

Dear Adele,

Hand delivery

Further to discussions with the Friends Group, they have asked me to write to the Parish Council with regards to the Green Flag Awards.

This letter has been circulated to all of our members prior to its issue.

We understand that you have not as yet made a final decision regarding future Green Flag submissions and as such write to you in order that our views may be considered.

As a volunteer group we complete tasks in the park, monitoring and reporting (including to the Police and other public bodies as appropriate), also, some of our individual members undertake ad hoc volunteering such as litter picking.

We also canvas public opinion and encourage community involvement and engagement in the park.

Through our chair we have also updated the management plan for the park, a contribution that has enabled you as a Parish Council to be in a far better position regarding the future management of the park and reflect the best practice of having a current management plan.

As such we hope that our views are considered seriously and make a difference to the decision that you are to make with regards to future Green Flag submissions.

We firmly support the Green Flag program; indeed our chair wrote and submitted to you a summary of its benefits.

These benefits we believe are incredibly valuable to how the park is managed and perceived by the public. The external benchmarking provides opportunities to explore understand, share and learn from best practice. As the Parish Council are at this stage newcomers to parks management (of the scale and diversity of Ballgrove), we believe this in particular is beneficial to you, your clerk and to the park.

The accreditation that is achieved when a Green Flag Award is made not only recognises the effort of you as a Parish Council but it also recognises the efforts that we make as a Friends Group.

Unfortunately it seems rare that community groups are acknowledged. Whilst none of us volunteer for the acknowledgement, this award does go a long way in encouraging us.

The award adds value to the park, as the Green Flag is the highest nationally recognised award for an individual park of this nature.

It engenders civic pride and ownership.

We had understood that the intention of the Parish Council in taking on its ownership was to retain and where possible enhance standards. We feel strongly that discontinuing the Green Flag Award submissions would be a significant degradation of the value and perception of the park. It may also lead to the park either having no current management plan (The current one is an interim one, valid

for a year) or having one that has not been completed by a professional dedicated to parks management. Whilst we appreciate that your Parish Clerk is very professional, in terms of the management of a park of this scale and diverse features, this is new and the expertise that is shared through the Green Flag judging process and that within our group can only be beneficial.

As the chair, I must confirm that unfortunately if the decision is made to discontinue the Green Flag Award submissions then I personally will be unable to provide further assistance with the technical aspects of the park. I may also have to reconsider any assistance with any of the larger funding applications. The larger ones are technical and time consuming, and often require significant experience and expertise. I am afraid that I would have to carefully consider the allocation of my time to such a project if the Green Flag Award submissions were to be discontinued.

We will as a group however remain committed to the park and the other areas in which we operate, albeit, significantly disappointed if we cannot continue to make every effort to reflect and achieve best practice in the management of the park we love.

Yours Sincerely,

Mel Henley

Chair, Friends of Ballgrove Park