

Quality Assurance Scheme to have increased focus on the visitor experience

Visit Wales will soon begin to roll out revised Quality Assurance guidelines – ensuring that Quality Assurance Schemes remain relevant and informative as well as supporting businesses and consumers in a globally changing and competitive marketplace. The revised guidelines follow a review undertaken by the national tourism organisations of Wales, England, Scotland & Northern Ireland and the AA. The review was called for due to changing trends for both businesses and visitors – with greater use of user-generated content; online booking engines and consumer review scoring systems as well as the greater diversity of accommodation now on offer.

Following customer and industry feedback, the revised schemes will see more emphasis on the quality of experience with less emphasis on the provision of facilities. The roll-out of the new criteria for the serviced and self-catering sectors will begin in April 2018 with the aim of increasing participation in the various schemes.

As part of the shift in the Quality Assurance approach, Visit Wales will phase-in new signs and materials to enable businesses to showcase their quality star-rating to guests. The suite of new materials, which have been updated to reflect the award-winning Cymru Wales brand style, include new starred plaques; contemporary certificates; and digital badges and logos. Businesses do not need to request the new materials – they will be issued and introduced over the summer; and customers are advised to look out for the Draig Goch logo on hotels, B&Bs, guest and bunk-houses when they book, as a trusted mark of quality.

In visiting the Lake Vyrnwy Hotel today [Monday 26 March] the Tourism Minister said:

“Quality is integral to the future success of tourism in Wales – and one way of ensuring we meet with customer expectations and demand in addition to helping the industry strive to be the best they possibly can – is through our Quality Assurance scheme. Although it was acknowledged at a UK level that the schemes needed to change, it was also the consensus across all national tourism organisations that offering an independent assessment of facilities and services is still important. Our grading schemes are about confidence – confidence in what we have to offer, confidence in how we are offering it and confidence that those who visit Wales will experience a high quality, memorable experience.

“I’m delighted to be in mid Wales today – at the beginning of what will hopefully be a busy Easter for the industry. The impression

I've had over the last few months is of an industry full of commitment and enthusiasm and I believe that by working in partnership we can build on the success we have achieved in recent years. I've also recently met with the chairs of the four Regional Tourism Fora, and I'm confident that this structure works for the future development and marketing of tourism. I've had the opportunity today to reassure colleagues in mid Wales that I have no intention of changing this structure. I wish the industry a busy and prosperous Easter."

Anthony Rosser UKHospitality Cymru said:

"This revised scheme further recognises the world class visitor experience the Hospitality industry delivers across the whole of Wales and a project that works towards the maintenance of these standards is to be welcomed, the emphasis being to better reflect the guest experience as opposed to the rigid, physical aspects of a business.

"Any Scheme that aims to provide more support for the industry to improve and develop is also to be welcomed as continued investment in our businesses is vital to attracting visitors and maintaining and building market share in the face of ever increasing competition in the UK and abroad."

Adrian Barsby, Wales Tourism Alliance Chair said:

"Given the seismic changes we have seen over the last ten years to the way our customers research and book their holidays or short breaks, we welcome this much awaited review and enhancement of the Quality Assurance scheme. Increased emphasis on the experience as opposed to the material facilities is in line with today's customer expectations. Whilst we all recognise the customer is increasingly relying on previous visitors reviews online, these do not give the same assurance as the expertise provided by a dedicated Visit Wales tourism professional. The QA scheme is there to provide that additional baseline re-assurance to the prospective customer that they are making the right choice. We look forward to the benefits it will undoubtedly bring."