



PRESS RELEASE

New Amenity Standard launched in Scotland and set to be a game changer for the sector providing assurance of professional standards

At a specially convened conference focussing on the challenges and opportunities in the amenity sector, held in Edinburgh, the new Amenity Standard was formally launched in Scotland by Mairi Gougeon, MSP, Minister for Rural Affairs and the Natural Environment. This Standard is akin to the Red Tractor in food and agriculture. Those operating to the Standard and displaying its logo will demonstrate their adherence to recognised assured standards in all tasks undertaken.

There is much greater public and political interest related to weed, pest and disease management, especially linked to the use of plant protection products. The reasons why such products need to be used, as part of a fully integrated approach, in seeking to provide safe, healthy amenity spaces and sports surfaces, is not always clear to the public and stakeholders.

The wider public users of amenity spaces need to have clear assurances that all those involved in creating and maintaining safe, healthy sports grounds and other amenity spaces, operate at the highest professional standards; and whatever methods are used, such operations are undertaken by competent, trained personnel following well designed and managed plans.

The introduction of the Standard has already generated widespread support. Speaking about the Standard, the Rural Affairs Minister said “what happens in the management of our amenity spaces affects us all – the Amenity Standard will help land managers demonstrate that all tasks undertaken are safe, sustainable, legal and at very best practice. The Scottish Government fully supports the Amenity Standard and the wider work of the Amenity Forum and we will continue to work together to encourage a fully integrated approach to weed, pest and disease management in amenity spaces.”.

Professor John Moverley OBE, Chairman of the Amenity Forum, also said “We feel this to be exactly the right time to introduce this Standard which we hope will be sought and demanded from all who operate in amenity management. It will give assurance that work undertaken is of the highest professional standards by those committed to best practice in every aspect of operations. Those who work in amenity management undertake important and essential operations seeking to create safe and healthy amenity and sports spaces fit for purpose. Introduction of the Standard is we believe a major step and demonstrates once again the high levels of professionalism to be found in our sector. We were delighted to launch the Standard at this event in Scotland and look forward to making it a success with the support of all involved”

The Amenity Standard is a bespoke quality management standard that has been developed, as a partnership, by all sides of the amenity sector. Those operating to the Standard will be committed to an integrated approach to amenity management and to the highest professional standards. They will be members of an approved assurance scheme recognised by the Standard. The cost of operating the Standard is covered by fees from providers of these recognised assurance schemes and there will be no extra cost to individual organisations other than their support of the Amenity Forum and through its commitment to best practice.

The Amenity Standard is designed to:

- Provide an industry benchmark
- Provide a basis for continuous improvement
- Focus on quality as an objective
- Provide assurances about the quality of the approved organisation and maintenance of the amenity space
- Ensure that quality assurance scheme operators recognised under this Standard use auditors with technical knowledge and experience of the sector concerned
- Promote confidence in organisations operating and providing resources in the amenity sector by provision of a robust and transparent standard

The Amenity Standard will be operated by the Amenity Forum who will maintain, review and regularly update matters as required. They will audit each scheme operator to quality assure that they are operating to agreed standards. In turn, the scheme operators audit their members and approved organisations to assure that they are meeting the requirements of the Amenity Standard. At its launch, three Assurance Schemes are to be recognised by the Standard – the Property Care Association Scheme for Invasive Weed Management and two schemes offered by BASIS Registration, Lawn Assured and Amenity Assured. The aim is for more schemes to be recognised as the Standard develops so that all sectors of amenity are covered.

The need to move quickly on this is recognised by the sector. Clearly embedding the Amenity Standard will need time; it is not a quick fix. Its introduction will need to be accompanied by a communication strategy both externally and internally. However, if this step is not taken, the great progress made to date in increasing the recognition of the professionalism within the amenity sector may be threatened. It will not always be easy, but it is the right step, at the right time. Hopefully the logo will soon appear on amenity areas across the UK and be upheld with pride by operators. For more information contact

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Communication Links for Reference

www.theamenitystandard.co.uk

[@AmenityStandard](https://twitter.com/AmenityStandard)

Notes to Editors

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

For further information on this press release or the work of the Forum, please contact the Secretary, Kate Hopkins, or the Chairman, Professor John Moverley OBE. Similarly, if you wish to register for future press releases, please let us know.

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