

Flying the Flag



Higginson Park in Marlow celebrate their Green Flag award



The Green Flag Award scheme is the benchmark national standard for parks and green spaces in England and Wales. Each year, our staff commit significant time and effort, supporting our clients to retain and win more awards.

Across the country, the hard work of our clients, our staff and volunteers is recognised as more and more flags are raised in celebration. In 2010, John O'Conner was proud to be associated with the following Green Flag Awards:

Raising the standards in North Herts

Two new Green Flags have been received this year at our North Hertfordshire contract; Norton Common in Letchworth and Priory Park in Royston.

"Getting the Green Flags has been a huge team effort, and we have enjoyed working closely with NHDC, Countryside Management Services and the Friends of Group" commented Gareth Towson, Contract Manager.

Angela Forster, CMS said, "It's fantastic that Norton Common has gained the Green Flag Award and is a credit to the efforts of all the partners involved, especially the Friends and volunteers who have given so much of their time."

We would like to thank Angela Forster and all at CMS and a big thanks to Barbara Crombie and the Friends of Group; both groups put in 138 days of volunteer time at Norton Common.

To mark the event an official Green Flag was raised at a ceremony attended by Cllr Peter Burt, portfolio holder for waste and environment at NHDC, which maintains public spaces throughout the district.



Priory Gardens



Norton Common

The Winners, 2010

- Bedgrove Park - Aylesbury
- Vale Park - Aylesbury
- Higginson Park - Marlow
- Aberford Park - Borehamwood
- King George V Park - Bushey
- Oakmere Park - Potters Bar
- Parkfield - Potters Bar
- Priory Gardens - Royston
- Clarence Park - St Albans
- Sopwell Park - St Albans
- Southern Country Park - Bishops Stortford
- Rothampstead Park - Harpenden
- The Common - Harpenden
- Alexandra Park - Alexandra Palace

In this issue

Page 2:
JOC goes overseas

Page 3:
The Rother 'Masters'

Page 4:
Watford Housing



JOC achieves the international Customer Satisfaction standard

John O'Conner (GM) Ltd has further enhanced customer satisfaction by achieving the internationally recognised British Standard ISO 10002.

John O'Conner now joins a select league of organisations that focus on ensuring customer feedback is processed and systematically dealt with on par with world class standards. ISO 10002 supports the development of a customer-focused environment that is open to feedback, resolving any complaints received, and enhancing our ability to improve customer service and satisfaction.

Operations Director, Neil Cain said, "Customer care is one of our core priorities that is vital to our daily operations and the reputation of our clients. This certification is proof of the significant commitment we have demonstrated in this regard."

The accreditation coincided with our three year integrated management systems review which ended in a positive recommendation for continued registration to ISO 9001 / ISO 14001 / OHSAS 18001. Peter Clegg, (Auditor) commented, "the company continues to show a high level of commitment to improvement."

JOC wins work overseas

As we go to press, John O'Conner (GM) Ltd stands poised to sign a new contract with Isle of Wight Council to deliver integrated grounds maintenance services across the island.

Matt O'Conner, Managing Director said: "I am delighted that we have been selected to deliver this prestigious contract with Isle of Wight Council. This decision reflects our long-standing reputation for quality, commitment and professionalism and a growing track record for innovation in the delivery of efficient and cost effective services for our clients."

Our innovative approach will help the Council meet its financial challenges and introduce operational improvements that respond to the needs and requirements of both Isle of Wight and its residents. The contract is due to commence in January 2011 and we look forward to welcoming on board all the new staff that will transfer to us.

Job Vacancy

INTEGRATED SYSTEMS MANAGER
(S.E.Q. - Health & Safety, Environment and Quality)

We are looking for an experienced and qualified person, with the ability and motivation to become responsible for the maintenance, auditing and communication of the company's Health & Safety, Environment and Quality Systems in accordance with ISO standards and legislation, from our central Hertfordshire base.

You will hold a NEBOSH qualification and able to demonstrate understanding of quality and environmental systems. A full clean driving licence is essential for this position. Closing date for applications is 31st December 2010. For an informal discussion, please contact Matt O'Conner, Managing Director, 01438 717175.

Applications in own style with detailed CV to:
John O'Conner (GM) Limited
2 Great North Road
Welwyn Herts, AL6 0PL, or
recruitment@johnoconner.co.uk



JOC sail to the rescue

Shyam Shah will always remember his 10th birthday. He had been given a super remote control boat and was happily playing with it on the lake at Verulamium park in St. Albans when disaster struck. The boat went out of range of the remote control, careered across the lake and got stuck on one of the islands.

Tears turned to smiles after his mother contacted John O'Conner [GM] Ltd who care for the park. They assured her they would send a team to the rescue. The gardeners turned sailors and paddled out in a their bigger boat to the island. They successfully found the stray boat and after a wash down the boat was returned to Shyam as good as new.



From the top



Matt O'Conner

Welcome to another edition of the seasonal times; it is pleasing to see so much has been going on over the last few months, in and around all of our contracts.

We have had great success with Green Flags which is testament to our close working relationships with our customers and would not have been possible without our skilled teams of dedicated staff, who yet again have shown commitment and support in delivering the goods as and when required. Well done and thank you to all.

Congratulations to Mark Bennett who is celebrating 10 years with the company, Mark is a popular team member on our North Hertfordshire contract responsible for maintaining many of its green spaces.

Also in North Herts we said good by to Garry Watling who has retired with the council after even longer service. We have worked with Garry for well over 15 years and wish him well on his new journey ahead.

In the South, on our Rother contract well done for the hard work and commitment that led to the success with Bexhill in Bloom. The success with Bexhill in Bloom has led the team to make plans for entering even more awards next year so as they say, watch this space...

And finally I am sure we are all pleased that Shyam from St Albans had a happy 10th birthday. This was made all the more memorable by the team in Verulamium Park who turned from gardeners into sailors in order to rescue Shyam's new birthday present, a remote controlled boat which was almost lost on its maiden voyage.

The Rother 'Masters'

The Bexhill In-House Championship

With Bexhill seafront currently undergoing a facelift as part for the town regeneration programme, the seafronts only putting course (The Metropole) will be transformed into an amenity grassed area. As a result, the local team decided, under James Wassels direction, to bid farewell to the course in September with an 'End of Season' in-house Golf Tournament.

The afternoon was a great success, with just about everybody there. After a shotgun start, everyone was an expert: some advising others on how best to take their shot whilst some had sights set (in crouched position!) on the trophy. The winners of the event were steered to success under the Assistant Contract Supervisors (Billy Piggot) skill and leadership (more, it transpired after the event, in rigging the score cards total!).

'Cheating' aside (!!!), everyone enjoyed the event which raised another £60 for our RNLI charity pot, taking the total to date this year to £145.63.



Sean narrowly misses another chance for a double bogey

Mayors Charity Golf Day

Following on from a crash course in the 'Art of Golf' (left) we rallied a team of four to take part in the Mayors (Cllr Jimmy Carroll) Charity Golf Day at our local Cooden Beach course.



The weather played havoc with even the best steered ball. However, we managed to beat the rain to the final hole, and all without any hint of a cardiac arrest.

Again, it was another successful event, with JOC contributing £500 to the Mayors worthy local charities. Thanks to James, Johnny and most of all our captain Fred, for making it a day to remember.



Fred concentrates hard on following through

Bexhill in Bloom

Judges for the 2010 Bexhill in Bloom competition were again impressed by the high standards achieved and the splendid gardens and floral displays which are such a feature of the town. With 37 entries to consider, the judging panel (which included JOC Contracts Manager Sean Towey, David Fitton MBE and Peter Mills from Battle Town Council) had their work cut out.

Sean said, "This is my first time judging for Bexhill in Bloom and with 10 categories to judge, it was an eye-opener to see all the different types of entries. From this experience, on behalf of the avant gardening residents of Bexhill, I am very keen to encourage and promote more entries in future years."



Sean joins the judging at this years Bexhill In Bloom

Notice Board

Congratulations to:

Todd Manning and partner Tanya Cooper on the birth of their baby boy, Oscar - born 2nd September

Arron Smith and Michele Ford on their marriage on 2nd October.



Even during the wedding ceremony Arron struggled to stand unsupported

Happy retirement

We would like to say a big thanks and happy retirement to Gary Watling from North Herts District Council.

Gary has been with NHDC for 37 years and his knowledge of the local area has been invaluable to both NHDC and JOC.

10 years service

Mark started with JOC back in 2000 based in Welwyn as a machine operative. In 2004 he moved onto our North Hertfordshire Contract as a chargehand where he is today.

To recognise his long service Mark was presented with a gift from Contracts Director, Ian Pitkin.



Mark Bennett

Contract spotlight

Watford Community Housing Trust



Our contract with WCHT started in April 2009 and with a great team in place, led by Contracts Manager Paul Miller, the residential green spaces have seen continuous improvement and our team has grown in strength.

WCHT is a 'Community Gateway' - a membership organisation. Tenants and residents opt-in to become a member of the Trust, making them a legal shareholder and giving them full voting rights. The Community Gateway Model allows tenants and residents to not only say what they want but make decisions how services such as grounds maintenance are delivered. Therefore, residents had a significant input into selecting John O'Conner as their provider of choice.

Most importantly, there has been really positive feedback from the residents since we began. Paul attends the tenant association meetings and is keen to ensure that residents are involved and feel a part of the maintenance and improvements in their areas. "We have a great relationship with our client and regular joint site visits so we can both monitor the maintenance," said Paul Miller. "The team work well together and they make sure the work is completed to a high standard at all times."

The contract includes a large number of assisted maintenance gardens which involves regular contact with the residents. To ensure the residents feel secure we have a dedicated team looking after the areas. They get to know the residents and the residents feel happier seeing a familiar, friendly face.



Contract Manager: Paul Miller



Paul and George on site



Colin Wilkes

Employee spotlight -

Colin Wilkes, Grounds Operative

• **How did you get started?**

I started in horticulture through a YTS scheme, then onto a garden centre. I then went on to work at Dacorum Borough Council which led onto this job.

• **What's a normal day for you?**

I catch up with the lads in the morning and check if anything has come up, then off out on my Hayter grass cutting.

• **What's the best part of your job?**

I have worked with some great colleagues and I enjoy the variation of work.

• **What do you do in your spare time?**

I try and chill out, watch some football, I'm a Spurs supporter.

• **What do you find most challenging?**

Changing plans. You need to be flexible as you never know what may come up that day.

• **What's your top tip?**

Keep calm and be ready to change your plans.

