

Edinburgh gets top marks in environmental competition



Judges from around Europe gave Edinburgh's parks, streets and gardens top marks this weekend (Saturday 27 September) as the city grabbed gold for the management of its natural and built environment.

The panel of the prestigious [Entente Florale](#), Europe's biggest environmental competition, was unanimous in the decision to award the capital two awards for efforts to improve local parks and greenspaces at a ceremony held in Budapest, Hungary.

The city won a gold award plus a special prize in recognition of Edinburgh's [Grassmarket Community Project](#). Awarded the 'Lucija Cikes Prize' for inclusion of those with disabilities in green fingered activities, the Grassmarket project is a social enterprise which provides a range of horticultural, recycling, and business activities to improve the confidence and skills of those facing social exclusion in Edinburgh.

This is the first time the capital has represented the UK in the prestigious awards, following on from its success in [Britain in Bloom](#) earlier this year. The city will be awarded with a bronze plaque detailing the achievements, which the Council plans to place on display later this year.

Each summer more than 22,000 cities, towns and villages enter the contest, which judges entries on horticultural achievement, community involvement and responsibility for the environment.



The Rt Hon Lord Provost, Councillor Donald Wilson, commented: “This is a huge accolade for Edinburgh and proof that the city has some of the finest green spaces in Europe. I am delighted that the hard work that is carried out by the Council and the many volunteers and partners that work across the city has been recognised in this way.

“Edinburgh is a stunning city with beautiful parks and green spaces, and we will continue to work towards protecting and enhancing them.”

“It is especially humbling that the Grassmarket Community Project, which takes an innovative approach to supporting some of the city’s most vulnerable citizens, has received special recognition. The project offers mentoring, social enterprise, training and education in a nurturing environment, and helps people develop new skills. I extend my thanks and congratulations to all of those involved in the project.”

Mark Bevan, Head of Campaigns at [Keep Scotland Beautiful](#) said:

“This is a magnificent result for Edinburgh, adding to its appeal as a leading European City. It confirms that the quality of the local environment really matters, for tourism and for local people alike. That’s why the charity, Keep Scotland Beautiful celebrates the very best of community and local authority efforts to improve local environments all over Scotland through our Beautiful Scotland Awards.”

“We have really enjoyed supporting Edinburgh’s efforts and successes over the last three years. The local authority and communities have taken great strides together to enhance the natural environment within the city. We want this fantastic European achievement to encourage more communities to clean up and green up.”

As well as the management and design of the city’s parks and green spaces, judges focused on aspects like the city’s active travel strategy, its attitude to recycling, tourism and leisure and the work of bodies like Historic Scotland, Essential Edinburgh, University of Edinburgh and various community and Friends of Parks groups.

Tommy Steel is workshop manager at the [Grassmarket Community Project](#). He said: “We involve participants to grow a herb garden in Greyfriar’s Kirk and we use the herbs in our training kitchen. By developing their skills in these areas they’re also developing self esteem and confidence.

“Being part of Entente Florale gives them a focus. Taking part in the judging day has given them a real sense of achievement, as they see the fruits of their labour.”

Find out more about Edinburgh’s accolades in the [Entente Florale on the Council website](#).

See the full list of winners for 2014 on the [Entente Florale Europe website](#).