

# Achieving excellence – your tourism awards toolkit 2026/27



# What we will cover

- Why do businesses enter the awards?
- The tourism awards process
- Your application
- What are your next steps?



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# Why do businesses enter the awards?



# Excellence makes business sense

- Customers will pay more for excellence
- Recruit and retain better staff
- Profile and pride
- Profit!

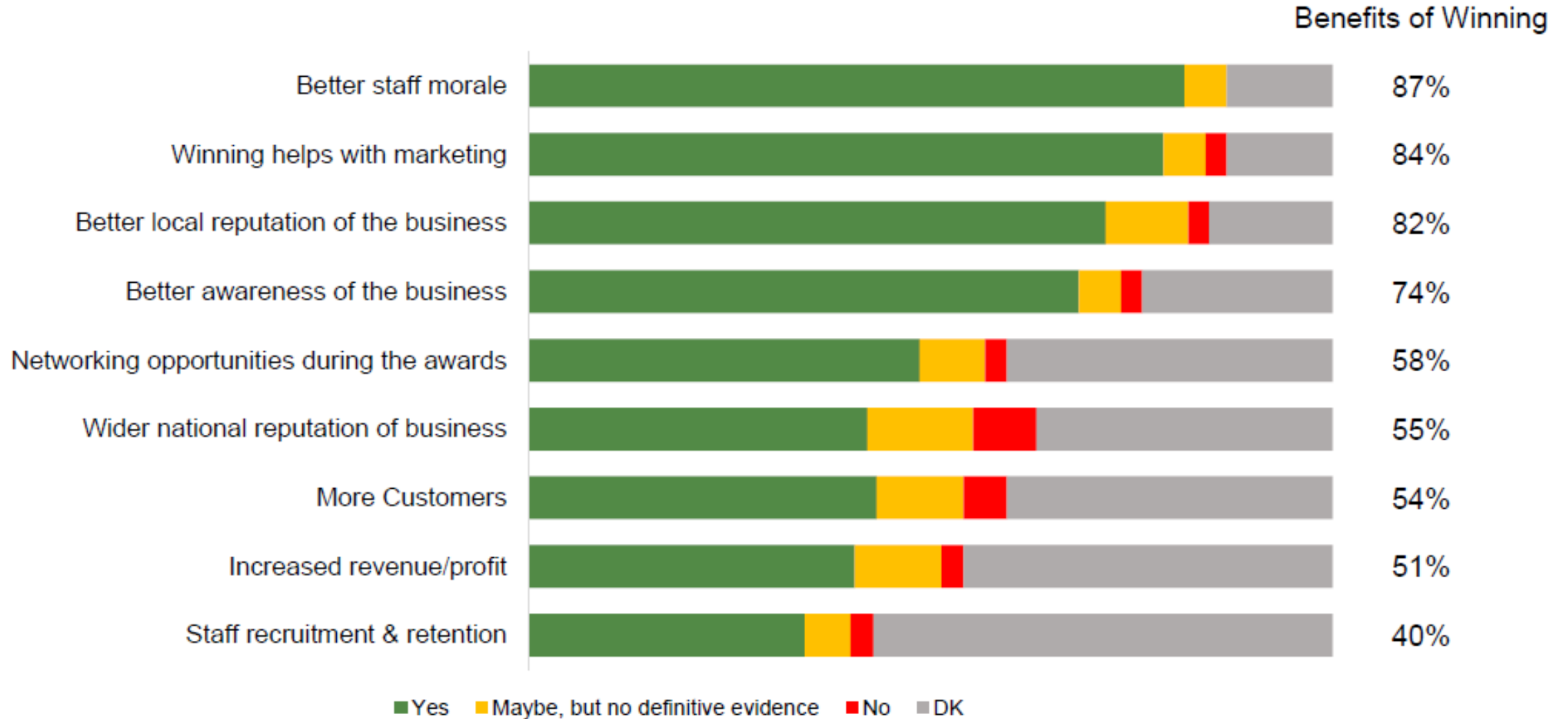
# Celebrating local excellence



# Why did you enter your local tourism awards competition in 2025? – top 5 reasons

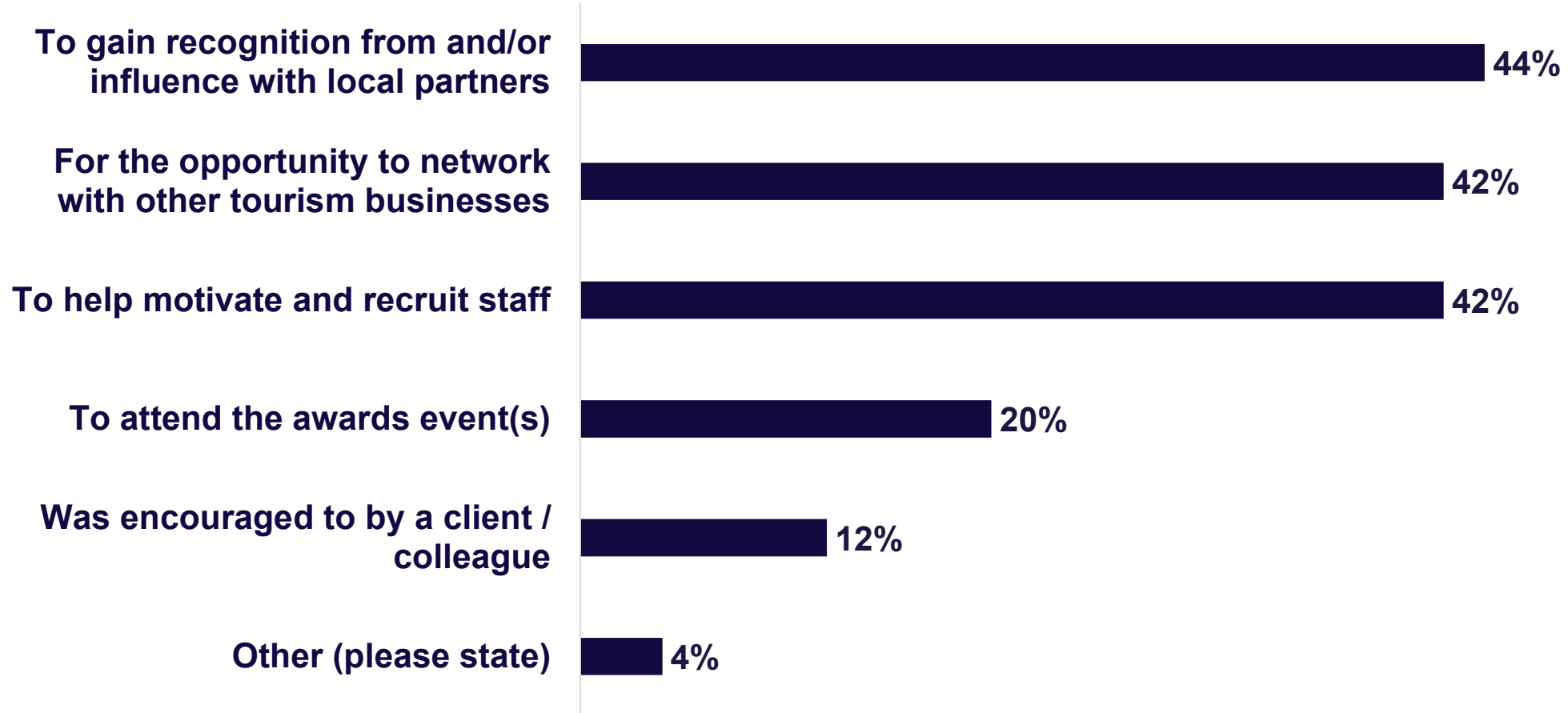


# The value of Awards is felt across multiple aspects



In which of these areas would you say your business has benefited from taking part in the VE Award for Excellence and becoming a winner?  
Base: c.38 interviews

# Why did you enter your local tourism awards competition in 2025? – other reasons



# Benefits of entering

- Receive a marque of quality assurance for use in marketing
- Increase your media coverage and PR opportunities
- Gain a competitive edge
- Chance to compete regionally and nationally
- Get free independent feedback
- Review your approach to excellence and drive best practice
- Network and celebrate with other businesses
- Recognition and/or influence with local partners
- Reward and motivate your team

## Find out more about why you should enter:

[visitbritain.org/business-advice/visitengland-awards-excellence](https://visitbritain.org/business-advice/visitengland-awards-excellence)

[visitbritain.org/business-advice/visitengland-awards-excellence#pr-toolkit](https://visitbritain.org/business-advice/visitengland-awards-excellence#pr-toolkit)



**VisitEngland Award Winners' PR Toolkit**

Winning an award is a brilliant chance to secure editorial coverage for your business – and this beginner's guide to PR will help you secure it.

Contents ▾

Congratulations on winning an award. As well as recognising the quality of your product, this triumph represents a valuable PR opportunity – read on to discover how to make the most of it.

## This toolkit contains advice on how to:



Find contacts for the most useful editors, writers and influencers.



Identify the most effective publications, websites and podcasts.



Craft the perfect press release and print-worthy images.



Make your pitch stand out, and hit editors' inboxes at the ideal time.



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# The tourism awards process



# Reaching the VisitEngland Awards for Excellence

Visit Herefordshire Tourism Awards

VisitEngland Awards  
for Excellence

# The Core Categories

- Accessible & Inclusive Tourism
- B&B and Guesthouse of the Year
- Business Events Venue of the Year
- Camping, Glamping & Holiday Park of the Year
- Experience of the Year
- Hotel of the Year
- Visitor Attraction of the Year
- New Tourism Business of the Year
- Pub of the Year
- Regenerative Tourism Award
- Self Catering Accommodation of the Year
- Taste of Herefordshire / Taste of England Award
- Unsung Hero Award

## Local Categories

- Wedding Venue of the Year
- Retailer of the Year
- Herefordshire Producer of the Year

# The application system

HOME MY ACCOUNT FIND OTHER COMPETITIONS TERMS AND CONDITIONS

## Login or Create an Account

Login

Email Address \*

Password \* [lost password?](#)

remember me

Create a New Account

First Name \* Last Name \*

Job Title \*

Phone Number \* Email Address \*

Business Name \*

Give the official name as you wish it to appear in all publicity materials, on certificates, in presentations etc.

Business Street Address \*

*Please provide address details for the main administration office, if different, the address details relating to the specific business being entered for an award can be added within the application form.*

## Find out more about the categories:

- <https://www.herefordshirecountybid.co.uk/visit-herefordshire-tourism-awards-2026/>
- [visitbritain.org/business-advice/visitengland-awards-excellence/visitengland-awards-excellence-award-categories](https://visitbritain.org/business-advice/visitengland-awards-excellence/visitengland-awards-excellence-award-categories)
- <https://www.herefordshirecountybid.co.uk/visit-herefordshire-tourism-awardssample-application-forms-2026/>

To apply today, select a category below to submit an application:

Accessible and Inclusive Tourism Award  
B&B and Guest House of the Year  
Business Events Venue of the Year

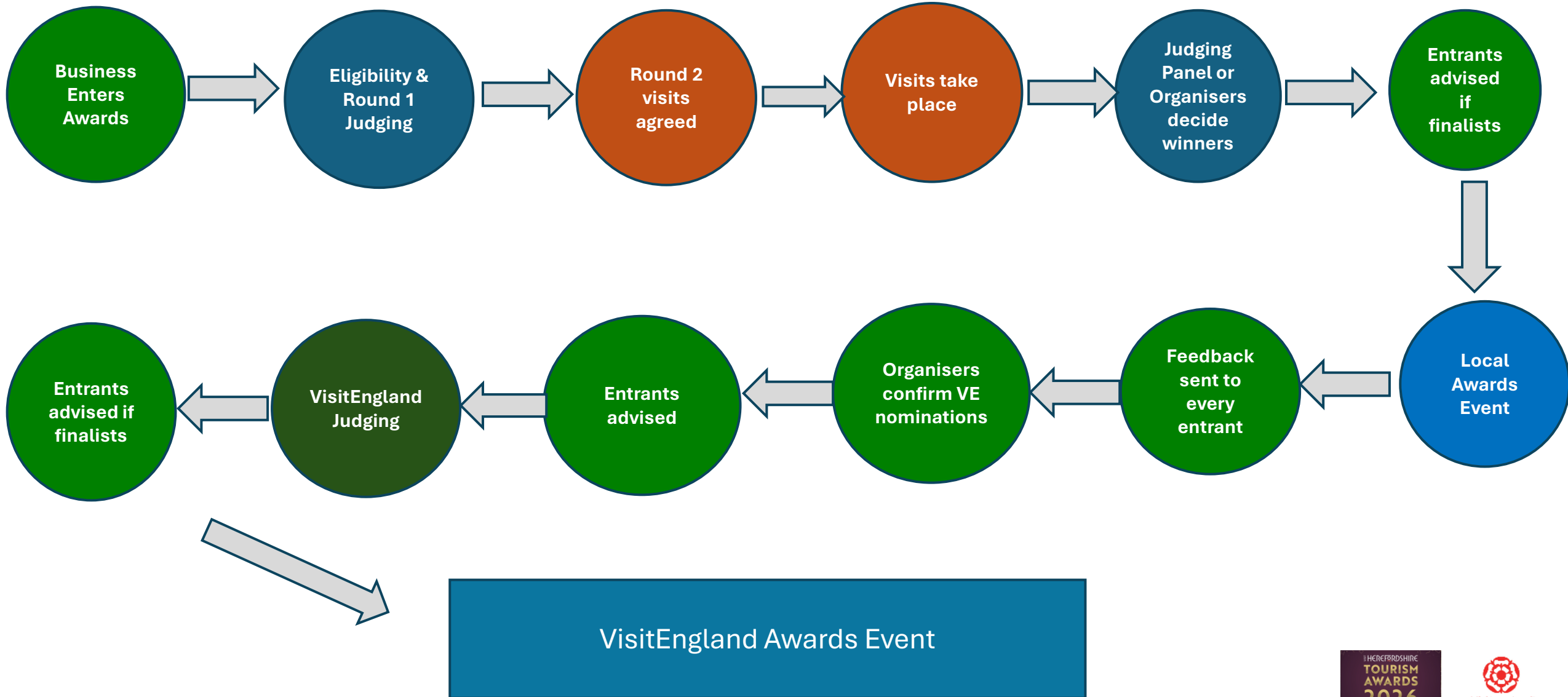
Camping, Glamping and Holiday Park of the Year\*  
Camping & Caravanning Park of the Year  
Glamping Business of the Year  
Holiday Park of the Year

Dog Friendly Business of the Year  
Experience of the Year\*  
Active & Learning Experience of the Year  
Spa and Wellbeing Experience of the Year

International Tourism Award  
Large Hotel of the Year  
Large Visitor Attraction of the Year  
New Tourism Business Award  
Pub of the Year  
Regenerative Tourism Award  
Self Catering Accommodation of the Year  
Small Hotel of the Year  
Small Visitor Attraction of the Year  
Taste of England\*  
Café & Tearoom of the Year  
Casual Dining Award  
Restaurant of the Year

Tourism Event/Festival of the Year  
Unsung Hero Award  
Visitor Information Service of the Year  
Wedding Venue of the Year

# The Judging Process



# Top tips 1



**The National Space Centre, Leicester**  
© Visit Leicester/Mynt Communications Ltd  
Large Visitor Attraction of the Year, Silver, 2025

- Read the guidance
- Choose categories
- Check your eligibility
- Read through the questions



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# Your application



# Setting the scene



Ad Gefrin, Northumberland

©Ad Gefrin Anglo-Saxon Museum & Distillery/ Sally Ann Norman  
New Tourism Business of the Year, Gold, 2025

- Business details
- Promotional description
- Promotional images
- Background
- Awards and accolades
  - ✓ VE/AA rating
  - ✓ Do you have any other quality awards/ratings?

# Supporting evidence



**The Courtyard, Hereford**  
© The Courtyard / Joe Nobile  
Accessible & Inclusive Tourism Award, Bronze, 2025

- Relevant links
- Evidence that supports the question
- Adds value, does not repeat

# Importance of online presence & reviews

- Provide relevant links
  - ✓ Review sites
  - ✓ Website
  - ✓ Social media platforms
  - ✓ Regenerative Tourism policy/ information
  - ✓ Accessibility guide/ information
  - ✓ Booking/ distribution platforms  
(International Tourism Award only)
- Evidence of engagement

Find out more about online marketing:

[www.visitengland.org/onlinemarketing](http://www.visitengland.org/onlinemarketing)



The screenshot shows the 'Digital Marketing Toolkit' page from VisitEngland. The page title is 'Digital Marketing Toolkit' and the subtitle is 'Learn how digital marketing can help even the smallest tourism business reach a global audience with our toolkit of resources.' Below the title is a 'Contents' dropdown menu. The main content area is titled 'This Digital Marketing Toolkit for Small Medium Enterprises (SME) tourism businesses:' and features three bullet points, each with a checkmark icon: 'Explains what you need to know about digital marketing strategy.', 'Provides information on topics from building a website to maximising social media and content marketing.', and 'Includes helpful case studies of other businesses' digital strategies.'

## Chapters



### **Chapter 1: What is digital marketing?**

Get to grips with the basics of digital marketing and learn how it encompasses everything you do to promote your tourism business online and effectively communicate to customers. Click through for useful case studies.



### **Chapter 2: How to create a website**

What you need to consider when building a website for your tourism business.



### **Chapter 3: Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)**

Understanding Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) to increase the likelihood of your website being seen and indexed by search engines.

# The four key questions

- Your top qualities
- Your recent improvements
- Your results
- Your future plans

# Question 1: Your Top Qualities



The Wizard Walk of York, York  
© Wizard Walk of York / The Story of You  
Experience of the Year, Silver, 2025

## Unique selling points, strengths and essence of your business:

- Quality of your core product and customer experience
- Added extras that delight your customers
- How you care for your team
- Use and promotion of local suppliers
- Innovative marketing and PR
- Inclusive facilities, experience & welcome
- Sustainable practices that align to regenerative tourism
- Innovative adaption, diversification and/ or resilience building

# Areas to Consider for Q1



**Sunnyside Guest House, Southport**  
© Sunnyside Guest House / Larissa Duffey  
B&B and Guest House of the Year, Gold, 2025


## Caring for your customers

- Always going the extra mile
- Staff training and development  
e.g. Welcome to Excellence/In-House training
- Induction process for new staff
- Customer feedback initiatives/complaints process
- Attention to detail

# Areas to Consider for Q1 (1)


## Innovative marketing /promotion

- Specific marketing and promotion carried out?
- Trying something different or out of the ordinary?
- Social networking sites
- Joint marketing with other tourism businesses
- Engaging with LVEP, DMO and VE/VB campaigns




### Get your introduction to PR toolkit

Learn the basics of getting publicity with our free public relations guide. Our PR toolkit provides ideas on how to secure media coverage and publicity.



- ✓ Intended for managers or employees at English tourism businesses who are not marketing professionals, this toolkit gives you simple steps towards getting media coverage.
- ✓ You'll find helpful advice such as who to contact in the media and how to make your pitch.
- ✓ There is also guidance on writing press releases to liaising with journalists and working with social media and influencers.
- ✓ Find suggestions on how to measure your PR campaign.
- ✓ Included throughout are case studies from small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) who have successfully scored media coverage without spending lots of time or money.

**VisitEngland Introduction to PR Toolkit**  
Find out who to contact, what to say, how best to say it and when to make the most of media coverage.

**Download (1.55 MB)** 

# Areas to Consider for Q1 (2)

## Inclusive facilities, experience and welcome

- How you attract a diverse audience
- How you provide for visitors with access needs
- What you have in place to ensure all visitors are welcomed, supported and encouraged to take part or enjoy their stay with you

### Find out more about accessibility:

[www.visitbritain.org/business-advice/make-your-business-accessible-and-inclusive/visitengland-accessible-and-inclusive](http://www.visitbritain.org/business-advice/make-your-business-accessible-and-inclusive/visitengland-accessible-and-inclusive)

Visit England's Accessible & Inclusive Tourism Toolkit (inc. Top 20 Tips)

[www.visitengland.org/access](http://www.visitengland.org/access)

Webinar on accessibility

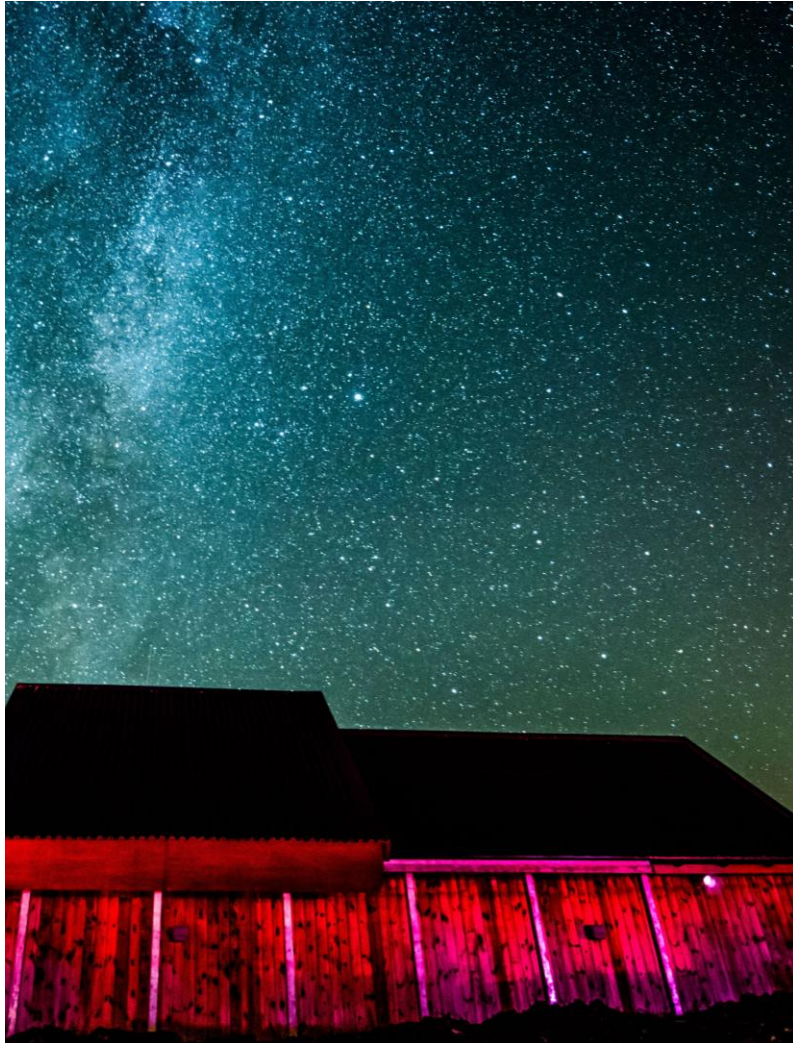
[www.visitbritain.org/business-advice/business-recovery-webinars](http://www.visitbritain.org/business-advice/business-recovery-webinars)



**Mendip Basecamp, Somerset**

© Mendip Basecamp – Family Adventure Campsite / Mark Gray  
Camping, Glamping & Holiday Park of the Year, Silver, 2025

# Areas to Consider for Q1 (3)



**Battlesteads, Northumberland**  
© Battlesteads Hotel & Restaurant / Martin Kitchin  
Ethical, Responsible and Sustainable Tourism Award  
Bronze, 2025

## Regenerative Tourism

Champions that tourism should leave a place better than it was before. The main goal is for visitors to have a positive impact in the destination or place they visit. Through this we wish to champion actions of suppliers, staff and local stakeholders in supporting the entrant on their delivery to the visitor.

We are looking for actions that support some or all of the below to a standard that could inspire visitors, suppliers and staff in positive actions:

- Climate – actions to decarbonise energy/mobility towards Net Zero
- Circular Economy – clear examples of management of suppliers, waste, recycling, sustainable products and efficient use of resources
- Biodiversity – actions to protect and restore nature
- Place based – respect for local area/communities, tourism that does no harm

**Find out more about sustainability:** [www.visitengland.org/green](https://www.visitengland.org/green)

## Q2: Your Recent Improvements



**Abbots Grange Manor House, Worcestershire**  
© Abbots Grange Manor House / Richard Tae  
B&B and Guest House of the Year, Silver, 2025

Explain your reasons for making the improvements and indicate which parts of the business are impacted:

- Promotional initiatives
- Improving the skills of you and your team
- Expansion, upgrade of facilities, enhancements to your services
- Not-for-profit successes
- Sustainable practices that align to regenerative tourism
- Inclusive facilities, experience and welcome
- Innovative adaption, diversification and/ or resilience building
- Use of digital technologies
- Approximate date of improvement

## Q3: Your Results



**The Farmers Arms, Devon**  
© The Farmers Arms / Matt Austin  
Pub of the Year, Gold, 2025

- Are you able to attribute success directly to any of the improvements that you've made (Question 2)?
- Don't be vague, use figures and specific examples i.e.
  - ✓ % increase in occupancy levels/visitor numbers, sales, customer satisfaction and wastage reduction
  - ✓ % increase in online bookings or repeat business
  - ✓ Business generated from marketing activity
  - ✓ Growth of social media following and engagement
  - ✓ Not-for-profit successes e.g. community engagement, membership/partnership increases
- How significant has the impact been on your business?

# Q4: Your Future Plans



**Polmanter Touring Park**  
© Polmanter Touring Park / Kiss Photography  
Camping, Glamping & Holiday Park of the Year, Gold, 2025

- Continued innovation, adaption, diversification and/ or resilience building
- Sustainable practices that align to regenerative tourism
- Inclusive facilities, experience and welcome
- Expansion, upgrade of facilities, enhancements to your services
- Improving the skills of you and your team
- Marketing and PR, including partnerships with other businesses
- Operational efficiency
- Not-for-profit improvements
- Use of digital technologies

## Top tips 2



King Richard III Visitor Centre, Leicester  
© King Richard III Visitor Centre,  
Small Visitor Attraction of the Year, Silver 2025

- Refer to the relevant criteria
- Make sure you answer the question
- Tailor your answer
- Use facts - do not make ambiguous or inaccurate claims
- Support answers with evidence
- Don't assume the judges know your business!
- Use the word limit and give detailed answers
- Make every word count - don't waste word count with duplication
- Ensure all aspects of your business are covered

# Top tips 3



Cow Cuddling at Dumble Farm, East Yorkshire  
© Dumble Farm  
Experience of the Year, Gold, 2025

- Start preparation early
- Highlight why you are different and what are your best qualities
- Don't over complicate
- Reflect your passion and personality
- Fully answer question, use prompts to help
- Include initiatives from across the business
- Show how you act on feedback (and mistakes!)
- Don't forget accessibility and sustainability
- Embrace review sites; they can be invaluable
- Read through the form twice – ask a colleague
- Review and submit on time



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**What are your next steps?**



# Timetable

Date	Activity
TBC	Awards open
TBC	Awards deadline
TBC	Announcement of finalists
TBC	Awards ceremony
June 2026	VisitEngland Awards for Excellence event



# Useful links

- Benefits of entering [visitbritain.org/business-advice/visitengland-awards-excellence#why-apply](https://visitbritain.org/business-advice/visitengland-awards-excellence#why-apply)
- The national awards [www.visitenglandawards.org](https://www.visitenglandawards.org)
- Review the core entry forms in advance of entering [visitbritain.org/business-advice/visitengland-awards-excellence/visitengland-awards-excellence-award-categories](https://visitbritain.org/business-advice/visitengland-awards-excellence/visitengland-awards-excellence-award-categories)
- Get free business advice [visitbritain.org/business-advice](https://visitbritain.org/business-advice)
- Sign-up to industry newsletter [visitbritain.org/subscribe-our-newsletters](https://visitbritain.org/subscribe-our-newsletters)
- Download free toolkits:  
Award Winner's PR Toolkit [visitbritain.org/business-advice/visitengland-awards-excellence#pr-toolkit](https://visitbritain.org/business-advice/visitengland-awards-excellence#pr-toolkit)
- Digital Marketing Toolkit [www.visitengland.org/onlinemarketing](https://www.visitengland.org/onlinemarketing)
- Accessible & Inclusive Tourism Toolkit [www.visitbritain.org/business-advice/make-your-business-accessible-and-inclusive/visitengland-accessible-and-inclusive](https://www.visitbritain.org/business-advice/make-your-business-accessible-and-inclusive/visitengland-accessible-and-inclusive)
- Watch webinar on accessibility [www.visitbritain.org/business-advice/business-recovery-webinars](https://www.visitbritain.org/business-advice/business-recovery-webinars)
- Watch webinar on sustainability [www.visitbritain.org/business-advice/business-recovery-webinars](https://www.visitbritain.org/business-advice/business-recovery-webinars)
- Improve your sustainability [www.visitengland.org/green](https://www.visitengland.org/green)

**Start your entry here** <https://www.herefordshirecountybid.co.uk/visit-herefordshire-tourism-awards-2026/>



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**And remember . . .**





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# Excellence pays!



# Useful information

Before you start your application:

- Read and accept the **Applicant Terms and Conditions** when prompted.
- Make sure that you are eligible for the category you are considering applying for. Read the **eligibility criteria** carefully, if you are deemed ineligible you may be moved to another category where you would be eligible, or your application may be discounted altogether. If you are not sure whether you are eligible, check with the competition organiser before completing your application.
- To avoid duplication in your responses, read all the **questions** before you start. For most categories each question covers a different aspect of your business, e.g.

Question 1 – **Top Qualities** e.g. unique selling points, strengths and the essence of the business

Question 2 – **Recent Improvements** e.g. business developments and improvements over the last two years

Question 3 – **Results** e.g. recent successes from across the business – providing figures where relevant

Question 4 – **Future Plans** e.g. plans to develop and promote the business over the next year

# Useful information before starting

Before you start your application:

- Read the **guidance information** starting ‘judges will be looking for . . .’ for suggestions on what to include in your answers.
- By setting up an **account** you can save your work and come back to it later – you don’t have to start and submit your application in one sitting.
- Take your time but be mindful of the **closing date** for applications.
- Be aware of the **word limits**, they are exact.
- **Proof your entry** before submitting.

**Good luck!**

# Any questions?

Email: [Projectofficer@herefordshirecountybid.co.uk](mailto:Projectofficer@herefordshirecountybid.co.uk)

Call: 07377153664

**#VisitHerefordshireTourismAwards**  
**#VEAwards2026**