

### **BEST SELF SERVE ACCOMMODATION**

The self-serve sector covers a wide variety of customer expectations and requirements designed to allow the customer to tailor their stay around their needs. Serviced apartments, hostels, camping facilities etc provide very different experiences, but what unites them is the commitment of the accommodation providers to offer a level of comfort and access to facilities to match the aspirations of their customers

**Visitor Experience:** This category celebrates the finest examples of Scotland's renowned reputation for exemplary service and experience to the visitor. For Self Serve Accommodation providers that demonstrate exemplary levels of customer service and satisfaction.

**Who should enter:** Participants in VisitScotland's Quality Assurance scheme or similar recognised scheme and operate a Self Serve Accommodation ranging from camping, caravanning, chalet, apartments etc.

**What the judges are looking for:** A clear strategy, a proven track record and evidence of exceptional customer care. Evidence that provide both qualitative and quantitative measures.

### **QUESTIONS**

**Q1** - Provide a general overview of the nature and history of your accommodation. Provide 2 examples of what you have learned from out with your business and from your operating experience to deliver the best customer care.

**Q2** - What services and facilities do you offer to enhance the tourism experience for your guests? Demonstrate how staff have gone that extra mile? Explain what positive impact you have recorded for your business. Provide evidence of standards being achieved.

**Q3** - Describe the key features of your business plan, covering objectives, strategies and outcomes. Provide evidence by highlighting an increase in average spend, any loan reductions, forward bookings compared to previous year, percentage increase, customer numbers etc. Explain how your business has experienced growth and how you plan to increase growth in the future?

**Sustainable tourism is the commitment by businesses to generating a low impact on the surrounding environment and community by acting responsibly while generating income and employment for the local economy and aiding social cohesion.**

**Q4** - Provide examples of how your business demonstrates sustainability? For example; do you use local suppliers? Do you employ local staff? Do you have water saving measures in place?

**Q5** - Explain how you achieve and maintain quality customer service throughout your business. Provide examples of any changes that have been introduced as a result of customer feedback. How do you identify and provide for people with specific needs? How do you identify staff development needs and how do you implement this?

#### **NEXT STEPS**

Once you have completed your entry are happy with it, the next step is to submit this. In order to submit your entry, follow these procedures:

- Upload it to the Scottish Thistle Awards website [www.scottishthistleawards.co.uk](http://www.scottishthistleawards.co.uk)
- Log in if you have already created an account or click the register button and complete the information
- Scroll to the category you are entering
- Click on Enter now
- Complete Mandatory Fields
- Select which region you are entering
- You can enter more than one region, providing your submission demonstrates you operate in that region. You must complete an entry for each region you are entering
- Upload your main entry document by clicking browse button to search for your document
- If you have supporting documents, click into browse to search for supporting document. You can do this for up to 3 documents not exceeding 5mb each upload
- You can then either click on save to save your entry for editing later **OR**
- Click on Submit if you are completely happy with your entry
- Once you have submitted you can no longer access your entry and it will be forwarded for judging.
- Repeat the above steps for every additional entry
- **If you are entering on behalf of another party, you must have their permission before submitting the entry**

#### **THE REGIONS ARE AS FOLLOWS**

**South and Central East** - Edinburgh City Council, East Lothian District Council, Mid Lothian Council, West Lothian Council, Scottish Borders Council, Fife Council, Perth & Kinross Council, Stirling Council, Clackmannanshire Council, Falkirk Council

**Highlands & Islands** - Highland Council, Moray Council, Comharile nan Eilean Siar, Orkney Islands Council, Shetland Islands Council

**North East** - Dundee City Council, Angus Council, Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council

**South and Central West** - East Ayrshire Council, North Ayrshire Council, South Ayrshire Council, Dumfries & Galloway Council, Glasgow City Council, Renfrewshire Council, East Renfrewshire Council, Inverclyde Council, West Dunbartonshire Council, East Dunbartonshire Council, North Lanarkshire Council, South Lanarkshire Council, Argyll & Bute Council

#### TIPS TO REMEMBER

- **Read the questions** - Read all the questions before starting to gain an understanding of what the panel judges are hoping to read from your entry
- **Answer the questions** - Answer all the questions clearly demonstrating specific areas when asked - give the judges a sense of what was innovative or creative.
- **Keep it simple and clear** - Be clear, specific and structured. Ensure your entry is concise and easy to understand. Focus on the facts, avoid jargon and be consistent. Make it easy for the judges to spot what is important.
- **Draft** - Write a draft of your entry first and email it to others within the business who can act as a fresh pair of eyes and flag up anything you may have forgotten.
- **Evidence** - Provide solid evidence against what has been asked. This will give your entry the best chance. Include measurable outcomes such as increased revenue, return on investment backed up by facts and figures.
- **Honesty** - Be honest in your entry. No business or individual is perfect, address challenges and don't be afraid to highlight how the business has tackled challenges and issues.
- **Supporting documents** - Make sure any supporting documents are relevant and do not include extra information just for the sake of it. Supporting documents should demonstrate success with facts and details.
- **Be fervent** - Your entry should come across how passionate you are about what you have achieved. Give your entry to someone else to read who will be objective. If they don't find it impressive, chances are the judges won't either. Your entry should show why your project/business is important, what it has achieved and what's exciting.
- **Proof read** - proof read your entry.
- **Give it to someone else to read carefully** - preferably someone who is not as close to your business as you are. Check spelling mistakes and grammatical errors, as this could take the gloss off an otherwise solid entry. And avoid jargon!
- **Start early** - Don't leave this until the last minute, start early to give yourself plenty time to put together a well thought out and structured entry.

#### **Closing date for entries is 5pm on Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2012**

- Entries will be judged after closing date
- Winners from each region will become the finalists of the national awards