



Date: 25th September 2017

Embargo: 12.01AM on Monday 25th September 2017

Why Amenity Matters Week highlights green spaces and champions the 'heroes' who maintain the UK's urban landscape

This week (25 September – 1 October) marks Why Amenity Matters Week. Through the eyes of the Colins family, the campaign encourages families and friends to celebrate the enjoyment of our local parks and sports grounds and recognise the contribution of those who maintain our green spaces and infrastructure.

Launched by the Amenity Forum, Why Amenity Matters Week also aims to show how the UK's urban spaces, roadside verges, trees, hedges and railway lines are maintained and how the amenity sector, responsible for caring for this managed landscape, impacts on our daily lives; helping us travel to work and enjoy leisure activities while contributing to the economy and protecting the natural environment. The campaign highlights how invasive weeds have a negative impact on the economy estimated at £1.7 billionⁱ with £6 millionⁱⁱ alone being spent on controlling Japanese Knotweed on the road network in the UK.

As well as promoting the importance of the sector, the week also highlights the benefits of enjoying local parks and sports grounds as well as saluting the sector's 'unsung green heroes' who care for them and ensure they are managed safely. The campaign is also designed to raise awareness among commuters of the maintenance work that goes on behind the scenes to keep the country's railway network, stations and highways clear from weeds.

Key facts include:

- Over 37 million people regularly use parks in the UK (over 57% of the population)ⁱⁱⁱ
- There are over 27,000 parks and green spaces across the UK^{iv}

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- More than 18,000 miles of railway track need to be maintained
- Trains carry 1,650 million passengers a year
- And carry 28,000 million tons freight a year
- Offices or homes neighbouring railways lines are occupied by more than 7 million people
- 2500 railway stations across the UK need to be kept weed free
- Invasive weeds have a negative impact on the economy estimated at £1.7 billion - £6 million is the total cost of controlling Japanese knotweed on the road network in Great Britain

During the week, a social media survey on Twitter is set to quiz those enjoying urban green spaces on who they think manages our amenity areas, who is responsible for keeping streets and verges weed free and who ensures our urban trees stay free of pests and disease.

At the same time, members of the Amenity Forum who range from local greenkeepers to national water companies will lift the lid on what's involved in looking after their patch.

The Amenity Forum represents the diverse sector behind the maintenance of the managed environment; from manufacturers to suppliers, trade associations, local authorities, major users, landscape, sport and leisure. In the landscaping sector alone, 61,500 people are employed within the UK and the annual turnover for the landscaping services industry is £4 billion.

Independent Chairman of the Amenity Forum Professor John Moverley OBE said: "Most people appreciate that the environment around them is maintained in some way but fewer realise that there is a huge contribution from something called the amenity sector behind this; working to ensure our green spaces and essential infrastructure are managed safely for public enjoyment and leisure. What they do impacts upon every UK citizen every day providing a safe and healthy environment and sports and leisure areas fit for purpose'

"Studies have shown a positive and clear link between mental health and access to parks and green spaces. The Get Moving campaign was creative to help show the importance of effective and safe weed control to the smooth running of things we take for granted, such as clear pathways and roads.

"This year we want to encourage everyone to get back out into their local parks and green spaces and to recognise the contribution of those working in them to enable us to travel, keep physically active and protect the environment.

"Those responsible for weed, pest and disease control may go largely unnoticed but their work is vital in ensuring that our journeys to work, the shops, for recreation, are safe and our environment is protected and that invasive plants like Japanese Knotweed are controlled.

“During Why Amenity Matters Week why not give a thought to the green heroes who are quietly making a big impact on your enjoyment of outdoor space.”

More information on Why Amenity Matters Week can be found online at www.getbritainmoving.uk and activity will be running all week on social media from www.twitter.com/amenityforum and www.facebook.com/AmenityForumUK.

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Notes to Editors

For further information or to arrange an interview with independent Chairman John Moverley, please contact Keystone Marketing on 01480 278750 or email hayleywilliams@keystone-marketing.co.uk

About the Amenity Forum:

The Amenity Forum is the non-profit making voluntary initiative and the independent body bringing together professional organisations with an involvement in the amenity horticulture sector. This is a very diverse industry responsible for the landscape management of urban areas, highways and rail network, sports grounds, parks, industrial and utility sites. To establish and maintain these areas to a high standard, the sector requires access to pesticides, efficient equipment and trained and qualified staff. The organisation was formed in October 2003 as a key action to support the Voluntary Initiative, an industry led project agreed with Government to reduce the environmental impact of pesticides.

The membership comprises of organisations from across this diverse industry, covering manufacturers, suppliers, trade associations, local authorities, major users, landscape, sport and leisure. Equally important are those members who represent training and qualification standards. The key Government agencies have an important observer role. The objectives of the Amenity Forum are:

- To promote and encourage proper and responsible use of pesticides and integrated methods for the control of pests, weeds and diseases
- To lead, coordinate and encourage achievement of “Best Practice” objectives in weed, pest & disease management
- To ensure that all practices are sustainable and protect the environment with minimised risks to public health.
- To run a communication programme to support these aims and to promote the image of the sector among stakeholders and the public.
- To coordinate and encourage the establishment of sustainable qualifications, training and CPD activity, specifically for the Amenity sector
- To organise activities within the Amenity Forum membership and linked organisations, such that Amenity Forum objectives are developed in a coordinated way

More at www.amenityforum.co.uk

ⁱ The Economic Cost of Invasive Non-Native Species on Great Britain, F. Williams, R. Eschen, A. Harris, D. Djeddour, C. Pratt, R.S. Shaw, S. Varia, J. Lamontagne-Godwin, S.E. Thomas, S.T. Murphy CAB/001/09 November 2010 <http://www.nonnativespecies.org/downloadDocument.cfm?id=487>

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ⁱⁱⁱ The Association of Directors of Public Health Running Free: Consultation on preserving the free use of public parks <http://www.adph.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/ADPH-Running-Free-Consultation-Response-.pdf>

^{iv} House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee Public parks Seventh Report of Session 2016–17 <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmcomloc/45/45.pdf>

^v Network Rail – data presented at the Amenity Forum Conference, 2015