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## Center Parcs retains top UK biodiversity award

In 2007, Center Parcs became the first organisation in the UK to be awarded The Wildlife Trusts' Biodiversity Benchmark standard for its short break locations in Cumbria, Nottinghamshire, Suffolk and Wiltshire. Due to the company's hard work and commitment, it has maintained this standard for the subsequent seven years and once again, following another rigorous audit, Center Parcs has achieved the accreditation again this year.

Awarded in recognition of Center Parcs' continual efforts to protect and enhance the natural environment at its short break locations across the UK,

The Wildlife Trusts' Biodiversity Benchmark is the only certification which recognises organisations' achievements in managing landholdings for wildlife. Similar to other standards for management systems, the Biodiversity Benchmark is composed of a set of detailed requirements which an organisation must be able to meet. Furthermore, it is the first truly recognised endorsement to acknowledge organisations who continually commit to biodiversity improvement.

Leader of the UK's short break market, Center Parcs champions the way forward for the natural environment within the UK tourist and leisure industry.

The five Center Parcs villages across the UK feature a broad range of habitats including mixed woodland, lakes, waterways, wood pasture, heath, acid grassland and meadow. These sites are home to many protected species, including the Red Squirrel at the Whinfell Forest site in Cumbria and the Nightjar at the Sherwood Forest site in Nottinghamshire. Center Parcs is the only organisation to employ a dedicated Red Squirrel Ranger to work with other organisations in Cumbria to preserve and enhance the refuge for red squirrels. The Nightjar, a rare night-hunting bird, is being encouraged to thrive at the Sherwood Forest site where Center Parcs is carrying out major heathland re-creation to provide an ideal habitat for this bird to breed and hunt.

Landscape Asset Manager, Richard Watson, Center Parcs said: *"We are delighted to be accredited with the Biodiversity Benchmark for the 8th year running. A thriving natural environment is the essence of the Center Parcs experience so families can spend their break connecting with each other and the nature around them. Families take great joy in their children's first encounters with wildlife and it is a pleasure and privilege to be part of the team working hard to protect and enhance the forests so they can be enjoyed by families, plants and animals for many years to come."*

Chief Executive, Julian Roughton, Suffolk Wildlife Trust added: *"Center Parcs is an outstanding example of how the tourism and leisure sector can operate with conservation of the natural environment at its core. Their commitment to the environment, and in particular biodiversity, is exemplary and just goes to show what can be achieved when business and conservation work hand-in-hand. Center Parcs truly deserve to be awarded the Biodiversity Benchmark for the 8<sup>th</sup> year running at their Villages, congratulations to everyone involved."*

For more information on the Biodiversity Benchmark visit:

[www.biodiversitybenchmark.org](http://www.biodiversitybenchmark.org)

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## Notes to Editors

1. Center Parcs has five Villages across the UK; Sherwood Forest in Nottinghamshire, Elveden Forest in Suffolk, Longleat Forest in Wiltshire, Whinell Forest in Cumbria and Woburn Forest in Bedfordshire which opened to guests on 6 June 2014
2. As the leader in the UK short break holiday market, Center Parcs regularly achieves average annual occupancy in excess of 97%
3. Center Parcs offers weekend, (Friday to Monday) or midweek (Monday to Friday) breaks and welcomes over 2 million guests each year, with 96% of guests expressing an intention to return
4. The Center Parcs concept is to provide a range of high quality accommodation, shops, restaurants and exceptional leisure facilities, carefully nestled amongst 400 acres of protected forest environment
5. This concept originated in Holland in 1967, with the first UK Center Parcs opening in 1987. Center Parcs is now a separate entity in the UK
6. Center Parcs has been awarded the following accolades since 2008: the Green Business Award for Biodiversity Protection, Visit Britain 5 Star Rating, Hospitality Assured, Biodiversity Benchmark - Land Management, Carbon Trust Standard, Good Spa Guide Award, ISO14001, Investors in People
7. Center Parcs has recently been announced '[Best Family Holiday Provider](#)' in the Tommy's Awards for the eleventh year in a row

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