SEARCH TO FIND ‘UK’S BEST PARK’ LAUNCHED BY FIELDS IN TRUST

Friday 23 September, 2016

Do you think that your local green space is the best in the country? Here’s your chance to prove it. National charity Fields in Trust have launched a campaign to find the *UK’s Best Park, as voted by YOU!* This unique award is open to all public green spaces across the UK through a simple online nomination at www.fieldsintrust.org/bestpark. It might be that your local park is great for a Sunday afternoon stroll, your neighbourhood playground is a hive of activity for children, or a nature reserve provides a stress-free space to relax. This is your chance to help your favourite space gain the recognition it deserves.

Launching the awards Former England International footballer **Graeme Le Saux** said *“The Fields in Trust’s annual awards are a fantastic way for us to recognise the organisations and individuals who help make our parks, playgrounds and playing fields the best they can be. I was very fortunate that growing up in Jersey I had a huge amount of access to outdoor spaces and it was something I really appreciated as a youngster, not just because I wanted to be a football player but also because I was able to spend time outdoors with my friends. I understand the importance of these spaces and the opportunities they provide for our communities.”*

At a time when the UK’s parks are seeing a dramatic reduction in funding for upkeep and maintenance and childhood obesity is identified as a growing concern, the *UK’s Best Park* award will highlight the vital role of local parks and green spaces – for play, relaxation or sport – and help ensure they are protected from closure or building development.

UK’s Best Park is a unique award open to all local green spaces across the UK. A simple online nomination form, open from 23rd September will allow anyone to suggest their favourite green space. This will be followed by a public vote to identify a shortlist with the winner announced at the Fields in Trust Awards evening on 30th November.

Fields in Trust Chief Executive **Helen Griffiths** said *"Parks and open spaces are arguably the most universal of all public services. They are used by the entire community from pre-school children through to retired adults - our nation's parks and green spaces are places to enjoy life experiences, whether that’s reaching a personal sporting milestone, teaching grandchildren to cycle, engaging with nature, having a first kiss or simply walking a much loved dog.*

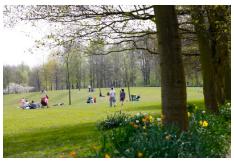
“Our Awards help recognise the role that our parks play in our communities, bringing people together and creating a safe outdoor environment that everyone should be entitled to. We want to celebrate them and invite all park users to vote for their favourite green space.”

The *UK’s Best Park* award is one of eleven categories that together form the fifth, annual Fields in Trust Awards. Winners will be revealed at Lord’s Cricket Ground on 30th November in an event which celebrates the achievements of individuals and organisations who have worked over the last year to ensure that everyone has access to protected outdoor recreational space.

Categories include the Community Champion Award and, sponsored by Environmental

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regeneration charity **Groundwork**, the Young Community Champion Award. A new category for 2016 is for the Best Athletics Project on a Fields in Trust site supported by **England Athletics** and **parkrun,** which will celebrate projects which have increased community participation in running or athletics.

Fields in Trust, the only national charity that safeguards recreational green space, want to recognise the role that parks play in our communities, bringing people together and creating a safe outdoor environment that everyone should be entitled to.

-ENDS-

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NOTES TO EDITORS

About Fields in Trust

Fields in Trust is a national charity that operates throughout the UK to safeguard recreational spaces and campaign for better statutory protection for all kinds of outdoor sites.

Founded in 1925 as the National Playing Fields Association by King George V, their mission is the same now and as it was then: to ensure that everyone – young or old, able-bodied or disabled and wherever they live – should have access to free, local outdoor space for sport, play and recreation. These spaces are vital to building happy and healthy communities and sadly continue to be threatened by all kinds of development.

www.fieldsintrust.org

About UK's Best Park

Nominations for *UK's Best Park, as voted by YOU!* 2016 will open at 9am on Friday 23rd September.

Nominators submit a short 50 word description explaining why the space should be considered as UK's best. Nominations close at 5pm on Wednesday 19th October.

Voting opens for those parks nominated at 9am on Thursday 20th October.

The park with the most votes in each of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland will be shortlisted. Their nominators will be invited to attend the prestigious Fields in Trust Awards on Wednesday 30th November where the *UK's Best Park, as voted by YOU!* 2016 will be named.

www.fieldsintrust.org/bestpark

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