County Council

**Category Winners:**

**• Country Park:**

National Parks and Wildlife Service: Ballycroy Visitor Centre –

Wild Nephin National Park

**• Town Park:**

Kilbarry Nature Park: Waterford City and County Council

**• Community Award:**

County Meath: Julianstown Community Garden

**• Highly Commended/Special Award:**

Country Park:

Office of Public Works: Castletown House & Parklands

Town Park:

Maynooth University/Saint Patrick’s College: Maynooth Campus

Dublin City Council: Saint Anne’s Park