

Why Join our Quality Assurance Scheme?

High-quality service and facilities are crucial to making Scotland a must-visit, must-return destination. VisitScotland offers support to businesses to ensure that you meet and exceed the high standards expected by your guests. We play a vital role in assessing quality and service standards with our internationally recognised Quality Assurance Scheme.

VisitScotland's Quality Assurance scheme is a benchmark for quality across the tourism industry and operates across accommodation, visitor attractions and food sectors. In Scotland **a high proportion of businesses are already taking part in our quality schemes.**

“Quality is a never ending journey.”

Gordon Morrison, Regional Quality and Tourism Manager, comments “The star award is recognition of quality and provides reassurance to guests. It helps set expectation levels so that a visitor knows what they’re going to get.”

Our scheme is valued by consumers and businesses alike. Research shows that **95% of visitors say the grade given meets their expectations** and 65% said that the star scheme influenced their choice of accommodation or attraction. Bob Downie, Chief Executive of Royal Yacht Britannia says, ““I cannot speak highly enough about the value we attach to VisitScotland’s quality assurance scheme.”

Benefits of participating in VisitScotland’s Quality Assurance Scheme:

- Your visitors know exactly what to expect from you
- Our experienced Quality and Tourism Advisors can support you in maintaining and increasing the quality of your service and facilities.
- You gain a stronger competitive edge
- It helps extend the visitor season because an international market is more likely to travel when the quality is high.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Our Quality Assurance scheme has achieved international recognition, with a wide range of countries consulting us for advice.
- We've developed a range of Welcome Schemes which highlight businesses that cater to specific consumer interests such as cyclists or Golfers.
- Each of our schemes has been developed in partnership with the trade and with the Scottish Consumer Council so it reflects the things that are important to our visitors.
- Scotland is the only country in the world that grades visitor attractions

Scotland's scheme was the first quality -based star scheme in the world. Unlike the facilities-led method of most grading schemes; it provides an objective, consistent approach to grading the quality of the visitor experience. Gordon comments, "Quality Assured businesses get the benefit of the expertise of our Quality and Tourism Advisors (QTAs) who go out every year to hundreds of properties across the country."

Many businesses that take part in our scheme value the opportunity to have an expert in the tourism industry assess their services and facilities. Bob comments, "To have highly trained and experienced assessors walk through our attraction and gauge the customer experience we provide against internationally admired criteria, is of huge importance."

VisitScotland's scheme incorporates a **strong sustainable focus** so that businesses can achieve efficiency and marketing benefits by managing their environmental responsibilities. Our QTAs are aware of the factors that are becoming increasingly important to today's consumers and can help you achieve that **competitive edge**.

Gordon comments, "QTAs pick up on new innovation and what's driving industry standards up. This means we can help businesses benchmark themselves against others." Bob agrees that advisory visits help him to assess where his business is and where things could be improved, "At one level, yes, it is a report card, but more importantly it is a motivational tool, to help inspire us do better over the next 12 months – quality is a never ending journey."



Ann Walsh

Tantallon Bed & Breakfast, Edinburgh

Tantallon Bed & Breakfast is an attractive Victorian home in the Grange area of Edinburgh, within walking distance of the city centre. The small property, which boasts two sunny, quiet double en-suite rooms, has been part of VisitScotland's Quality Assurance scheme since 2003.

Ann Walsh, proprietor comments:

"I feel quality is one of the most important elements of a tourism business - from quality of welcome to quality of furnishings to quality of produce - it runs through everything. You've got to enjoy quality; if you don't, you shouldn't be in the tourism industry. Once I've made an improvement to my property I get a sense of achievement and pride because I know I'm delivering quality to my customers. Visitors notice good quality furniture, nice towels and comfortable mattresses and they mention these on Tripadvisor reviews.

"You've got to enjoy quality; if you don't, you shouldn't be in the tourism industry."

"It's easy to become complacent, but if you know you have a VisitScotland Quality and Tourism advisor visit coming up then you have a standard to maintain. After my visit, I always have a list of things I've discussed with my QTA so I know what I have to do. I think it's a huge mistake not to take part in VisitScotland's QA scheme. Although it's daunting to have someone come in to your property and inspect it, it's something to embrace rather than see as a threat. Your QTA is on your side and is just there to help you.

"I find that my QTA just gets what I'm trying to do. It's nice to speak to someone who isn't a visitor, but a person who works in the industry like me and appreciates what I do - it's very encouraging and comforting. My QTA can pick up on things I may not have noticed on my own because of her experience. You can really put a value on advice and appreciation."



Kathy Bichan

Buxa Farm Chalets Orphir/Haiton, Orkney

Buxa Farm Chalets includes three Norwegian style chalets and a converted croft house on 20 acres of unspoilt land between Houton and Stromness in Orphir. The accommodation, which has a 25% visitor return rate, has been part of VisitScotland's Quality Assurance Scheme since April 2004.

Kathy Bichan, proprietor comments:

“We offer affordable luxury in idyllic surroundings with the aim of exceeding customer expectations so much that visitors come back again and again. My self-catering chalets were completed in May 2004. I used the scheme criteria pack as a reference in deciding what was needed in order to achieve a four star grading. When I converted an old croft house adjoining the chalets in April 2010 I decided to market that property to families and so applied for the **Children's Welcome Scheme**. I was the first accommodation property in Orkney to achieve that award.

“The VisitScotland Quality Assurance scheme keeps me on my toes.”

“Quality is important to my business - I pick furnishings and fittings that are attractive but durable. Many of the comments in the visitor books state that I provide everything visitors need and more. The VisitScotland Quality Assurance scheme keeps me on my toes in providing and maintaining quality accommodation.

“I am impressed by the extensive advertising that VisitScotland does. Whenever I see a television advert for VisitScotland, I feel a sense of pride in the fact that I'm part of a bigger picture.”