

Scottish Thistle Awards: Responsible Tourism Support Guide

Responsible Tourism focuses on a collaborative approach for re-building and growing the value of tourism, in a way that makes better places for people to live and visit, in every corner of Scotland. Responsible Tourism maximises the positive benefits and minimising the negative impact of tourism for everyone, including host communities as well as the environment.

This guide will provide further background information and suggestions of activities with regards to the four priority areas of responsible tourism in Scotland, which you may want to reflect in your answer.

➤ **Low Carbon economy and environmental sustainability**

Tackling climate change is the biggest long-term challenge facing Scottish tourism. Incorporating low carbon, environmentally friendly practices into how we do business is key when developing a more sustainable and resilient business, and destination as a whole.

As relevant, please demonstrate how you are taking action in this area. You may wish to touch on aspects including:

- Measures undertaken in your business to increase energy efficiency (e.g. insulation, glazing, heating controls, low energy lighting and lighting controls, behaviour change) and use of low carbon and/or renewable energy
- Promotion of low-carbon transport to get to and around Scotland (e.g. Electric Vehicles, Public Transport)
- Where you run a vehicle(s) as part of your business, measures taken to reduce carbon emissions and change to low carbon vehicles
- Promotion of Active Travel, such as walking and cycling, as activities and a way of getting around
- If food and drink is provided and/or promoted, do you ensure seasonal, local food and drink is prioritised, as well as plant-based options are provided/promoted, and food waste is minimised.
- Reducing waste overall, particularly single use plastics, where possible
- Measurement, monitoring and reporting of your carbon emissions

➤ **Inclusion**

Accessibility and inclusivity, in the simplest terms possible, mean Scotland **being a place for everyone**, working to ensure that no one faces barriers to visiting Scotland, with equal access to all tourism opportunities. This could include people with hearing loss, mental or visual impairments, wheelchair users, senior travellers, families with young children, and LGBTQ community among others.

As relevant, please demonstrate how you are taking action in this area. You may wish to touch on aspects including:

- What you have done to make your product or service accessible and available to everyone?
- How do you ensure potential customers know what you have available, e.g. do you offer autism or dementia friendly services, accessible bedrooms, tours in British Sign Language or Audio tours?
- Do you publish an accessibility guide to help people to plan their visit?
- Do you have an ongoing commitment to staff training on welcoming all customers?

➤ **Thriving Communities**

A warm Scottish Welcome from our local communities is crucial for the industry, as it's one of the top reasons for repeat, as well as first-time visitors. Resetting tourism in a responsible way is to ensure we all work with the local communities, giving visitors as well as locals fantastic experiences, while ensuring to maximise tourism's positive impact on communities across Scotland and throughout the year.

As relevant, please demonstrate how you are taking action in this area. You may wish to touch on aspects including:

- How your business invests in your local community, e.g. through employment, training, use and promotion of local products and services?
- Has your business engaged with local projects, bringing people together, and the benefits this has had to your local community?
- Have you repurposed your business to serve the local community differently during the Covid19 pandemic?
- Have you engaged with communities to inform the development and/or delivery of a tourism product or service?

➤ **Natural and Cultural Heritage**

Scotland has an international reputation for its natural and cultural heritage – scenery, landscape and wildlife, as well as our castles, arts, crafts, music, literature and food and drink. It is what makes us unique and attractive, therefore it is important to promote a responsible enjoyment of our heritage ensuring our visitors have quality, memorable experiences, while minimising any negative impact, in particular on sensitive environments.

As relevant, please demonstrate how you are taking action in this area. You may wish to touch on aspects including:

- How is your business promoting and enhancing Scottish intangible cultural heritage and traditions that make Scotland so unique? (e.g. craft, music, dance or language)

- How is local food and drink offered and/or promoted (where applicable) – How do you make the best use of locally produced food and drink? How do you make sure that your team have the product knowledge to promote it? How do you let your customers know about it?
- How do you promote Scotland’s natural heritage – the landscapes, marine and coastal areas, waterways and wildlife – to your customers?
- How do you encourage responsible enjoyment of our natural and cultural heritage in your customers? And, where applicable, ensure any negative impacts on sensitive sites are minimised (e.g. making use of the Responsible Tourism campaign materials to engage the visitor, being mindful of a site’s carrying capacity and limiting numbers if necessary)?
- How do you support the protection or regeneration of natural habitats for biodiversity? (e.g. wildlife friendly gardening, supporting conservation and regeneration projects and organisations)

➤ **Communication and Collaboration**

You may also want to consider including in your answer how you are communicating and promoting your responsible tourism commitment and actions (e.g. responsible tourism policy, green certification) to your customers and staff, as well as how you are engaging staff and customers to participate and support your commitment. Any activity which has benefited from collaboration and knowledge sharing with other businesses, organisations, destinations, etc can also be highlighted.

To find out more about Responsible Tourism and the priority areas , why it is important, what it means for businesses, what the key benefits are and advice and support available, please see VisitScotland’s Responsible Tourism pages at <https://www.visitscotland.org/supporting-your-business/responsible-tourism>