

SERVICE UPDATE

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UPDATE:

Environmental Services 2023/24

This report is to advise Committee of Environmental Services highlights and the progress and success of their 2023/24 campaigns and initiatives.

The team has worked tirelessly with community partners and together we have shaped the city's green spaces. Our partnerships sees everyone working together for the benefit of the city.

Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) UK Britain In Bloom Awards

Aberdeen's campaign, Aberdeen Communities Together (ACT) is a 365-day campaign involving a wide range of people from within local communities. The overall aim is to ensure that the communities come together with the goal of enhancing their surroundings and creating a better environment.

In Bloom actively engages with and gets direct participation of Aberdeen's citizens in the sustainability / environmental agenda in Aberdeen. The campaign delivers benefits across the city at little cost to the Council and helps communicate and support grass root actions and behaviour change towards a more sustainable city. It helps to meet our environmental objectives for a clean city, reducing carbon emissions and instils community pride, community cohesion and active citizenship.

Aberdeen came top in its category (City Award) at the 2023 Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) UK Britain In Bloom Awards, earning a Gold medal at a ceremony in London.

Aberdeen was also runner up for the Britain in Bloom Horticulture Award at the awards for showing excellence in its horticulture and landscaping.

The awards achieved are deserved recognition for all the tremendous partnerships and community project work that now takes place under the ACT umbrella, continuing Aberdeen's proud history and tradition of fantastic green spaces whilst bringing a new and innovative approach to caring for them.

The success of ACT is fitting recognition for the 1000s of fabulous people involved who work tirelessly for the benefit of the city's parks and green space.



Keep Scotland Beautiful Green Flags

The Green Flag Award scheme recognises and rewards well managed parks and green spaces, setting the benchmark standard for the management of recreational outdoor spaces across the United Kingdom and around the world.

Aberdeen had nine sites awarded with Green Flags in 2023. This is most we have ever achieved -

Duthie Park, Green Heritage award and 10th anniversary of being awarded a green flag

Hazlehead Park

Seaton Park

Johnston Gardens

Victoria Park

Slopefield Allotments

Garthdee Field Allotments

Cove Woodland,

Westfield Park

Aberdeen is the first local authority in Scotland to have an allotment site awarded with a Green Flag. We now have 2!

It is a tremendous achievement to be awarded Green Flags. There have been obvious challenges this year but despite this, our parks and green spaces continue to be beautiful, well maintained, and accessible to everyone.

Keep Scotland Beautiful's, It's Your Neighbourhood

More groups involved in Keep Scotland Beautiful's, It's Your Neighbourhood scheme than any other local authority in Scotland – with 40 flying the flag for Aberdeen.

As part of the Beautiful Scotland, Its Your Neighbourhood initiative, Environmental Services supports many community groups and volunteers in their community green space / environmental projects.

Aberdeen continues to lead the way in this initiative, and we had 40 Its Your Neighbourhood groups involved in 23/24. More than any other Scottish council.

Across the city our work with community partnerships continue to grow. The service now has more than 200 collaborations in place including volunteers, communities, businesses, schools, third organisations and companies. Thousands of volunteer hours spent in Aberdeen's parks and green spaces



Keep Scotland Beautiful Beach Awards 2023

2023 saw Aberdeen retain its Seaside Award. This was the 17th year in a row that our beach has been recognised and awarded in this way.

This is a fantastic achievement and recognises and celebrates all the hard work of our staff and the many volunteers who help care for the beach.

The Beach Awards are administered by Keep Scotland Beautiful and started in 1993. The awards aim to celebrate all of Scotland's beaches and coastal communities whilst driving up the environmental standards around our coastline.

Awarded beaches demonstrate excellent beach management and environmental best practice ensuring the maintenance is of high standards.

Clean Up Aberdeen 2023

Clean Up Aberdeen is part of Keep Scotland Beautiful's national mass-engagement campaign Clean Up Scotland.

Clean Up Scotland aims to involve one million people in action against litter and mess. It is a national coalition of organisations and people from all places and backgrounds who want Scotland to shine and work towards making Scotland the cleanest country in Europe.

Aberdeen's 2023 campaign was launched in March in partnership with Marine Conservation Society and East Grampian Coastal Partnership as part of Climate Week North East. Our campaign continued to be a success in 2023 with 241 community clean ups completed, 2667 volunteers filled 2342 bags. We now have more individual volunteers helping to keep the city clean than ever before.

The Clean Up Aberdeen campaign provides a fantastic opportunity for everyone to help in the fight against litter and mess and be part of ensuring Aberdeen remains a beautiful and litter free place to live.



Meadow-in-a-Box

Meadow-in-a-Box is a project that sees the educational and nature value of creating a wildflower meadow in a small and easily managed space. A planter box! With a small planter and the right seed mix, it is possible to grow a small meadow anywhere.

To date, 100+ meadows-in-a box have been distributed across Aberdeen.

The planters have been a tremendous success providing colourful, wildflowers and a great source of nectar for pollinators such as bumblebees and butterflies.

This very simple project has boosted local biodiversity and educated hundreds of people on the importance of pollinators, and our partnership with them.



Woodside Wee Forest

The Woodside Wee Forest continues to thrive, with most of the trees now in leaf. The Alder and Willow are doing particularly well, now being over two metres tall. Biodiversity increases in the Wee Forest with every passing year; a variety of invertebrates have colonised the Wee Forest and many are used to feed chicks of the many birds in the greater Woodside area. The Wee Forest is used every week by outdoor education groups from Woodside Primary School and Nursery, with pupils and staff helping to maintain and monitor the plants.

Aberdeen Flagship Parks for Pollinators

We are extending naturalised greenspace management by improving and creating blue/green habitats in Duthie Park beside the River Dee and Seaton Park on the River Don. The approach has been taken in these parks to show this approach can benefit both people and wildlife.

A Nature Restoration in Parks grant of £37K from the Scottish Government was used to survey, plan, and design work to further improve the parks for nature. This included improving the wetlands and ponds to provide a valuable habitat for a range of species. In addition, the project created new and improved existing wildflower meadow areas for pollinators. Tree planting was also included

Aberdeen Flagship Parks for Pollinators also supports longer term 'B-lines' pollinator work between Aberdeen City Council and the charity Buglife.

The service has many ongoing initiatives to help nature and biodiversity, these include, Aberdeen B-lines, a change in grass cutting regimes to encourage wildflowers, community tree planting and planting pollinator friendly planting.

Green Thread

We have amazing people doing wonderful things to help look after our city. A few highlights -

- We have engaged with over 280 community partnerships throughout the year, working on in bloom and environmental improvements.

The Council's team has worked tirelessly with thousands of individuals for the benefit of the city. We estimate that the communities have delivered 16,895 volunteer hours, with the value of this being in the region of £340K. The real figure is likely to be considerably more.

A beautiful Aberdeen with everyone on board!

- Spring bulb planting initiative has seen 160,000 spring bulbs delivered to 112 schools, nurseries, 'Friends of', resident's groups, community councils, churches, and individuals.
- The team were finalists in the 2023 LGC Awards for our project Protecting Aberdeen's Beautiful Trees and Woodlands.
- In by the end of 2023 the ACC Countryside Rangers Facebook page had 4,700 followers, up from 3,800 followers at the same point in 2022. The team delivered 115 educational sessions to a wide range of demographics, including schoolchildren, community trusts, additional support groups, and retired communities. In total, 3473 people participated in educational sessions lead by the team in 2023 and 500 volunteers contributed 1,500 hours of work to the Countryside Ranger Service,
- Our Crates to Plates project saw refurbished art gallery packing crates becoming vegetable planters for use by Ukrainian guests at the Aberdeen Airport Hotel in Dyce. Five workshops were run in partnership with CFINE and in 2024 we anticipate the creation of more Crates to Plates locations in Aberdeen, benefiting asylum seekers from many countries.
- The team were awarded Silver in the finals of the APSE Striving for Excellence 2023 Awards. This was for Grounds, Parks, and Street Scene.

- Duthie Park volunteer gardening group, Parkforce, help to manage and maintain the community garden at the park. The group have been running for 10 years and average 1,000 hours per year. The volunteers help by planting the summer and winter bedding plants, planting and looking after the vegetable plots, pruning the soft fruit bushes and apple trees. They also do all the weeding on the community garden and in the 1920s rockery.

The volunteers who help, have several reasons for attending. Some want to give something back to the community, others are referred from agencies, some are new to the area and want to socialise and for others it helps to raise their level of confidence.

- The Duthie Park Ranger Service provide a variety of outdoor environmental themed workshops for schools. During a year, the Ranger Service has worked with 2,500 pupils, providing workshops on pond life, plants, how to care for the environment and minibeasts.

The Ranger Service also provides workshops for primary children during the school holidays and also for Out of School Groups. Workshops are similar to the school's educational programme but are more fun. Almost 800 children took part in 2023.

- The Duthie Park Ranger Service also took part in the Fascination of Plants, which is a worldwide event.

The Service works in partnership with educational institutes in helping to deliver this event for the Aberdeen community. The aim of the event is to increase people's awareness of plants and the significant role they play within our lives.

The open event was held at Duthie Park, attracting over 200 families. Other organisations involved include Aberdeen University, Robert Gordon University, Scottish Rural Colleges, James Hutton Institute and Aberdeen Science Centre

- Aberdeen Civic Society 2023 presented the Friends of Victoria and Westburn Park with a Commendation Award In recognition of Victoria Park Fountain refurbishment.