

EMBARGOED UNTIL 8PM 3RD OCTOBER 2019

PRESS RELEASE - Good Parks for London 2019 – Parks and health – Report Launch

Thursday 3rd October: Parks for London tonight published the *Good Parks for London Report 2019 – Parks and health*. This year the report takes a close look at how London's parks* can improve the health and well-being of London's residents. The report foreword is written by Julie Billett, Chair of the London Association of Directors of Public Health. The report will be available to download from 4th October at: <https://parksforlondon.org.uk/good-parks-for-london/>

Good Parks for London 2019 considers the approach that London Boroughs are taking towards their parks*, evaluating them against ten criteria: public satisfaction, awards for quality, health and wellbeing, sustainability, events, supporting nature, skills development, community partnerships, collaboration and strategic planning.

This report comes at a time of ongoing political turmoil over Brexit, continued uncertainty over funding for parks services and growing concerns about the environment and climate change.

This year the London Borough of Southwark has topped the league table for the overall best parks service, demonstrating the fantastic work that they are doing to promote, enhance and protect their parks*. They scored exceptionally well in the areas of public satisfaction; provision of health, fitness and wellbeing facilities and activities; and in developing the skills of their parks staff by offering apprenticeships and training & development for staff at every level.

Cllr Richard Livingstone, Southwark Council Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport and the Climate Emergency, said: *"This is a really fantastic result for Southwark and a great achievement for all of our staff and volunteers who work so hard to make our parks the best they can be for our residents. Our parks are at the heart of our communities and play host to some fantastic events throughout the year. As a central London borough where most people do not have their own garden it is particularly important for our residents to have access to excellent open spaces. Our borough is home to 30 Green Flag parks with each of them offering a range of high quality free facilities available for our residents to get active and enjoy the outdoors. I am incredibly proud that the quality and investment in our parks has been recognized and celebrated."*

Boroughs across London should also be congratulated on the work that they are doing. This year's highlights include:

- Economic modelling estimates that £950 million per year of health care costs are avoided thanks to London's public parks.
- Over 80% of London Boroughs now use parks for social prescribing, with over 70% accessing health funding to improve health, fitness and wellbeing in their parks.
- All Boroughs provide outdoor gyms and just over half offer programmed activities in them.
- In response to reducing single use plastics, 80% of London Boroughs make provision of free drinking water in key parks, either by installing water fountains or through cafes; this is a 6% increase from 2018.
- Nearly 70% of London Boroughs have green vehicles within their fleet, this is an increase of 23% from last year – 4 have a 100% green fleet!
- 75% of Boroughs have an up to date Biodiversity Action Plan in place.
- 55% parks services support apprenticeship schemes, this shows a decrease from 2018.
- Surveys show that in 42% of London Boroughs upwards of 80% of residents (that participated) are satisfied or very satisfied with their parks.
- On average 13% of parks in each Borough will attain Green Flag Awards, with over 40% of Boroughs surpassing the London average.

- Just over half of London Boroughs have an up to date green space strategy in place, an area we are keen to see improvement in.

Tony Leach, CEO of Parks for London said: *‘We hope this year’s report will motivate decision makers to protect future parks budgets and stimulate more Boroughs and other organisations to work together to make parks healthier so that Londoners can benefit from having not just good parks, but great ones.’*

Martin Kelly, Head of Planning at GL Hearn, the report’s sponsors, said: *“Not only is the report a celebration of the extraordinary number and the outstanding quality of London’s parks, it acts as a benchmark for the kind of London we would all like to see.”*

END PRESS RELEASE.

Notes to editors

The Good Parks for London Report is compiled by [Parks for London](#) and sponsored and produced by [GL Hearn](#), part of Capita Real Estate. It is supported by London Boroughs and other partner organisations. This is the third edition of the report. Parks for London are extremely grateful for the continued support of GL Hearn.

*For purpose of the report and press release **‘parks’** are defined as all publicly accessible parks and green spaces that are owned/leased and managed by London Boroughs excluding allotments, housing green space and those managed by other land owners, such as the Royal Parks or Lee Valley Regional Park Authority.

Criteria used to assess London Boroughs’ parks and green spaces services:

1. Public satisfaction with parks
2. Awards for quality (Green Flags and London in Bloom)
3. Collaboration
4. Events: both policy and range and number of events
5. Health, fitness and well-being
6. Supporting nature
7. Community involvement
8. Skills development
9. Sustainability
10. Strategic planning

The criteria are refined annually in collaboration with a working group of local authority parks officers. This year both Kingston upon Thames and Havering have shown the biggest improvement in their parks service.

Julie Billett is also the Director of Public Health for Camden and Islington.

The reports for 2018 and 2017 can be read [here](#).

About Parks for London

The Charity, Parks for London, exists to ensure that London’s green infrastructure continues to thrive now and into the future. The charity enables the people who plan, design and manage London’s parks and green spaces to not only share their knowledge and experience, but to use good practice drawn up by Parks for London in collaboration with partner organisations. We ensure that standards and quality are maintained and improved, we safeguard and lobby for resources, maximise services

by improving and sharing good practice and seek to promote and celebrate the numerous benefits these increasingly vital assets bring to London.

Our mission is to ensure that London has a strong network of parks*, which are of high quality, safe, accessible, stimulating, innovative and able to meet modern day challenges such as climate change, air pollution and health issues to serve a growing population.

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GOOD PARKS FOR LONDON 2019



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