

5 June 2024

## Your request for information under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 (“the Act”)

Thank you for your request for information, which was received by VisitScotland on 22 April 2024, requesting the following information: “*the process of carrying out QAs which you no longer do, along with costs, and how many per year you were doing.*”

We have interpreted your request as a request for:-

1. The process followed for the Quality Assurance Scheme;
2. The cost of running the Quality Assurance Scheme; and
3. Figures for how many Quality Assurance visits took place annually.

### VisitScotland’s response

In response to your request, we have responded in three parts using the numbering above.

1. Please see attached a document containing information on how our Quality Assurance scheme process was carried out. The document also contains a link to information that is available publicly: [Quality Assurance Scheme sector guidance | VisitScotland.org](https://www.visitScotland.org/quality-assurance-sector-guidance)
2. Please see financial data on the direct costs of running the Quality Assurance Scheme below for the last 5 financial years. Please note that the information provided contains only direct costs which is the information we hold. It is not possible to account for every contribution made by other staff members to Quality Assurance, however the figures do include salaries for VisitScotland staff whose time is completely taken up with administration of the Quality Assurance Scheme.

Time period	Award Scheme Fees received	Direct Costs of Service	Net Cost of Service Delivery
Financial Year April 22 – March 23	£627,000	£669,000	<b>£42,000</b>
Financial Year April 21 – March 22	£0	£633,000	<b>£633,000</b>
Financial Year April 20 – March 21	£0	£609,000	<b>£609,000</b>
Financial Year April 19 – March 20	£53,000	£1,061,000	<b>£1,008,000</b>
Financial Year April 18 – March 19	£929,000	£1,124,000	<b>£195,000</b>

Please note that these figures, plus other financial information about VisitScotland, are covered within our annual reports and accounts which are available at this link for the last ten financial years: [Our Annual Performance Report | VisitScotland.org](https://www.visitScotland.org/our-annual-performance-report)

3. Please see a table of Live Quality Assurance visits completed since financial year 2017/18:-

Year (Apr-Mar)	Count	Notes
2017/18	3117	
2018/19	3158	
2019/20	2908	1
2020/21	0	2
2021/22	70	2, 3
2022/23	1237	4, 5
2023/24	1539	
2024/25	103	6

Explanatory notes:-

1. Visits during 2020 were curtailed due to Covid restrictions
2. VisitScotland waived membership fees and suspended live Quality Assurance visits during 2020/21 and 2021/22
3. A number of visits to test Covid protocols took place, when restrictions allowed, ahead of the restart of live visits
4. Visits between April and June 2022 were limited to test visits ahead of the restart of live visits
5. Visit schedule moved from annual to biennial visits for all sectors, reducing the total number of visits.
6. Continuation of outstanding visits accrued from 2022/23 and 2023/24. No new visits have been assigned since the announcement of QA retiral in February 2024.

### Your right to request a review

If you wish to request a review of your application under either the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 or the Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations 2004, your request should be submitted to us in writing, or another permanent format (for example e-mail or voice recording) to:

Mr Malcolm Roughead  
 Chief Executive  
 VisitScotland  
 Waverley Court  
 4 East Market Street  
 Edinburgh  
 EH8 8BG

Telephone: 0131 472 2201  
 E-mail: [malcolm.roughead@visitscotland.com](mailto:malcolm.roughead@visitscotland.com)

The request for a review should be received by us within 40 days of the date of this letter. Any request for a review should also set out, in as much detail as possible, the reasons why you are not satisfied with our response or the manner in which we have dealt with your application. If you are not satisfied with the result of the review, then you have the right to appeal to the Scottish Information Commissioner.


You can contact the Scottish Information Commissioner at:

Scottish Information Commissioner  
Kinburn Castle  
Doubledykes Road  
St Andrews  
Fife  
KY16 9DS

Telephone: 01334 464610  
Fax: 01334 464611  
Email: [enquiries@itspublicknowledge.info](mailto:enquiries@itspublicknowledge.info)

You also have the right to appeal to the Court of Session in Scotland on a point of law concerning our response.

## How does it work?

To apply for Quality Assurance membership, follow these simple steps. 

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### Review the guidance and criteria

Take a look at our [Quality Assurance criteria](#) for your type of business, so you are aware what our team will be looking for when assessing your business. Don't worry if you're not sure you can meet all the requirements, we can offer you guidance that's right for your business.

If you have any queries, our team can help provide advice on what will work best for you. Get in touch with us at [customer.services@visitscotland.com](mailto:customer.services@visitscotland.com)

Don't forget to check you agree to our [schedule of conditions](#):

[Schedule of conditions for accommodation providers](#)

[Schedule of conditions for visitor attractions](#)

[Review the guidance and criteria for your business type](#) →

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### View participation fees

Our annual fees for Quality Assurance scheme membership vary depending on the type and size of your business. They range from around £52 +VAT for a small hostel to around £1,500 +VAT for a large accommodation provider with 100 rooms.

Find our full range of Quality Assurance scheme fees in the following download:



#### VisitScotland 2023/24 QA fees

Published March 2023

QA fees for the current scheme year

Download (120Kb)



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### Complete your application

Once you've signed up, you'll receive a welcome call from our Quality Assurance team. They will talk you through the process of how your first live grading visit will work before we visit you in person. You'll also have the chance to ask us any questions you might have.

We want to help you reach your desired Star Award as early as possible. This is a chance for us to offer some advice and give you a bespoke written report to help you on your way.

We will also provide you with your Awaiting Grading logo which you can use straight away. This way, you won't need to wait for us to visit before offering your visitors some reassurance that you care about providing a quality experience.

Using the logo can help reassure visitors. It demonstrates that you want to be transparent about the level of your offering. It will also show that your business will be held accountable to national standards.

[Apply for QA membership](#) →

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### The visit

One of our Quality and Tourism Advisors (QTAs) will schedule a live grading visit. Depending on what type of business you are, this may take the form of an incognito visit.

At the end of the grading visit, the QTA will provide you with feedback and advice about their experience. This is a valuable opportunity to learn about the visitor journey your business is offering. It is also a chance to gain insights on any plans you have for future development.

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### Your award

Following your grading visit, you will receive confirmation of your Star Rating by email, along with a detailed report containing tailored advice and guidance.

We will also provide you with an award plaque and electronic logos so that you can shout about your new Quality Assurance Award.

- [Read more about how to make the most of your award.](#)

Link to sector guidance remains live on [visitscotland.org](https://visitscotland.org): [Quality Assurance Scheme sector guidance](#) | [VisitScotland.org](https://visitscotland.org)