

Hints and tips for writing a great entry

- Leave enough time to do your entry justice and to manage the online registration and entry process. Completing a great entry takes thought, effort and some time – particularly the first time you apply.
- The deadline for entries is **5 pm on Friday 3rd March** and no extensions will be offered. Entries received after this time will not be judged.
- All entries must be completed on the VisitEngland online entry system, called OpenWater, by following the individual link for each category. No other entries will be accepted.
- A sample entry form can be downloaded for each of the award categories. These forms should be used for checking your entry eligibility and preparing a draft entry prior to completing your online submission.
- Read the criteria and guidance contained within each sample entry form. Each award category has a different emphasis, so tailor your answers accordingly.
- Some categories have additional eligibility criteria, such as a certain number of rooms or visitors or the length of operation. Make sure you are eligible to enter your chosen category.
- We can only judge what you tell us so make sure you give us sufficient information and don't assume the judges already know anything about your business.
- It's normal to perform better in some areas than others but do answer all the questions as best you can. Leaving a blank space automatically means no score for that question, affecting your likelihood of being shortlisted.
- Create as full a picture of your business or nominee as possible. We are looking for passion and enthusiasm which makes the business or the person come alive so be engaging, genuine and personal – and don't use too much marketing speak!
- Shout about your successes. Tell us if you've increased your occupancy, visitor numbers, average room rate; if you've received improved customer feedback and reviews; or, if you've saved costs or the environment through your developments, initiatives and changes. Be specific and quantify your successes wherever possible.
- Lots of entries don't bring out the exceptional, the innovative or the unique aspect of the business. Keep in mind the sector and level in which you operate and tell us what really makes you stand out above and beyond the other competitors.
- A good answer to a question will provide specific examples/evidence to back up the answer. This is particularly relevant when asked about the outcome of a certain activity/recent development. Those who

can quote actual figures or specific results will score more highly than a generic answer such as 'better feedback' without any evidence.

- The answers require 3 – 5 examples per question. The best entries will be able to highlight a range of examples from different areas of the business, such as developments, customer service, marketing, accessibility, sustainability and training.
- There is no requirement to include **supporting evidence** and it should only be included if it enhances your entry form, is relevant and highlights how you stand out from the competition.
- Ask someone else to proofread your draft entry for spelling, grammar and typos and ask them whether what you've written makes sense to someone who doesn't know your business.
- There are word counts against each required answer. The online entry form will prevent you from submitting your entry if you exceed the word count.
- Keep the detail of your entry focused mainly on what you've done in the last 2 years.

Using the OpenWater online entry system

- To enter you will need to register on the OpenWater system following the links on cumbriaawards.co.uk.
- Progress with your entry can be saved and doesn't need to be completed in one go. It can also be printed.
- You will need to register to create a login which will allow you to save and submit your application.
- The system will strip out any formatting attached to data you cut and paste across from another source. If you are using cut and paste from a Word document, you will need to use Ctrl-V rather than the 'paste' option. Therefore, double check all formatting and URL links.
- Text boxes will cut-out at the word limit.
- Anything with an '*' is mandatory and the application cannot be submitted until those fields are completed.
- You will not be able to access/amend applications once the deadline has passed.
- Double check that your application has been submitted and not marked as 'incomplete'.