

Quality Assessment Guidance – Park/Garden/Trails

Includes: Country Parks, Parks, Gardens, Trail sites

ASVA Quality is a scheme designed to support the Scottish Visitor Attractions industry in providing high-quality and memorable experiences for visitors.

The design of this scheme and the associated assessment parameters is unique: We have incorporated extensive industry consultation, as well as a first-of-its kind visitor survey, to ensure that ASVA Quality looks at what matters most to both you and your visitors. Please use the following document in conjunction with the [Terms & Conditions](#) which covers commitments and statutory obligations.

How do we measure Quality

One of our advisors will conduct a Quality assessment visit every year or every other year based on your membership option. Within the visit, they will evaluate each aspect of your park/garden as an incognito visitor, based on visitor expectations of quality and best practices. During the assessment, your advisor will carefully evaluate key areas, always with the goal of helping you enhance and refine your park/garden. You will then receive comprehensive feedback and advice to enhance quality standards even further!

The assessment is entirely objective—no judgments are made based on personal preferences.

The goal of the assessment is to enhance quality while preserving the unique character, style, and individuality of Scottish Attractions.

Scoring Breakdowns

During your visit, your advisor will evaluate all aspects of your attraction and assign a score from **0 to 10** for each element assessed:

0-5	Unacceptable
5-6	Satisfactory
7	Good
8	Very Good
9-10	Excellent

At the end of the visit, an overall percentage score will be calculated for the park/garden, as well as for each individual section. This percentage score relates to a Star rating and to achieve a Quality Scheme Star rating, your attraction must achieve an overall percentage of 66% or above (2 Star band):

No Grade Awarded	1 – 65%
2 Star Award	66 – 71%
3 Star Award	72 – 78%
4 Star Award	79 – 85%
5 Star Award	86 – 100%

Scoring sections

There are 6 possible key scoring areas which will contribute to your overall star award outcome, as per the diagram below. Note that where a scoring section or individual scoring element is not relevant to your attraction, this will not be scored and will **not** negatively impact your overall award potential.



***Staff Attitude / Efficiency / Knowledge** – staff interactions at any point during the visitor journey are incredibly important in ensuring a positive experience. As such, staff interactions will be assessed within the relevant main scoring areas (Arrival, Experience / Attraction, Food & Beverage, and Retail). Where there is a staff interaction via phone, email, or webchat prior to your assessment, this will be assessed within the Pre-Arrival booking section. Assessment of staff interactions across all areas of your park/garden will include your advisor considering a range of factors around attitude and efficiency / knowledge, to arrive at an overall staff score per scoring section. Further information around what your advisor will look for within staff interactions is detailed later within this guidance.

***Cleanliness** – housekeeping and cleanliness standards across all areas of your attraction are also incredibly important in ensuring a positive experience. As such, cleanliness will be assessed within the relevant main scoring areas (Arrival, Experience/Attraction, Food & Beverage, Retail, and Toilets).

We know that not all attractions provide every service or facility as above. If a section is not applicable to your park/garden, it will be excluded from the assessment process, and this does not negatively impact your overall score/Star rating.

What the advisor assesses

This section provides a detailed overview of the factors your advisor will consider when awarding scores that contribute to your overall Star grading.

All assessments are conducted within the context of the specific attraction.

Expectations will vary based on the size and nature of the attraction; however, **the fundamental principles remain consistent** and regardless of whether your park/garden is large or small, these core principles guide the assessment to ensure a memorable and satisfying visitor experience. Key themes should be in evidence such as excellent visitor service, high standards of maintenance, safe and enjoyable activities, and well-presented, clean facilities.

Cleanliness – assessed within each relevant section (Arrival, Food & Beverage, Retail & Toilets). Litter & Waste Management assessed within ‘Experience / Attraction)

A **clean and well-maintained environment is essential** to delivering a high-quality visitor experience. Attention to detail and consistency in cleanliness standards reflect the professionalism and dedication of your park/garden.

- Bin provision, usage, and any litter evident around the park/garden.
- Evidence of regular and effective cleaning schedules. Evidence of regular checks in all central areas throughout the day.
- Evidence of attention to detail, including touchpoints
- Cleanliness of windows and window fixtures
- Cleanliness of internal floors and tidiness of internal spaces
- F&B areas - crockery, cutlery, cutlery containers, drinking glasses, and drink dispensers’ cleanliness and hygiene. Cleanliness of food display/service areas and seating areas.
- Retail - The advisor will evaluate general cleanliness, including dusting of retail displays, merchandise, clean flooring, clean counter tops, door handles, card machines etc.
- The cleanliness of toilet facilities is a key area for visitors - Walls, floors, handles, sanitary ware, taps, wastes, extractor fans, toilet brushes, and waste bins.

Pre-Arrival

This section evaluates ease of use of the website, and the accuracy and clarity of information provided to visitors before their visit. This includes details shared through

your **website, social media channels, and any printed materials** such as leaflets or brochures.

- Depth and accuracy of visitor information
- Functionality and ease of use of website and/or app
- Booking procedures (if applicable) and ease of use
- Accessibility of website and provision of Access & Inclusion guidance for attraction
- How to find you
- Foreign language provision

Arrival

This section assesses the **overall visitor experience upon arrival**. This extends to access gates, and any initial arrival point to the experience such as a visitor centre (including external building elements and the arrival/reception desk area internally if in place).

Key considerations include:

First Impressions / ‘Kerb Appeal / Car Park’

- Roads, car parks, accessible parking bays, paths, grounds, and steps.
- Quality and condition of surfacing, and ease of navigation.
- Lighting provision
- Buildings maintenance, quality, and ‘Kerb Appeal.’

External Signage

Includes assessment of initial signage externally on and around the visitor centre and/or entrance gates.

- Range of information including opening times, pricing, and indication of on-site facilities such as cafes or toilets
- Quality and condition of signage

Design & Flow / Ease of Use

When assessing ‘Ease of Use’ within the arrival area, it is important to **consider the needs of all visitors - including pushchairs and wheelchair users**.

Key questions include:

- Is the Arrival area **easily navigable** for all visitors, including those with mobility aids?
- How is the **flow of visitors managed**? Are there effective operational management arrangements in place, such as separate arrival points for groups, or separate entrance and exit etc which help create a comfortable and accessible arrival experience for all visitors.

Visitor Information/Signage (Internal arrival areas)

Includes internal signage within the visitor centre arrival / reception area (provision, quality, and condition), and any orientation tools used by the park/garden upon arrival, including:

- Directional waymarking in visitor centre or arrival / reception area.
- Site maps (static, digital, or handout), 'You are here' tools.
- Staff guidance and support in commencing the experience.
- Branding and Quality of signage
- Clarity of signage to direct visitors to the welcome desk/tickets, toilets etc.
- Clarity of any appropriate pricing information at entry points/welcome desk.
- Use of clear fonts and accessible colours/use of pictograms
- Orientation of site offered (all formats assessed)

Internal Decor, Fixture & Fittings

If visitor centre is in place, this will include arrival/reception area, and any fixtures and fittings relating to the welcome desk and surrounding areas.

- The quality and condition of all decorative elements assessed.
- The quality and condition of all fixtures and fittings assessed, includes lighting and heating.

Staff Welcome / Attitude / Efficiency

Likely to be scored in parks/gardens where there is a visitor centre or designated arrival/welcome point.

- Quality of the staff welcome to the attraction. Staff should have a friendly demeanour and show genuine enthusiasm for the park/garden. Pro-activity in engaging their visitors and anticipating their needs. Ensure visitors feel valued in all areas of the attraction from arrival through to departure.
- Queue Management

- Staff efficiency of any admissions process is smooth and demonstrates awareness of the needs of the visitor.
- Ticket or receipt should be offered if appropriate, along with comprehensive scene setting for the rest of the visit and orientation of the site given. Suggest any must see's, tour times or similar, and any temporary closures. Consider upselling (booking for lunch perhaps). Excellent knowledge of all areas of the park/garden demonstrated.
- **Visitors tell us** that the arrival interaction is where proactivity is most important to them, to set them up with all relevant information for enjoying the park/garden at their own pace.

Staff Appearance

Staff are the 'face' of your attraction and therefore should be well presented and wear appropriate clothing and present themselves in a manner that aligns with the image you wish to project.

- While staff are not necessarily required to wear uniforms, **visitors tell us** that staff should be easily identifiable and distinguishable from visitors in a busy attraction setting.
- **85% of visitors surveyed told us** that the quality and style of staff uniforms had either 'major impact' or 'some impact' on their impressions of the overall attraction.

Access and Inclusion

An assessment of all provisions in place to ensure the park/garden is accessible and inclusive to all, catering to a variety of requirements. Considerations such as (but not limited to):

- Foreign language provision
- Accessibility of physical spaces, particularly for wheelchair/buggy users.
- Social inclusion policies
- Partner with local transport authorities to create access routes. Readily available accessible parking conveniently located.
- Accessible facilities
- Any community or youth activities / policies

This section assesses key aspects of the main experience within the park/garden. This includes all elements within the main outdoor park/garden areas, pathways, and any additional internal exhibition space within the visitor centre if in place. A hugely important aspect of the main experience will be the maintenance and presentation of the park/garden, and how any points of interest are highlighted to visitors for further engagement. Consider that today's visitors are increasingly informed and discerning, often comparing their experiences with those offered by top international attractions.

Design & Flow / Ease of Use

Visitors tell us they do not want to feel that they are 'doing it wrong.' 48% of visitors surveyed told us that they wanted the freedom to be able to self-navigate their experience, meaning that the design and flow is of vital importance.

This scoring element will include an evaluation of how the park/garden works for visitors/the volume and movement of visitors throughout the experience. Have you done all that you can to assist in the movement of visitors?

- Assessment of the design of the main park/garden areas, and any visitor flow management measures in place where there are pinch points, and if appropriate: such as booking only, extra staff during busy times, one-way systems etc.
- If internal exhibitions are in place, known bottleneck exhibits may be timed entry / booking only; however, use of this technique should be limited as **only 6% of visitors** surveyed showed positivity towards this method.
- Ensure layouts are coherent, with clear positioning and sequence of pathways, or displays and exhibits - **Visitors tell us** if the layout is confusing this negatively impacts their visit.
- Capacity management
- Route through the main body of the park / garden, including within or around any features.
- How all areas within the park / garden work in terms of the ease of use for all types of visitors.
- Space around and between any obstacles such as features, gates, bridges etc and then flow onward to any other areas of the attraction such as retail/F&B/toilets/exit.
- Interaction space and comfort for all additional elements or informative interpretation etc.

Visitor Information/Signage

- The advisor will look at the use of directional signs, finger post signs, orientation boards, plans and display boards.
- Route through the main experience should be clear in terms of signage and/or verbal guidance.
- With the benefit of all the above a visitor can view all areas of the experience and feels comfortable that all areas have been viewed. **Visitors tell us** that clear signage is valued, it allows visitors to orientate themselves and feel in control of their experience.
- An assessment of how practical and effective the positioning of signage is. Signs should be well-maintained, durable, and consistently updated with accurate information and directions. Signs should be easy to read, a clear font, and sharp contrast between text and background.
- Temporary or handwritten signs should be avoided if they create a poor impression.

Path Maintenance

- All paths and path networks within the park / garden
- Quality of path surfacing, appropriate to the attraction.
- Condition of path. Are there potholes and/or divots, is the path muddy with no traction support installed.
- Bordering and clarity of path borders
- Where there are steep areas, are there appropriate supporting elements such as handrails or steps created. Is visitor safety considered?

Grounds Maintenance & Presentation

- Advisors will take into consideration that many parks/gardens may have wilder areas, or wildflower fields / meadows to promote biodiversity. These will not be expected to be manicured but should still have evident maintenance and control for higher scores.
- Assessment of maintenance of grassland, defined lawns, flower beds, woodland, hedgerows.
- Fencing and gates
- Lighting if appropriate to attraction

Features / Playparks

- Playparks and / or adventure playgrounds (Quality & Condition)
- Any outdoor exercising equipment

- Any seating, picnic benches and/or other visitor usage features such as permanent BBQ stations (Provision, Quality & Condition)
- Other interactives or features of interest such as glass/greenhouses, mazes, statues, fountains, bandstands, contained dog runs etc.

Heritage / Flora & Fauna information

A key feature of any attraction is the uniqueness and appeal of the story it tells and a memorable narrative. Within a park/garden setting, this will be information provided around key heritage and flora/fauna features around the grounds. Where a park/garden has a visitor centre with a dedicated heritage exhibition space, this will also be included within this score:

- If a dedicated heritage exhibition space is offered - do the exhibits excite, stimulate interest, educate, and provide engagement? Assessment of any interactive and immersive technologies - digital innovation and how well this has been implemented.
- Range and quality of formats and methods of interpretation and information provision (leaflets, around the park/garden and in any dedicated exhibition space)
- Any interpretation offering engagement and information about any Heritage Features or Flora & Fauna around the park / garden. E.g. interpretation boards, plaques, handouts, or QR codes / app info. Provision, quality, and condition of any supporting materials.
- Any guided tour element, or proactive information provided by staff.

Staff Engagement – Presence / Attitude

- Staff should be visible within the key and central park/garden areas, with a strong presence. They should demonstrate an awareness of varying visitor needs and abilities and should tailor engagement to suit the visitor. A key staff skill should be in reading the level of proactivity that each visitor wants or needs. **Visitors surveyed** gave a wide mix of responses in the level of proactivity they wanted from staff in the main experience, highlighting that this aspect is highly individualised and down to preference of each visitor (so long as proactivity was experienced on arrival).
- Any relevant additional information should be offered, to compliment the interpretive elements in place – aid the visitor in engaging with all that is on offer, adding value for the visitor, be open and receptive to visitor enquiries/engagement.

- Where possible, staff should offer a final departure engagement or presence, creating a lasting positive final impression of the attraction for visitors. Further onward journey and area Tourism advice may be offered.
- As standard, staff should present a positive demeanour and show genuine enthusiasm for the attraction.

Staff Appearance

Staff are the ‘face’ of your attraction and therefore should be well presented and wear appropriate clothing and present themselves in a manner that aligns with the image you wish to project. **85% of visitors tell us** that staff appearance/quality of outfits worn is an important marker for their overall impression of the attraction.

- While staff are not necessarily required to wear uniforms, they should be easily identifiable and distinguishable from visitors in a busy attraction setting. This might be accomplished by staff simply all wearing the same colour (uniform in look) and using branded name badges. Can your staff/volunteers be easily spotted as such by visitors?

Access and Inclusion

Your advisor will assess how inclusive the park/garden is and/or what plans are in place to move forward with this. Not all actions are appropriate for all attractions, but some considerations should be:

- Inclusion across all visitor types and requirements
- Staff accessibility and EDI training and confidence
- Foreign language provision.
- Accessibility & comfort for a range of needs
- Digital inclusion / Wi-Fi availability on-site
- Sensory friendly designs
- Accessible play areas
- Cultural and social outreach policies and activities
- Youth & Education Outreach

Food & Beverage

The advisor will make every effort to assess all F&B outlets if an attraction has more than one, including any pop-up vans or similar.

Visitors tell us having a Food & Beverage offer on site is important to their experience. (73% deemed it either extremely important, or very important).

Design & Flow / Ease of Use / Visitor Information & Signage

How the F&B outlet works for visitors / the volume and movement of visitors throughout the space, at the counter or within the seating area. Have you done all that you can to assist in the movement of visitors?

- Signage letting visitors know if it is counter or table service.
- Queue management
- Can the visitor manoeuvre comfortably around the facility, including between seating?
- Counter service should have a logical layout.
- Counter or a section of the counter should be accessible to people of short stature, wheelchair users and children.
- Items on self-service counters should be clearly visible, priced and within the visitors reach.

Menu Presentation

- Menus should be available online, to allow visitors to view the offer and make the choice to eat with you. **57% of visitors surveyed told us** that viewing an appealing menu online makes them more likely to choose to visit that attraction.
- Positioning and availability of menus throughout the attraction
- Availability and positioning of specials boards
- Quality of presentation, and branding. The quality and condition of whichever method you have chosen will be assessed.
- Any printed menus should be clean and well presented.
- Accessibility of your menus – clear font, large print available, Braille

Quality, Range & Presentation of food & drink

- The variety and range of the produce on offer, are you catering to all tastes and budgets?
- Range of diets catered for – vegetarian, vegan, gluten free etc.
- The quality of the produce available, look at local produce and highlighting these.
- The level of culinary skill demonstrated, care and flare taken in presentation of dishes, serving temperatures, and crockery used to create visual appeal to enhance your visitor's experience.
- Display and freshness of items in chill/display cabinets.

- Self-service hot food is well presented, freshly prepared and regularly topped up.

Staff Attitude / Efficiency / Knowledge

- Any service transaction should be efficient and smooth for the visitor. Queue management should be pro-active. Staff should be flexible and adapt to visitors' requests/needs. Comprehensive knowledge of the menu and F&B area should be demonstrated, with cross selling or upselling considered – leading to increased revenue stream. Receipts should be offered. In self-service/counter, condiments/cutlery/water/glasses etc should all be pointed out. Satisfaction checks should be made with diners, and tables cleared promptly and efficiently.
- There should be adequate staff presence to ensure a smooth catering service for visitors.
- All F&B staff should present a positive demeanour, and show genuine enthusiasm for the catering service, as well as the wider attraction.

Staff Appearance

As with other areas within the attraction and mentioned under other sections above:

- In addition, within catering staff should wear clean aprons, branded would be worthwhile, to ensure a cohesive link with the attraction, long hair tied back and suitable footwear for a food environment.

Décor, Fixtures & Fittings

- Floors, walls, windows, fixtures, fittings, crockery, table appointment, heating, lighting & ventilation – all assessed for quality and condition.

Access and Inclusion

- Do your menus cater to a range of dietary requirements?
- Are allergens clearly identified, and are staff sufficiently trained in providing accurate information to customers.
- Are there sufficient procedures in place to prevent cross-contamination of allergens.
- Is the F&B space easy to navigate for those with mobility aids or pushchairs?
- Provision for babies and toddlers – e.g. highchairs and ability to warm bottles
- Menus should have appropriate text to background contrast, and attractions should consider large print options.

Retail

Design & Flow/Ease of Use

- How does the retail area work for visitors/the volume and movement of visitors throughout the space, at the sales desk, browsing the merchandise.
- Have you done all that you can to assist in the movement of visitors?
- Use of retail space: single purpose or multi use space.

Merchandise - Range, Quality & Presentation

- Range of merchandise via expectation
- Appropriateness to the experience & quality of the offering. **Visitors surveyed tell us** that souvenirs and items linked to the attraction are a key focus of what they are looking for.
- Quality & Condition of displays and sales materials used.
- Consideration given to placement of products to ensure all visitors can browse.
- Eye catching presentation to draw visitors in

Staff Attitude / Efficiency / Knowledge

- Staff should be clearly available for assistance if required and should be skilled in reading each visitor to determine the appropriate level of proactivity in offering browsing support. Multi-buy offers or cross selling opportunities should be highlighted by staff.
- Knowledge of the retail area and merchandise, queue management, smooth and efficient transaction, unprompted additional services offered – bag, gift wrap (if appropriate), VAT reclaim, onward postal service, receipt offered.
- Staff should present a positive demeanour, and show genuine enthusiasm for the retail offering, as well as the wider park/garden.

Staff Appearance

Staff are the ‘face’ of your attraction and therefore should be well presented and wear appropriate clothing and present themselves in a manner that aligns with the image you wish to project.

- While staff are not necessarily required to wear uniforms, retail staff should be easily identifiable and distinguishable from visitors in a busy retail setting this particularly important when they are out on the shop floor.
- **85% of visitors tell us** that staff appearance/quality of outfits being worn is an important marker for their overall impression of the attraction.

Décor, Fixtures & Fittings

Areas assessed:

- Windows, doors, walls, flooring, sales desk, heating & lighting, and any non-display fixtures & fittings

Access and Inclusion

- Retail spaces should be easily navigated by those with mobility aids or pushchairs.
- Consider the height of your service desk, and accessibility of card machines, presentation of merchandise etc for wheelchair users.
- POS materials should have appropriate text to background contrast.

Toilets

A Key Part of the Visitor Experience

While not every attraction provides toilet facilities, those that do should recognise the considerable influence toilets have on a visitor's overall experience.

- **First Impressions Count:** For many visitors, the toilet is their first stop. A poorly maintained, understocked, or unclean facility can set a negative tone for the rest of their visit—and may discourage them from visiting the café or returning to the attraction altogether.
- **Maintain High Standards:** Cleanliness, freshness, and consistent restocking are essential. Toilets should be checked regularly throughout the day to ensure soap, hand towels, and toilet paper are always available.
- **Accessibility Matters:** Accessible toilets should be high-quality, thoughtfully designed spaces that fully meet a range of needs. They should never feel like an afterthought or be noticeably inferior to standard WCs.

The advisor will look at:

Location /Design & Flow/ Ease of use of toilet facilities

- Where the facilities are located
- How many locations toilets are located throughout the attraction.

- How the facilities work for the visitor in terms of ease of movement within cubicles, at basins and dryers, are there hooks and shelving for visitor belongings.

Décor, fixtures & Fittings

- Assessing all décor, fixtures & fittings for the quality, condition and appropriateness of the wall décor and flooring and general maintenance of the facility.
- When looking at fixtures and fittings, the advisor will consider more than just the toilets and washbasins. They will also look at the door locks, soap dispensers, bins, mirrors, hand dryers, paper towel dispensers, cubicles etc.

Access & Inclusion / Provision

- Accessible toilets availability, baby change availability, lowered facilities for children, Changing Places, gender neutral facilities.
- Facilities should meet demand. **73% of visitors surveyed told us** that sufficient numbers and availability of toilets within an attraction was either extremely important or very important to the experience.