



Visit Wales
Croeso Cymru

Visitor Attraction Quality Assurance Scheme

Core criteria and quality guidance booklet

Including: Core Criteria, Quality guidance and best practice, Composite Case Studies,
Sustainable Tourism and Accessibility in Visitor Attractions



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

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At the beginning of each section a highlighted box is featured which contains the 'Core Criteria'. These are the VAQAS minimum standards for Visitor Attractions. These are not onerous and should be easily achieved by all well run establishments.

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Introduction

A Visitor Attraction is currently defined as:

"A permanently established excursion destination, a primary purpose of which is to allow public access for entertainment, interest or education: rather than being primarily a retail outlet or a venue for sporting, theatrical, or film performance. It must be open to the public, for published periods of the years and should be capable of attracting day visitors or tourists."

The benefits of VAQAS

VAQAS is a valuable management and marketing tool for all attractions operators. The scheme meets the needs of attractions of all sizes and types from volunteer run, charity organisations to world famous, iconic attractions. The benefits of participation in the scheme include:

- A quality assessment of your attraction
- One-to-one debrief
- Assessment Report highlighting aspects of quality and any development issues
- The accreditation 'Accredited Attraction' and free electronic artwork and plaque
- Promotion on www.visitwales.com and www.visitbritain.com

How does it work?

All areas that impact on the quality of the visitor experience are included in a quality assessment. The assessment will recognise areas that may be 'unique', as well as common areas. Where an attraction does not have a particular facility, such as a car park or catering, those aspects will not be included.

Assessments are carried out unannounced as 'mystery visits', although the named key contact at the attraction may be advised to ensure their availability for the debrief. Assessments are annual and at any time the attraction is open to the public. Assessors may visit solo or as a family group, as considered appropriate.

The scheme does not attempt to 'grade' attractions but will assess each on its own merits using objective quality benchmarks, provided by the industry. All well run attractions should be able to achieve the accreditation. On the occasion when the accreditation cannot be awarded the reasons are fully explained and where appropriate a follow up visit will be arranged (this may be an extra cost).

How is quality assessed?

The assessor will 'experience' all aspects of the attraction, from initial phone enquiries to departure. They will sample all facilities and activities such as guided tours, rides, film shows etc., as well as any catering and retailing – assessing the quality of the visitor experience. The assessment is followed by a debrief. This acknowledges quality strengths and highlights any areas for quality development. Any advice is for consideration, and objectively based on examples of best practice drawn from relevant sectors of the industry.

The debrief provides an opportunity to discuss other aspects of your operation, from activities to increase secondary spend to brochure design and combined with the assessment report provides a useful management tool.

The award of VisitWales's accreditation 'Accredited Attraction' provides a valuable marketing tool. This can be used on all publicity material.

Accessibility

VisitWales's Visitor Attraction Quality Assurance Scheme has recognised the need for the inclusion of accessible guidance and advice within this booklet, and as an integral part of assessment debriefs. The diversity of visitor attractions means that a 'standard' would be difficult, but certainly not impossible, to draw up. Some attractions may have in-built physical restrictions but this does not prevent planning for large print guides, enhanced audio guides, tactile displays, good clear signage etc. The importance of attitudinal change and recognition of differing accessibility needs cannot be overstated.

Sustainable Tourism

Operating a visitor attraction in a sustainable manner relates to environmental, social, cultural and economic activities that may minimise the impact on the environment, improve the business efficiency, reduce costs (and therefore improve profits) or maximise benefits to local communities. By adopting a sustainable management approach you can do your bit for the environment and the local community in which you operate, whilst at the same time improving the quality of the service you offer to visitors. Within the Best Practice Guide suitable advice on 'green' actions is provided where it is integral to the quality of the visitor experience.

N.B. Both accessibility and sustainability advice is a new introduction to this booklet and we have highlighted it with coloured 'lozenges' for this reason, but they do not form part of the quality assessments process.

'A high quality visitor experience is seldom achieved by chance. It is almost invariably the outcome of careful planning and anticipation of visitor needs at all levels, allied to a genuine concern for the convenience and enjoyment of the visitor and the enduring, positive memory of the visit.'

How to use this booklet

This booklet (revised 2008) has been produced as part of the Visitor Attraction Quality Assurance Scheme (VAQAS). It is designed to be one of a number of tools available to attraction operators that can be used to enhance quality and spread best practice within the sector.

The format of this booklet follows the 'visitor journey' from aspects of pre-arrival to arrival and first impressions, to the attraction, including advice on presentation and interpretation. Sections on toilets, catering and retailing are included and at the back of this guide is a selection of composite case studies. These illustrate best practice being implemented to enhance the quality of the visitor experience.

Meeting the VAQAS core criteria, which are highlighted in the guide, should be achievable by all well run attractions. The challenge is to create a quality of visitor experience that makes an attraction distinctive.

1 Pre-arrival

This includes

- Telephone Enquiries
- Leaflet, Brochure and Website Content, Accuracy and Clarity

Core criteria

- Where an attraction has an entrance charge, visitors should be able to gain information by telephone. The telephone contact or the answerphone need not be at the attraction itself, but should be able to provide information on opening times and all entrance prices, including any seasonal variations, additional charges for individual attractions and any significant restrictions to entry.
- Current leaflets, brochures or websites must provide an accurate reflection of the amenities, facilities and services provided at the attraction. Opening times should be clearly advertised, including seasonal variations, and a map or directions should be provided. Prices, if quoted and current, should not be exceeded on arrival.

Quality Guidance & best practice

1.1 Telephone Enquiries

In some cases this may be the visitor's first point of contact with the attraction. How a call is handled will influence first impressions. Some attractions offer a 24-hour recorded information line, which can provide consistency and be comprehensive. In all cases, the clarity of the information provided will be important to ensure that calls are effectively dealt with.

- Telephone calls should be answered quickly and dealt with in a pleasant and cheerful manner, rather than in a hurried fashion. Recorded information lines should be clearly recorded and provide contact details for further advice, such as accessibility, making bookings, organising group visits or requesting event details.
- The name of the attraction should be quoted with all information provided accurately and with certainty. Staff should be familiar with the attraction; this may include opening times, entry prices, including any discounts or concessionary rates, and any restrictions to access. In addition, staff should be able to provide directions in a very clear, concise and simple to follow manner.

- Without making the telephone call too lengthy, other relevant information that could help to enhance the quality of the visitor experience could be offered. This could include advice on special activities or events not to be missed, relevant information for families or opening times and menu range of any catering facilities. Information on access for visitors with disabilities, such as the availability of wheelchairs or large print guides, should be available.
- Interactive recorded information lines should be easy to use. Numbered options should be logically numbered with options answering all frequently asked questions. The user should be able to return to the main menu and listen again to options with ease.
- Interactive information lines and recorded messages, including out of hours messages, could include the website address for further details, office hours, and the opportunity to leave a message.

Accessibility

- The BT 'Type talk' facility could be available / accepted and staff made aware of this facility. It is used by visitors who find it hard to hear/talk on the phone. For more information see www.typtalk.co.uk
- Staff must be aware of individual needs when communicating with someone with hearing impairment. They should speak clearly, slowly (but not exaggerated speech) and hold the receiver close to the mouth.
- Information should be available on request e.g. posting of an Access Statement/guide.
- Staff should enquire if there are any specific requirements and whether information is required.

1.2 Leaflet, Brochure and Website Content, Accuracy and Clarity

Where personal recommendations have not influenced the visitor, the brochure, leaflet or website will invariably be the main source of information. The internet, as an increasingly important source of information, will complement traditional print and all provide important marketing tools for the attraction. Of greatest importance will be the clarity of the information presented and the overall ease of use of the medium.

- The brochure or leaflet is best when professionally produced, of a manageable size and clearly presented allowing information to be easily read. Rather than being on thin paper, photocopied, with faded photographs or containing very small print, the brochure should have impact, providing a strong impression, through effective

and imaginative design. This could include effective use of the top third of the front cover so the name, or recognisable logo, is visible when racked. Care should be taken over colour of text and font styles to ensure information can be easily read by all visitors, including those with impaired vision.

- It is recognised that different pieces of print are designed for different periods of use. Current brochures or leaflets will contain pertinent information, such as opening times, entry prices and contact details, including the website address, clearly advertised. Where the brochure is not dated and prices are not printed, a contact telephone number should be advertised for gaining this information. In addition, where space permits, other information could also be provided, such as:
 - a clear description or depiction using photographs or images of the attraction.
 - a site plan, whether large or small, to illustrate the size and scale of the attraction.
 - if the attraction, or areas of the attraction, are appropriate for disabled visitors, children or pets (this could include information on acceptance of service dogs).
 - if there are any seasonal or special events.
 - a suggested day's itinerary, with a suggested length of time needed for the visit.
 - if any areas are undercover or if umbrellas are available for hire.
 - the proximity of the car park or the coach park to the entrance including bays for the use of disabled people.
 - relevant local information such as details of and proximity to public transport, cycle routes, footpaths and public car parks. Advice on local taxi companies able to accommodate wheelchairs could also be provided.
 - an Access Statement or information on accessibility of the site should be available on request and on a website to which consumers can be signposted.
- Websites should be designed to ensure the site is easy to navigate, providing clear and relevant information. Other considerations could include:
 - click icons could be obvious and menu bars could repeat on all pages.
 - visitor information, including answers to the most frequently asked questions, should be easy to locate.
 - appropriate telephone numbers should be provided for further details.
 - sites may be enhanced with moving graphics, sounds and pictures, although consideration should be given to download times.
 - photographs could be captioned
 - maps and directions could be downloadable (preferably in different formats as PDFs are not suitable for all, particularly visually impaired visitors using a 'reading' programme on the computer e.g. JAWS)
 - where pre-booked tickets or receipts can be printed.
 - whilst on line consideration should be given to page layout to minimise print costs. This however should not compromise the readability of the print.
 - sites should not automatically download software to the user without prior warning and an option to reject the download should be provided.

- links to other relevant sites, including related attractions, specific sites and travel and transport sites, could also be considered. Links to dedicated access information sites that provide additional information for visitors with disabilities could be considered e.g. Tourism for All, RNIB.
- information should be regularly updated, especially with regard to events and any changes to accessibility.
- promotional leaflets could be provided on websites in various formats (PDFs are not suitable for all people) and Pod Casts.
- Any maps should be accompanied by clear, simple directions and differently scaled maps can be used effectively. For example, a national or regional map to show the attraction's location in relation to nearby cities, towns and road and rail links could be used in conjunction with a more detailed local map to clearly show the most suitable route to the attraction's entrance. Advice on distances and suggested travel times can help visitors plan their journeys more effectively. Standard road atlas colours could be used, and where appropriate, post codes provided for satellite navigation.
- Information on parking arrangements or drop off points for disabled visitors should include distances to entrances from the car parking facilities.
- Other facilities could be described along with opening times. This could be especially important where the times differ from the attraction times. For example, a restaurant or a tea shop that opens at midday for lunch but where the attraction does not open until 2.00 p.m.

Accessibility

- People who are diabetic will find opening times of food outlets or availability of food especially important in order to regulate their blood sugar and maintain a regular eating pattern.
- Website accessibility should be considered for further information refer to www.w3c.com, search for the Bobby program which tests a websites accessibility. Refer also to the Publicly Available Specification 78 (PAS 78) developed by RNIB, DRC and British Standards institution.

Sustainable Tourism

- Include public transport options in promotional and booking information.
- Use could be made of sustainable paper sources for printing promotional and interpretation materials, such as maps etc. There are a variety of printers who now specialise in environmentally friendly approaches, look for those who have ISO14001 certification and also operate in line with Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) Chain of Custody protocols or the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification schemes (PEFC) using FSC/PEFC certified paper sources.

2 Arrival

This includes

- Initial Signage
- Appearance of Initial Grounds and Buildings
- Car Park
- Layout and Maintenance of the Entrance
- Welcome, Efficiency and Appearance of Staff
- Visitor Information
- Cleanliness

Core criteria

- The overall condition of the initial grounds and buildings must be sound with the access roads, car parks, parking bays for disabled visitors, paths and steps safe and appropriately surfaced. There should be some attempt to direct parking.
- Where appropriate, areas must be clearly illuminated to ensure the safety of visitors.
- Initial signage should be well maintained with the opening times and the full range of prices and any restrictions to entry clearly displayed either outside the entrance or entry point.
- Where applicable, staff must be easily distinguishable from visitors and must deal promptly and courteously with all visitors.
- A high standard of cleanliness must be maintained at all times with the entrance area of an overall tidy appearance.

Quality Guidance & best practice

2.1 Initial Signage

The initial signage refers to those directional and initial signs, which guide the visitor to the entrance. They may be located along the approach routes, to and around the car park (if provided) and before the entry point to the attraction. Of specific importance to the visitor will be those signs which display such information as the opening times, prices (including concessionary prices with applicable ages and special offers), special events, seasonal variations and any restrictions to entry.

- Signage should be clearly visible and thoughtfully positioned, containing the distance to the attraction and ensuring that the entrance is easy to locate (given any constraints imposed by the highways authorities). In addition, at larger attractions the distance to the entrance from the car park could be marked, especially beneficial for elderly or disabled visitors and those with young children. Where less obvious, drop off points could be signed and exit signage could direct to main roads or towns.
- A poor first impression will often result from damaged, weathered or handwritten signs, all of which may be difficult to read. A better first impression could be achieved if signs are professionally produced and of a uniform design, making the style more easily identifiable to the visitor. In designing signs, consideration could be given to the needs of visitors with impaired vision or learning difficulties.
- The information provided on the signs should be clear and legible with the price display at a height which is easy to read and with alternative payment methods clearly displayed. Where appropriate, information could also be provided in foreign languages, in tactile and/or Braille. 'Extra' charges, such as a separate entry to areas within the main attraction, should be advertised and further associated information could be provided, such as:
 - the cost of rides, talks, exhibitions or shows, if not included within the main admission price.
 - concessionary prices including entry policy for carers.
 - the times of special activities and/or events.
 - the availability and cost of hire equipment, such as pushchairs, wheelchairs, umbrellas or audio guides.
 - where appropriate, tickets could be defined, for example, family tickets (2+2), child ages (3-15) and season tickets.
- Different styles of signs may best suit different areas to further assist the visitor. Where appropriate, welcome panels, finger posts, orientation boards, maps and site plans may all be considered. Some signs may need easy access, such as orientation boards, and an appropriate surface, such as paving, could be provided to prevent

wear. Maps and plans should contain 'You Are Here' and easily understood symbols to indicate the location of facilities. Where signs are double sided, both sides could be used effectively. For example, a garden attraction could use one side of an A-board to promote seasonal highlights for visitors arriving, and the reverse to promote 'What to See next Month', for those leaving.

Where practical, signage should present a positive impression of the attraction with negative signs kept to a minimum and language kept positive; 'Please Keep to the Paths' presents a more positive impression than 'Keep off the Grass'.

Accessibility

- For advice about clear signage for people with disabilities please refer to the sign design guide which is produced by the RNIB.
- When placing signs ensure that they are at an appropriate height or area large enough to be seen by wheelchair users and those of a smaller stature, this will also help with interpretation for children.

2.2 First impression of grounds and buildings

This section looks at the first impressions, the grounds and the buildings which are visible before visitors enter the main attraction. This section may not apply in many instances, such as a town centre museum, but where applicable, could include the entrance driveway, the landscaping around the car park area and the approaches to the entrance. In addition, it may include any buildings which lie outside the main entrance of the attraction, such as kiosks, toilet facilities, gatehouses, barns, work buildings and the entrance building itself.

- To ensure a very positive first impression is created the initial grounds could include feature areas which could be either hard or soft landscaped with the use of imaginative planting to provide colour and interest, for example water features and sculptures. If neglect is evident, this area will offer a poor first impression of the attraction and excessive weeds, storage of equipment and a general lack of maintenance will detract and should be avoided. All driveways and paths should be well maintained providing a clear, obstacle free and obvious route to the entrance.
 - The needs of disabled visitors should be considered and where appropriate pathways could be suitable for less mobile visitors and/or relevant information provided, such as highlighting steep inclines or steps. Consider any areas that may cause a hazard, particularly for visually impaired visitors of uneven paving, top and bottoms of ramps and steps.
- Building styles and ages may vary, from historic buildings to striking modern architecture but in all cases they should offer a positive first impression. With new developments, consideration could be given to using materials which are in keeping with the local environment whilst also considering their suitability for people with a disability.
 - There may be wild areas for conservation reasons and these should be well managed and possibly interpreted for the visitor, rather than simply neglected.
 - Any work areas, such as work compounds, which are located close to the entrance or by the car park, may be screened with fencing or planting to enhance appearances.

Accessibility

- Suggest that in an Access Statement the main entrance and approach are fully described and detailed to ensure visitors expectations are met with regard to their first impression.
- Clear, obstacle free routes in and out of the attraction are essential for many visitors with a disability, particularly those who have a mobility or visual impairment. Ensure all hazards are highlighted and paths kept free of weeds, litter and damage, as this will be the first impression a disabled person may have.
- Try approaching the attraction from a seated position to ensure that the welcome and good first impression is transferred at all levels.

Sustainable Tourism

- For grounds, gardens and frontage use materials that are in keeping with the local environment and physical characteristics of the local geography, geology and age of buildings.
- Use could be made of energy saving light bulbs throughout the attraction in public areas and back of house areas.
- Greater use could be made of natural light.
- Motion sensitive lighting systems could also be used in certain less frequented viewing areas.
- Improved insulation and greater use of thermostatically controlled and zoned heating will save on energy use.
- Recycling is traditionally seen as a 'behind the scenes process' and not often dealt with in the quality guidance, but visitors can help with recycling and many are used to sorting and recycling waste products at home. There are plenty of opportunities to provide facilities that will assist visitors to help the establishment with its recycling programme, and for the management to communicate it's recycling commitment.

2.3 Car Park

The car park should suit the style of the attraction. The size, layout and the type of surfacing expected at an attraction with over 200,000 visitors a year may be very different from a seasonal one attracting less than 20,000 visitors a year. However, in both cases, the size and the layout will need to allow easy manoeuvring and the type of surface should be consistent to ensure easy parking, even in wet weather.

- At some attractions parking may be relatively simple but where visitor numbers are higher some form of managed parking should be evident. This could include the following features:
 - clear and well positioned signage (high enough not to be obscured by parked vehicles).
 - one-way traffic flow.
 - obvious parking bays.
 - clearly signed and sensibly placed sleeping policemen or rumble strips to ensure safe driving (these should allow a space at one side for wheelchair or walking aids). They should also be highlighted so that they do not cause a hazard to visually impaired visitors.
 - parking attendants to direct traffic.
 - a land train service.
 - zoned areas, to aid locating vehicles on departure.
 - landscaping to add interest and colour or indicate parking bay areas.
- Spaces for disabled visitors should be of a suitable width and length, conveniently located and clearly signed. Drop-off points should be considered where no spaces are available at the entrance.
- Cycle racks could be provided close to the entrance. Where practical, these could be covered.
- A suitable drop-off point for coach groups should be provided and if appropriate, there should be a separate coach park allowing ample turning space.
- Any overspill car parking will, by its very nature, differ from the main car park, but it should also offer easy manoeuvring and parking.
- At larger attractions, additional thought may be given to pedestrian movement with the use of zebra crossings, pedestrian walkways and, if appropriate, lighting.

Accessibility

- Suggest that a contact telephone number for the attraction is displayed alongside the designated parking bay/s to enable visitors who need assistance in the car park to call.
- Parking bays should allow for access to the rear of the vehicle as many will store equipment or essential articles in the boot, some of which may be large e.g. wheelchair.

- Parking bays should be at least 3.6 metres wide.
- To make effective use of space adjacent parking bays could use common space provided there is enough space to both sides of a vehicle.
- Consider introducing a policy for the use of accessible parking spaces, can you reserve them in advance? How to ensure that non-disabled people do not use the spaces? Don't allow staff to use the spaces unless this forms part of your reservation policy.
- Any facilities or services offered to help with transfer from the car park to the main attraction should be assessed for their suitability to disabled users (e.g. land trains). If they are not suitable an alternative should be considered and this might include locating the designated accessible bays near the main entrance of the attraction.

Sustainable Tourism

- Provision should be made, if possible, in the car park for a clearly marked public transport pick-up and drop-off point for taxis', buses and/or coaches.

2.4 Layout and Maintenance of the Entrance

It is recognised that an entrance may well be dual purpose, perhaps positioned within a retail or catering outlet. However, it should be obvious and easily located with visitor flow unimpeded. In addition, the intrinsic quality of the entrance will be important in helping to provide a positive first impression of the overall quality of the attraction.

- There should be clear freedom of movement with no obstacles ensuring that, for example, pushchairs and wheelchairs have easy access. Where there is a counter, the height should allow easy communication and should take into account visitors in wheelchairs and younger visitors.
- Visitor flow may be managed with, for example, a one-way system for entering and exiting, multiple entry points, turnstiles and, where appropriate, a separate entrance for groups or wheelchair users. Seating can be provided close to the entrance for waiting visitors.
- The visitor experience will often begin on entry and where an attraction is themed the entrance may be similarly themed to further enhance first impressions.
- Some entrance areas are used for administration and these should also be well maintained with adequate lighting and ventilation. In addition, they should be well presented avoiding the untidiness that can sometimes detract in an office environment.

- Where an attraction has a policy of not accepting dogs, such as a farm attraction, suitable provision could be made for dogs, including shaded parking, a water point and bowl. The policy on service dogs should be made clear.

Accessibility

- Reception areas should be carefully planned to ensure that they are well lit, avoid use of mirrors or distracting displays immediately behind staff service as this inhibits lip reading, can confuse someone with a visual impairment and hinders visitors with a learning impairment.
- Staff should have their face in view and not covered. This will help visually impaired and hearing impaired visitors who are lip reading.

2.5 Welcome, Efficiency & Appearance of Staff

First impressions count and the importance of well trained staff cannot be overstated. The attitude and efficiency of staff when dealing with customers, especially in how they acknowledge and serve visitors and how well queries are dealt with, will impact greatly upon the quality of the visitor experience. Staff may not need to be in complete uniforms but should be easily identifiable and this could be achieved with the use of smart or suitable clothing or name badges. Training should include disability awareness to offer service to disabled visitors.

- Entrances should be sufficiently staffed and able to deal with the visitor flow, with staff organised and managed to ensure visitors are quickly acknowledged and efficiently dealt with.
- A warm and friendly greeting should always be provided, for example a friendly "Good Morning" rather than a curt "Yes".
- Entrances which are temporarily unmanned should contain clear signage to ensure that staff can be easily summoned.
- Staff should be trained to deal with enquiries and anticipate visitor needs effectively. Relevant information which could impact upon the quality of the visitor experience could be volunteered. For example:
 - the availability of combination tickets.
 - the location of facilities and their opening times.
 - a suitable route and suggested time for the visit.
 - the times of special events.
 - seasonal features or 'not to be missed' aspects.
 - the location of lockers / cloakrooms for leaving bags.

- Special needs or requirements could be anticipated and suitable assistance or advice offered. This could include:
 - the location of facilities for disabled visitors.
 - identifying areas which may be difficult to access.
 - the location of baby changing facilities and adult.
 - changing facilities if provided.
 - seating areas.
 - the offer of a foreign language guide.
- Staff should never be heard complaining and should be smartly presented, well groomed and of a neat and tidy appearance appropriate to the style of the attraction. For example, on a farm attraction staff could be in a similar style of dress wearing sweatshirts with the farm's logo, jeans and Wellington boots. A more uniform style with name badges could be more appropriate in a large municipal museum.

Accessibility

- All staff having contact with visitors (even if not on a daily business) should have some form of disability awareness training. Often complaints from disabled people are centred on the attitude of staff rather than the accessibility of a business, so it is crucial that all staff are aware of visitors needs.
- It is important that all staff are aware of the company/ attraction's policies with regard to accessibility so that they are fully informed when dealing with visitors with disabilities.
- Basic disability equality training should be integrated into induction programmes where possible.

Sustainable Tourism

- All staff could be briefed/trained on the establishment's environmental policy and if relevant, membership in any green tourism management schemes.
- The management may wish to make use of interpretation materials to communicate their sustainable policy actions to visitors.

2.6 Visitor Information

Extra information, which may impact upon the quality of the visitor experience, could be inclusive or optional at extra cost. These could include information sheets, guide books, plans, maps, audio guides and guided tours, and could be offered to visitors either on arrival or within the attraction. For example, at a heritage attraction, where combination visits are available to the home and the grounds, extra information could be available at each entry/pay point.

- Where hand held plans of grounds are available, the plan will be easier to use if orientated with the entrance at the base. Symbols can be used to indicate the location of certain facilities and routes that are accessible to mobility impaired visitors.
- It can be helpful to the visitor if print follows a corporate style. Quality can be enhanced where it is professionally produced, with current information that is accurate and clearly presented. Maps or plans may contain symbols and colour coded areas to convey information more easily.
- Where appropriate, the information should meet the needs of the targeted market with a suitable choice of media available. For example, colouring sheets for children, detailed guides for enthusiasts and foreign language options for overseas visitors. Large print versions should be available on request.
- There could be relevant information on the attraction's policy towards sustainable and responsible tourism.
- Leaflet information points should be neatly presented and easily accessible.

Accessibility

- Accessible formats of the information being supplied should be considered, for example, if there is something that needs to be filled in, the provision of a clipboard for a wheelchair user may help inclusion.
- Consider easy read versions for visitors with visual impairments and learning impairments; this may include the use of size 16 font or above, type face Arial, simple language with no jargon or abbreviations etc.

Sustainable Tourism

- Draft an environmental management policy.
- Some attractions may join a green tourism management scheme.

- Some attractions may join, or set-up a voluntary visitor payback scheme where the attraction can collect and donates funds to a local charity, it could be educational, social or environmental.
- The management may wish to make use of interpretation materials to communicate their sustainable policy actions to visitors.

2.7 Cleanliness

Cleanliness and tidiness throughout the arrival area will be of paramount importance and while the style of the operation needs to be taken into account, attention to detail and a regular cleaning schedule should ensure that the best first impression is created.

- The entrance should be kept clean and tidy at all times with close attention to detail, especially areas above and below eye level – remember wheelchair users see everything from a different angle.
- Attention should be given to ensuring areas are clean on opening and where appropriate, regular litter sweeps should be in place to help ensure standards are maintained throughout the day.
- Within the entrance grounds, car park, picnic areas and at the entry point suitable bins could be provided, such as waste and cigarette bins. Where appropriate, recycling bins could also be considered. .

Accessibility

- Cleaning materials and equipment should not be left to cause a hazard. Where areas are left to dry or may be wet, clear signage would alert visitors. Ensure that the warning signs are large print, highlighted with contrasting text/picture and not situated where a visually impaired person could trip over them.

Sustainable Tourism

- Consider using environmentally friendly and chlorine free cleaning products, such as micro fibre cloths that reduce the amount of cleaning liquid required.
- Recycling is traditionally seen as a 'behind the scenes process' and not often dealt with in the quality guidance, but visitors can help with recycling and many are used to sorting and recycling waste products at home. There are plenty of opportunities to provide facilities that will assist visitors to help the establishment with its recycling programme, and for the management to communicate its recycling commitment.

3 Attraction

The broad theme of a visitor attraction can range from pure fun to high culture and it will be looked at within the context of the general sector that it sits in, recognising areas that may be 'unique' and areas of commonality.

This includes

- Layout
- Range and Quality of General Signage
- Appearance of Grounds and Buildings
- Range of Content
- Quality of Presentation
- Quality of Interpretation
- Appearance, Attitude and Knowledge of Staff
- Other Areas
- Cleanliness

Core criteria

- The layout of the attraction should be designed to allow practical access to all areas whether by free or directed flow, as appropriate, and assisted by clear and well maintained signage.
- The range of content should be appropriate to the accepted broad theme of the attraction.
- Where applicable, all exhibits or features should be effectively presented with the use of appropriate media, ensuring accurate interpretation.
- All areas of the attraction must be in sound condition, with appropriate lighting, to ensure a safe environment.
- Equipment needs to be safely maintained and working as intended.
- Where applicable, staff must be easily identifiable from visitors and should deal promptly and courteously with all visitors' enquiries.
- A high standard of cleanliness must be evident at all times with an overall tidy appearance.

Quality Guidance & best practice

3.1 Layout

The layout refers to the overall layout of the attraction and, if appropriate, the positioning of exhibits or displays. However, in some cases, for example, at cathedrals or churches, this will be dictated by the overall design and primary use of the building. In these cases, sensitively managed visitor flows, for example with a suggested route, can help to maximise the quality of the visitor experience. In other cases, where the attraction allows for free flow, such as at a zoo, the ease of movement and spaciousness will affect the quality of the visitor experience.

- The layout of the attraction should provide a logical flow. This may be a free flow or a managed sequential flow or chronology of a set of events.
- The location of toilet, catering and retail facilities will have an impact on the quality of the visitor experience. At larger attractions facilities should be conveniently located. For example, toilets could be close to entrances and next to catering. The main retail outlet may be supplemented by outlets selling, for example, ice creams and drinks.
- Where practicable, ramps and sloped paths could be provided to enhance access for all visitors. Where provided accessible areas should be highlighted.
- Where appropriate, for example at theme parks, space should be allowed for effective queue management, especially at particularly popular rides.
- The needs of different visitors could be met with special trails, for example, children's trails, outdoor walks, farm trails, and these could be waymarked to show distances and duration. A short description of the trail could be provided, to describe the terrain and offer advice on suitable footwear and suitability for people with pushchairs, wheelchairs, bikes, mobility aids etc.
- Visitors should be able to move freely and visitor management techniques, such as timed tickets, may be employed. Where pinch points are unavoidable, visitor flow should be encouraged and dwell points avoided. Where resource areas or children's areas are provided, there should be sufficient space for visitors to study or children to play. Where there is queuing a policy for disabled visitors could be considered.
- Thought could be given to the juxtaposition of displays or exhibits. A logical layout can avoid confusing the visitor.

3.2 continued

Accessibility

- Consideration to the needs of different people should be evident e.g. some visitors with Apspergers syndrome (a form of autism) may not be able to queue without causing anxiety, some mobility impaired visitors may not be able to stand for any length of time, some hearing impaired visitors may not be able to queue where background noise is excessive.

3.2 Range and Quality of General Signage

General signage can be an important and integral part of the layout, helping to direct the visitor around the attraction. In addition, they may indicate the location of facilities and the times of events but should not be confused with signs which interpret the displays themselves. Interpretation signs are covered under 'Quality of Interpretation'.

- The style of the general signage could be quite varied but should be suitable for the use intended. Directional signs, such as finger post signs, may help direct visitors, while display boards may be effective in conveying information of times, special events or for displaying plans. Site plans should always include 'You Are Here' indicators, to help orientate the visitor and allow them to plan their route. Some signs can be used in conjunction with each other; an orientation plan attached to a finger post will help both orientate and direct visitors. This can be especially helpful where the plan does not align with the visitor flow.
- The quality of the presentation of the signage can be enhanced where it follows a corporate style, mirroring the style of general signage from the arrival onwards.
- The positioning and height of signage should ensure that they are easily seen by all visitors. For some signs, such as waymarkers on a country walk, this may mean being visible from a distance.
- Signage should be easily understood and could use symbols to indicate the location of certain facilities such as the toilets, tearooms and exits. A simple arrow symbol can be used very effectively. Signs should also be clearly written, ensuring that they are legible and the following styles could be adopted:
 - the signs may be numbered to manage a sequential flow round the attraction
 - distances to facilities may be shown
 - a meeting point may be provided and clearly signed
 - foreign languages may be used
 - style, colour and size of font should be easy to read for all visitors.

- Signs should be well maintained and durable rather than weathered or damaged. Where appropriate, temporary signage or handwritten signs should be avoided, if they present a poor impression. In some instances, such as farm attractions, handwritten signs may be appropriate providing up to date information on the animals. As with Arrival Signage, A-boards could also be used, double-sided.

Accessibility

- Where possible signs should be readable from a seated or lower position. This would mean ensuring that text or pictures are large and clear or a lower sign at seating height be provided in addition to a high sign. This not only helps people with a visual impairment, a wheelchair user or someone with small stature but will also encourage children to read the directions and get involved.

3.3 Appearance of Ground and Buildings

Similar to the 'Appearance of Grounds and Buildings' in the Arrival section, this aspect refers to the hard and soft landscaping but within the attraction itself. This section will not apply to some attractions, such as some museums where the attraction lies within a building and there are no grounds available. Similarly, the appearance of buildings refers to any building within the main attraction, such as the restaurant, shop and toilet facilities.

- There should be regular maintenance of the grounds and buildings, particularly the paving and pathways, giving a well managed appearance appropriate to the style of the attraction. Areas could be hard and soft landscaped to enhance appearances with imaginative planting, art or sculptures and high quality pathways and seating.
- Building styles and ages may vary, from historic buildings to striking modern architecture but in all cases they should offer a positive impression. With new developments, consideration could be given to using materials which are in keeping with the local environment.
- The needs of disabled visitors should be considered and where appropriate pathways could be suitable for less mobile visitors or relevant information provided, such as highlighting steep inclines or steps.
- Seating could be provided in convenient locations. All seating should be well maintained and robust and suitable for use. For example, benches with arms will be easier for elderly visitors to use, than rustic logs. While the former may suit a garden or heritage attraction, the latter may suit a woodland walk or country trail. Seating in galleries and museums and similar attractions tend to be low level benches offering no support arms. If this is the case alternatives should be offered at seating height and offering seat arms.

- Areas should not be neglected with poorly maintained buildings, excessive weeds or accumulated grass cuttings. A positive attitude to conservation could be evident with managed natural wildlife areas with suitable planting. These could be interpreted.
- Any work areas should be suitably screened and areas being redeveloped could be clearly signed to promote the changes and encourage repeat visits.

Accessibility

- The type of terrain is very important to many disabled people. Most visually impaired visitors find uneven terrain e.g. uneven paving, hazardous and will want a route that avoids this. Wheelchair users and people with wheel along mobility aids will find gravel, small shingle and uneven grass hard to negotiate. Consideration should be given to different routes.

Sustainable Tourism

- For grounds, gardens and frontage use materials that are in keeping with the local environment and physical characteristics of the local geography, geology and age of buildings.
- Use could be made of energy saving light bulbs throughout the attraction in public areas and back of house areas.
- Greater use could be made of natural light.
- Motion sensitive lighting systems could also be used in certain less frequented viewing areas.
- Improved insulation and greater use of thermostatically controlled and zoned heating will save on energy use.
- Recycling is traditionally seen as a 'behind the scenes process' and not often dealt with in the quality guidance, but visitors can help with recycling and many are used to sorting and recycling waste products at home. There are plenty of opportunities to provide facilities that will assist visitors to help the establishment with its recycling programme, and for the management to communicate its recycling commitment.

3.4 Range of Content

The range of content will impact upon the quality of the visitor experience. The range should be appropriate to the general theme of the attraction (whether it be a walled garden, steam railway or wildlife park) and meet the visitor's expectations. The range of content may be quite small, where a particularly specialised topic is covered, such as a shell museum, or quite extensive where the theme is more encompassing, such as a museum of natural history.

- The range should be relevant and within the overall context of the attraction. This will ensure visitor's' expectations are not disappointed. Important aspects that could be considered include:
 - the range of content should be comprehensive enough to adequately reflect the subject or theme of the attraction. If it is too sparse or restricted it could detract from the quality of the visitor experience.
 - authenticity will be an important consideration. Many enthusiasts may use the attraction as a reference source for information, such as at a steam railway.
 - where there is a balance to the range of content this will help to ensure a clear understanding of the relationship between the exhibits or displays. This could be especially important where a story or series of events is being related.

Accessibility

- Information should be simple but informative which will enable visitors with a learning disability to appreciate the basic information.
- Different formats for presentation of content should be considered to be fully inclusive to all ages, abilities and interests and this would include considering a person's disability.
- Audio guides are a good way to enhance the experience for all.

3.5 Quality of Presentation

The presentation of displays, exhibits and activities will have a great impact on the quality of the visitor experience. The use of impressive settings may help to add authenticity to the exhibits and enhance their interpretation. Ensuring that displays are accessible, clearly visible and effectively illuminated will help to enhance the visitor's enjoyment of the attraction.

3.5.1 Room Settings

In many heritage attractions, such as at historic houses and castles, these will form the main style of presentation.

- The authenticity of the presentation may be enlivened with display 'extras' such as writing equipment on a bureau, place settings on a dining room table or floral arrangements.
- Effective lighting is important and can ensure that the setting is visible and help to accentuate detail. It will also help visitors who lip read and those with a visual impairment together with highlighting hazards to visitors, particularly someone with mobility impairment.
- Access to all areas of the room may be inappropriate in some settings and barriers or cordons may be used, but where greater access is possible this may help to enhance the quality of the visitor experience.

Accessibility

- Care must be taken when positioning barriers or cordons so that they do not cause an obstruction or hazard. They should be clearly contrasting with their background so that visually impaired people can distinguish them.

3.5.2 Display Cases

Display cases may either enhance, or detract, from the presentation of exhibits. Consideration could be given to the following points.

- The cases may be of varied quality but should not be damaged or worn.
- The level of illumination and the style of lighting may help to enhance the clarity of the display. Spot lights or back lighting may be effective although in some areas the use of non-reflective glass may be necessary. Care must be taken when lighting displays that the lights do not cause reflection or glare. This is particularly important for visually impaired people.
- The visibility of the contents and accessibility to the displays will be affected by their location and size. The needs of different visitors could be a consideration when designing and positioning the cases. For example, at an

aquarium the use of platforms or steps may help children see inside the fish tanks. Similarly, the use of mirrors or turntables can be used to reveal 'hidden' details, such as a maker's mark or different sides of a vase. Lower placed items and the use of mirrors can also be especially helpful for visitors in wheelchairs, children and those of short stature.

- The location of interpretation of a display case should allow easy linkage between the information and the exhibits. Where appropriate, this could be achieved with a numbering system, labelling or a silhouette. This information can be duplicated for very large cases to improve ease of use.

Accessibility

- Numbers and text should be clearly visible and large enough to read clearly (recommend size 16 font or above).

3.5.3 Static Information such as Screen Panels, Display Boards & Towers, Exhibit Labels etc.

These will provide interpretation of the displays or exhibits and may be presented in different ways:

- The size and location of the panels or boards will affect their visibility. Meeting the needs of different visitors should be considered, lower settings for children or wheelchair user, possibly higher settings to allow movement below and give a wider view.
- The legibility of the panels will be affected by the style, colour and type of print. If too small then the panels may be difficult to read, particularly when viewed by a group. If there is not well enough defined contrast in colours, then the text may merge into the background and be difficult to see. This is especially important for visitors with impaired vision.
- Lighting will affect the clarity of the signs. Dedicated or directed spot lights or rear illumination may be effective in areas where the general lighting has to be subdued, perhaps for conservation reasons. Care must be taken when lighting signs that the lights do not cause reflection or glare. This is particularly important for visually impaired people.
- Exhibition labels may be used within a display case. These should be positioned at a suitable height, angled to face the reader and in clear legible font to be easily viewed and read.
- Consider how user-friendly the information is. Some forms of presentation, such as ring binders, can provide a comprehensive range of information but will prevent information on different pages being viewed simultaneously.

Accessibility

- Text should be at least size 16 font, contrasting with its background and in an uncomplicated font such as Arial. For ideas to be inclusive to all refer to the 'See it Right' guide produced by the RNIB.
- Where possible diagrams and pictures should be displayed to enable those who have difficulty reading or understanding text to appreciate the interpretative boards.
- Consider different disabilities when preparing information. People with a poor degree of manual dexterity may prefer audio or board presentations rather than to have hand held information sheets or binders/guides/leaflets.

3.5.4 Hand held information such as guide books, hand-out sheets, folders and bats

These will provide an added source of information for visitors and may help where different levels of interpretation are available. For example, general information for the layman, detailed information for the enthusiast and technical information for the specialist. The needs of disabled visitors should also be considered and where appropriate large print, audio versions, easy read, and/or guide person provided.

- Ease of use will be affected by the size and format of the information, for example guidebooks may be more comprehensive but more cumbersome to use than information sheets.
- Laminated information sheets and cards will help to retain appearances and numbering will help where there is a sequential route or where a story is being developed.
- Holders for information sheets could be provided to keep information available and accessible. This may allow visitors to collect information at the start of their journey and deposit it at the end. Information folders should be easy to use and if detailed placed on a table or by a seat for visitor comfort. Information should be well presented rather than poorly photocopied pages from reference books.
- Souvenir guides may be available and could be used during the visit. The binding will affect how easy they are to use.
- The clarity of information will be affected by the size and style of print and the colour of the paper. The durability of the material used, for example, in an outdoor exhibit, should be considered. Water and tear proof paper or a strong laminate could help to maintain appearances.

Accessibility

- Consider how accessible the route is around the attraction to collect information for example what distance will need to be walked?, are there any obstacles?, is there space under the table to allow a wheelchair user to sit at it? etc.

3.5.5 Audio visual and audio equipment

A more enlivening form of information will be the use of AV where the use of live film, archive footage or 'yesterdays witness' or actors, can help to recreate the past or demonstrate an exhibit.

- The age and intrinsic quality of the equipment will affect presentation and the appearance of an older video player or television may detract from the quality of the interpretation. Similarly, older or lower quality equipment may lack clarity of vision or sound which would adversely impact on the quality of the visitor experience.
- The use of sensors may be used to initiate an AV display to ensure visitors see the presentation from the start. An indication of the title, content and duration of the AV can help visitors plan their visit.
- Location will affect how easily visitors can view the AV without intrusion from competing displays, other visitors or other light sources. A dedicated area or room for AV may need to be a consideration to ensure clarity of sound and vision. Visitor comfort may be further enhanced by the type of seating, if provided, and the lighting arrangements. In all circumstances, adequate space for wheelchairs should be considered.
- Subtitles may be needed on some film footage but consideration should be given to the clarity of the titles to ensure they are legible. Extra equipment may be provided; headphones can help capture sound more effectively than telephone points and offer stereo effects. Hearing loops can also be considered for some visitors with hearing aids.
- High-quality audio guides could include the latest technology with excellent sound reproduction.

Accessibility

- If videos are played they should have a closed caption decoder to enable subtitles to be displayed. Most DVDs have this facility automatically.

3.5.6 Touch Screens, Computers, hand-held devices

New technologies are allowing attractions to provide a greater range of information to visitors, via a greater range of media. This has allowed various levels of information to be provided and accessing information has become a 'hands-on' experience.

- A higher quality of experience may be achieved if the equipment is easy to use. The provision of simple to follow instructions may need to be a consideration.
- Visitor comfort will be affected by available seating, the height of monitors, suitable lighting and space around the equipment. Use of a 'slave screen' may be appropriate at busier locations (larger screen where the actual display is shown enlarged to enable visitors to view more easily).
- The versatility of the equipment can vary. For example, in a gallery the visitor may be able to use a touch screen or hand held device to gain additional information about a particular picture and artist. Quality is enhanced if they can also get a printed copy of the picture (for which there could be a charge), zoom in and out of the screen, and link to related pictures, artists or topics.
- Computers can offer web access, providing a resource facility to linked topics.

Accessibility

- When installing any equipment the location of it and it's proximity to other facilities should be considered for disabled people. Care should also be taken with heights of display screens and keyboards etc if provided.
- Help to use the equipment may be offered to disabled people.

3.5.7 Cut-away Sections, Interior Views

Providing a cut-away or an interior view, such as with a vehicle, will allow the visitor to see the 'hidden' detail of the exhibit.

- Lighting will be important to ensure the interior can be clearly seen.
- Screens may be needed to protect the display but should not affect clarity for the visitor.
- Steps or platforms may be needed to provide effective sight lines.

Accessibility

- Consider whether the view and/or accessibility of view are suitable for disabled people. If it is anticipated that visitors will spend a long length of time looking at the display then seats or perching seats should be provided for those that cannot stand for a length of time.

3.5.8 Tableaux and Re-constructions

A tableau can provide a highly effective means of setting the context for the display of the main exhibit.

- The attention to detail will affect the overall quality of the tableau ensuring accuracy of presentation and enlivening the display. For example, a war museum displaying a Second World War tank may do so in a reconstruction of an attack on a corner of a French village.
- The scale of the tableau may vary from miniature to life size, although life size re-creations often add greater realism.

Accessibility

- Ensure that disabled visitors are also able to enjoy the exhibit from various angles by providing wide walk ways, avoiding steps, seating, guidance to direction of flow. Some people may need reassurance before entering a re-construction in relation to what it involves e.g. loud bangs, flashing lights, movements, moving characters. This should be detailed before entering.

3.5.9 Dioramas and Models

Similar to tableaux and re-constructions, dioramas and models can help to add an element of realism to displays. Dioramas can help to place the exhibit, such as an animal in a natural history museum, in context. Models, such as the model of a battlefield or of an aeroplane wing, can present a three dimensional scene helping to interpret the subject more effectively.

- Lighting will affect the clarity of the exhibit and help to highlight specific detail. Care must be taken when lighting displays that the lights do not cause reflection or glare. This is particularly important for visually impaired people.
- The use of cut-away sections can provide an interior view revealing 'hidden' detail.
- Animation can help to add realism and enhance interest in the display.

Accessibility

- Ensure that all have access to a good vantage point for models; this might mean having a ramped platform to enable a wheelchair user to view.
- If there is animation without audio commentary, consideration should be given to including this to enhance the experience for a visually impaired visitor.

3.5.10 Cages and Enclosures

The presentation of enclosed animals has seen some changes, and the following points could be considered at zoos and animal collections.

- Enclosures landscaped to create more natural and spacious environments allowing visitors to watch animals within more realistic settings.
- Clearer visibility of the animals, helping to maximise the quality of the visitor experience for all ages with the needs of younger or wheelchair visitors met with clear sight lines at lower heights.
- Where appropriate, greater access to animals, as found at children's zoos and farm attractions, can add value to the visitor experience. Where an animal is less easy to see, there can be a suggestion on where to look. For example, 'If you cannot see the otter, look at the base of the tree, where it is often resting.'

Accessibility

- Try sitting in front of enclosures to experience the enclosure/cage from a different vantage point, is there anything that would enhance the experience for someone viewing from this level?
- Consider the positioning of labels, signs etc that explain what is in the cage/enclosure. Ensure that they are readable from all levels and offer pictures, large text and background information.

3.5.11 Living Reconstructions, Live Demonstrations and Interaction

To add realism to an exhibit staff may be dressed in costume, re-enact an historical event or recreate a period setting. Reconstructions, such as the building of an Anglo Saxon house, may be used to complement an exhibit. To help educate the visitor demonstrations, for example, milking a goat, or interactive displays, such as trying on a suit of armour, may be used.

- The use of costumes, accessories and working historical apparatus will help to add realism and enhance the visitor experience.
- A good viewing point to the re-enactment or reconstruction is an important aspect. Some demonstrations may need to be cordoned off, but where access is available or where clear sight lines have been provided, the quality of the visitor experience will be enhanced. This aspect becomes more important where detailed work, such as lace making or basket weaving, is being carried out.
- Demonstrations will need to be clearly visible and the use of tiered seating may help in larger spectacles, for example, sea lion displays. Demonstrations may be complemented with information boards and clarity of information and display of times of shows will be important considerations.
- Interactive displays may add to the visitors' enjoyment and items will need to be well presented and maintained.

Accessibility

- Where tiered seating is provided the ability for a wheelchair user or mobility aid user to access this should be provided. This might mean giving them priority at the front or allowing space at the back if the entrance is at the top.
- Ensure that displays, where possible, are at a height that can be enjoyed by all.

3.5.12 Cleanliness and Maintenance

The cleanliness and maintenance of the displays and exhibits will either enhance or detract from the overall appearance of the attraction.

- Regular and effective cleaning schedules and maintenance programmes should ensure high standards are achieved. With cleaning there should be close attention to detail, especially at eye level and at areas where dust may collect, such as light fixtures. In outdoor areas, extra attention should be given to wind blown, litter trap areas.
- In larger attractions, maintenance programmes may need to be supplemented with an effective maintenance reporting system, to highlight problems as they occur. Staff should be encouraged to collect litter as they see it to maintain high standards during opening hours.
- Where exhibits and interactive displays are not working, signage should be provided to inform the visitor.

Accessibility

- Remember that a wheelchair user sees everything from a different height & angle so attention to all areas is essential. Try sitting down in front of the area being cleaned to view from the correct angle/height.
- Where there are likely to be areas of hazard e.g. wet, staff must alert visitors of the hazard, particularly those with a disability. Beware of temporary signs in walkways which should be kept clear.

Sustainable Tourism

- Consider using environmentally friendly and chlorine free cleaning products, such as micro fibre cloths that reduce the amount of cleaning liquid required.

3.6 Quality of Interpretation

The interpretation of the displays, exhibits or activities may be in a variety of formats, usually visual, but could also include other sensory perceptions. The quality of the visitor experience will be affected by the level and variety of interpretation used and the content of the information will need to be authentic, accurate and significant. Information may be based on fact or opinion. For example, at an art museum the facts may include dates, the artist and the medium whereas the opinion may be a subjective explanation of the subject matter or of the artist's intentions. Some attractions, such as theme parks or piers will have no obvious interpretation. However, the theme itself may be interpreted by the appearance of the attraction or the use of actors, sounds or smells.

3.6.1 Visual Interpretation

3.6.1.1 Signs, Panels and Labels

Signs, panels and labels may provide a common format for interpretation and the visitor experience may be enhanced by consistency of delivery, with attention in the following areas.

- The relevance and the significance of the information provided. This may be factually based or opinion which could add interest.
- The depth of the information and how appropriate it is to the target market. This may include foreign languages, diagrams or drawings. Braille, tactile and easy read is also a consideration.
- The visitor's comprehension of the information will be important. Different levels of information could be available on one panel or in a series of panels. These, if following a logical pattern, could be sequentially numbered. Where individual panels are more complex, for example, botanical information, an explanatory panel, such as 'how to read these signs', could be used. Every method to breakdown complex information should be considered, particularly for those who have a learning disability or where English is not their first language.
- Linkage can be made with familiar objects, such as '...as heavy as a double-decker bus...', to enhance comprehension.
- The information can direct or link the visitor with another relevant part of the attraction or the subject. Where linkage is demonstrated this can greatly enhance the quality of the visitor experience.
- Label information may need to be succinct, but could link to more detailed interpretation in an information folder.
- Panels may be chalkboards or whiteboards to offer flexibility in updating changing information, such as for new animal arrivals or seasonal variations such as migrating birds on a reserve.
- Viewpoints, such as bird hides and observation points, will be enhanced where they are equipped with identification charts.
- Care should be taken with displays that feature a numbered key panel to ensure that all items match the key. Any items that have been removed could be indicated with an appropriate explanation.
- Plans and cutaway diagrams can provide an insight to otherwise 'hidden' areas adding to the visitor's understanding of the subject.

3.6.1.2 Hand - held information

Hand held information will enable the visitor to bring the interpretation closer to the subject. This offers an effective method of providing interpretation where information panels may be inappropriate.

- Guidebooks can offer a greater depth of information for the visitor. Some attractions may offer a short guide, a long guide and a souvenir guide to offer different visitors different levels of interpretation.
- Guidebooks should include a plan to help the visitor orientate themselves within the attraction.
- Larger guides could contain a contents page to allow easy access to information.
- Hand held site plans may be provided on entry or within the attraction and should be user friendly with key facilities highlighted.
- Laminated sheets, bats or room folders can allow more detailed information to be provided on a specific feature, exhibit or area of the attraction. These can use images to reveal 'hidden' areas or detail.
- Outdoor hand held guides, such as nature trails, garden guides and arboretum lists can be available. Trail leaflets should advise on distances, terrain and expected duration. Colour coded trails should be clearly depicted and signed. Where not to scale this should be made clear.

Accessibility

- Consider colours and their backgrounds. When putting green or red on something that is brown e.g. wood, they may blend into each other for the majority of people who have green/red colour blindness. Consider using only primary colours and avoid green and red.
- When producing guides, leaflets or sheets, either produce all in large, clear print or design some in large font to help visually impaired people.

3.6.1.3 Models

A model may be at scale or life size, static or animated, whole or cut away and if presented well, can assist interpretation greatly. Tactile models that visitors can touch can enhance the experience for all, including visually impaired and learning impaired visitors.

- The model may provide interpretation for the exhibit or may be the exhibit itself. In each case the size will be important to promote a greater understanding of the subject and will help to enliven the interpretation. For example, a model of a house or a castle can offer a bird's eye view and a greater appreciation of the size of the estate.

- Models can offer a reconstruction of a ruin providing a three dimensional interpretation of the attraction. This may help the visitor visualise the attraction better than a two dimensional picture can, enhancing the quality of the visitor experience.
- With cut-aways the use of colouring or 'guided' lighting can provide a clearer understanding of the workings of the exhibit, such as a model of an internal combustion engine, nuclear power generator or winery.

Accessibility

- Models should be carefully positioned to ensure enjoyment by all. Where time is needed to view the model seats

3.6.1.4 Tableau, Dioramas, Re-Constructions and Authentic Settings

In interpreting the subject the backdrop can help to add authenticity. This may be contrived, as in a diorama, or authentic, as in the case of a mediaeval kitchen.

- The detail will help enhance the interpretation. This could include, for example, original newspapers, photographs and plants in a Victorian room.
- An authentic setting, for example, a mediaeval kitchen, could be enlivened with 'food', smells and sounds.

3.6.1.5 Demonstration

Demonstration can bring understanding to a process, such as glass making at a factory attraction. Demonstration can also enliven the quality of the visitor experience by recreating an event such as a jousting tournament or demonstration of thatching.

- The operator can enhance the interpretation by explaining the demonstration, for example, a commentary during penguin feeding.
- Demonstrations may be provided on televisions but 'live action' can help to further enhance the quality of the visitor experience, such as a demonstration of ploughing.
- At some attractions the operator may have direct experience of the skill or product, such as a miller at a windmill, and can offer a personal insight to the demonstration. Demonstrations may be at set times during the day and these should be clearly advertised, ideally at the location of the event. Demonstration may also allow for visitor participation, further enhancing the quality of the visitor experience.

3.6.2 Audio Interpretation

This will involve many different styles and formats which can help to humanise the visitor experience.

3.6.2.1 Live Commentary

This form of interpretation can respond to visitors whereas a push button recorded commentary cannot. The human factor can significantly add to the quality of the visitor experience.

- Some commentators may be experts in their own field, such as a zoo keeper, and they will offer a more animated style of delivery which will be complementary to the activity, such as feeding. Training is essential, to ensure that while the subject is known, knowledge can be imparted effectively. For example, at animal feedings, the keeper's talk could adapt to the type of audience and could respond to impromptu questions. An important aspect will be advising visitors of other talks and demonstrations.
- Room Stewards and guides may be able to offer a more descriptive level of delivery and may be able to talk on the historical detail as well as offer more expansive knowledge such as the social history of the attraction. Training, again, will be essential to ensure that the delivery is pitched at the right level.
- At various attractions, ranging from historic re-creations to theme parks, the quality of delivery of a costumed 'commentator' could be enhanced with affected speech; the commentary becomes a performance. The performance, if effective, can engage the visitor providing a more memorable experience.

Accessibility

- Where live commentary is provided staff must be aware that visitors may be lip reading so where possible face the audience. Also consideration could be given to providing a hearing loop so visitors with a hearing aid may be able to hear the commentary.

3.6.2.2 Recordings

Other forms of commentary without interaction can be delivered by audio systems, such as portable audio guides and static listening posts, which can be activated by buttons or sensors. In all cases, clarity of sound will be important and competing sounds should be avoided.

- Portable audio guides
A more succinct level of information may be effective via the audio guide with detailed interpretation provided elsewhere to supplement the commentary. The clarity of sound will be important and a volume control will benefit those with hearing difficulties. The use of different voices (including male and female voices with varied voice pitch),

stereo sound, background sounds and music can all be used to further enhance the experience (but at points that will not interfere with hearing the commentary). Foreign language versions could be offered, where appropriate.

- Fixed audio point
These could be static listening posts activated by the visitor by a push button or by lifting a telephone receiver or headphones. Alternatively, it could be surround-sound initiated by a sensor as the visitor enters an area offering atmospheric sounds such as aircraft, typewriters or wildlife. The quality of the interpretation will be affected by the clarity, depth, authenticity and relevance of the sounds, and the commentary. Other considerations could include variations in the commentary and offering an alternative viewpoint such as the cabin boy rather than the captain. Where telephone points are provided, the post could be titled, the length of the recording advertised and the recording could reset each time the receiver is lifted. Where the recording is 'yesterday's witness', information could be given on the witness, such as their name, age and a brief summary of the audio.
- Induction Loops
Where appropriate, induction loops can be provided to assist some visitors with hearing difficulties who have an appropriate hearing aid.
- Audio visual
Audio visual can offer an enhanced level of understanding by combining audio and visual interpretation. Important quality considerations will be the use of stereo sound, or surround-sound. The clarity of the sound will be improved by elimination of competing noises in AV areas. Subtitles could be used where sound spillage is unavoidable. This would also aid visitors with hearing difficulties. A hearing induction loop will also help.

Accessibility

- Bear in mind that when selecting voices to record that many people with hearing loss lose higher tones first and find it easier to hear lower tones. Therefore lower female voices or low male voices are best.
- Portable audio guides could also be used to give verbal directions to help visitors locate areas or exhibits etc
- A transcript of an audio guide could be available to people who are unable to hear the recording.

3.6.3 Tactile Interpretation

This can involve demonstrations that include staff or the visitor alone. Tactile interpretation, or 'hands-on' often enlivens the interpretation considerably by involving the visitor and helping them to understand a process, principle or subject.

- **Animate**
The advantage of tactile interpretation is that it will give greater access to the subject matter and a greater understanding through a higher level of involvement. For example, at a Bird of Prey centre, handling the birds can help to enhance the quality of the visitor experience by improving the understanding of the animal. With family groups this can also help to enhance the experience of the whole group by adding an exciting element to the visit.
- **Inanimate**
Handling items such as clothing will illustrate the feel and weight of the item. Demonstrations may be activated by the visitor through mechanical or other means to illustrate 'how it works'.
- **Braille**
Tactile interpretation for visually impaired visitors may be provided with Braille signs, e.g. in a sensory garden.

Accessibility

- Provision of tactile floor plans, exhibits and displays will add to anyone's experience especially those with a visual impairment or learning disability.

3.6.4 Smell, Taste and Sensation

A less used form of interpretation which can add another dimension to the experience. Often linked with food or drink manufacturing, it can be used to further enhance the quality of the visitor experience.

- Complementary interpretation, for example, in a winery where a guide describes the smell and taste, can often help the visitor understand and interpret the subject better.
- In a sensory garden, smell and sometimes taste, will be an effective means of interpretation. This should be accompanied with information on the plants, their smells and their uses.
- Manufactured smells can help interpret a recreated scene, and are often self evident where the visual recreation can be obviously linked with the smell. For example, the smell of sweets in a Victorian confectioners.
- Temperature change can be used effectively to enhance interpretation. For example, the sensation of heat from a 'furnace' in a glass works or cold in an aquarium display of polar regions.
- Smell, taste and sensation will enhance the visitor experience, particularly for those who have loss of some senses e.g. sight loss, hearing loss etc.

3.6.5 Creative Participation

Where the visitor can interact or become involved with interpretation the learning experience can be heightened. This type of education becomes in effect a type of entertainment, but it should provide lasting knowledge and a degree of excitement sometimes perceived as fun. There is not only a need to be entertained but also engaged. The participation should seek to engage emotion, which results from becoming involved. This also serves to make an impression on the memory of the visitor, an all important point in referral and repeat visits and of course, enhances the quality of the visitor experience.

- Participation could include trying on clothing, brass rubbing or handling an animal. Visitor participation could be solo, in pairs, in a group or by tutoring. Where tutoring is provided, such as making a ceramic pot, the skill of the trainer will be important in providing an informative experience. Where solo activities are provided, such as lifting a sword, additional information will be required to complement the activity. Where volunteers are invited from an audience there should be consideration of the visitor and a balance between entertainment, showmanship and avoiding embarrassment.

Examples of activities include: -

- providing a memento of the visit, such as pressing a Roman coin at an archaeological museum
- learning complex principles through hands on exhibits, such as building a model bridge in a science attraction
- operating machinery, such as working a JCB digger at a science park attraction
- completing a puzzle or quiz, such as on a children's trail in a nature park attraction.
- recording a commentary, such as at a sports stadium museum.
- performing an activity, such as milking a model cow at a farm attraction, with a certificate provided to the children who take part.
- assisting in a bird of prey show.

Accessibility

- When involving visitors in an activity consider its suitability for disabled people.
 - Can everyone physically get to the area of activity or are there obstacles like steps, rough terrain, poor lighting?
 - Can everyone reach (in height) the activity?
 - Can the activity be undertaken from a seated position?
 - Does the activity provide contrast and visual stimulation?
 - If sounds are part of the activity is there a method for someone with a hearing impairment taking part?
 - Are all the limitations to taking part highlighted or promoted e.g. age restrictions for mechanical operating
 - If colours form part of the activity is green/red colour blindness considered?
 - Are allergies considered?
 - Is protective clothing provided for those who may be allergic e.g. in a mill the fine grains cause reactions – are masks available if required?

3.7 Appearance, Attitude and Knowledge of Staff

If all staff have customer contact then they need to be easily identifiable including the cleaners, gardeners and maintenance staff. While all staff may be able to deal with simple enquiries key staff must be able to deal with more specific and detailed questions. Training should include disability awareness to offer service to disabled visitors.

- The attraction should have a positive attitude to customer care achieved where appropriate through staff training to ensure consistency in customer service.
- Key staff should be equipped to respond to enquiries through training or reference materials. This can allow them to expand upon points raised to give a more comprehensive answer without being unnecessarily discursive or vague.
- Answers should be pitched for the audience to ensure they comprehend the information.

Accessibility

- Disability equality training is key for all front line staff particularly those who regularly provide direct customer service.
- Training on disability equality could be integrated into staff induction procedures.

Sustainable Tourism

- All staff could be briefed/trained on the establishment's environmental policy and if relevant, membership in any green tourism management schemes.

3.8 Other Areas

Other areas, which could impact upon the quality of the visitor experience, could include play areas or picnic areas.

3.8.1 Picnic Areas

- Where picnic areas are provided they should be conveniently located. This may be in an area aside the main attraction, within an open area providing space for playing or in an area providing a view. Alternatively, this could be indoors and themed to link in with the style of the attraction.
- Outdoor furniture should all be well maintained, with needs of mobility impaired visitors considered.
- Grassed areas should be well kept. Areas around picnic tables and seating could be suitably surfaced to prevent wear and furniture moved occasionally to prevent surface wear.
- Cleanliness will be an important consideration in picnic areas and there should be suitable refuse bins and regular litter sweeps.

Accessibility

- Where a picnic area is on grass or uneven terrain consideration should be given to providing part of the area with good surface or short even grass or smooth surface.
- Consideration should be given to wheelchair users and those with mobility impairment when providing picnic tables. Many people will be unable to negotiate the traditional picnic bench style so provision of alternatives with and without arms is important.
- Where the route to the picnic area is on a slope or undulates, consideration should be given to providing at least one area which is flat, easy to access and provides alternative seating.

Sustainable Tourism

- Recycling is traditionally seen as a 'behind the scenes process' and not often dealt with in the quality guidance, but visitors can help with recycling and many are used to sorting and recycling waste products at home. There are plenty of opportunities to provide facilities that will assist visitors to help the establishment with its recycling programme, and for the management to communicate its recycling commitment.

3.8.2 Play Areas

- Play areas should be conveniently and appropriately located, possibly in an area separate from the main attraction or close to a catering outlet.
- The range of equipment could cater for the needs of different age groups, including a toddler play area and an adventure playground, if appropriate.
- The intrinsic quality of the equipment may vary depending on the style of the attraction but all items should be well maintained and safe to use.
- The quality of the facility should allow safe and secure use. This may include the use of fencing to prevent children running into other areas of the attraction or towards roads and to keep dogs out. The provision of seating for parents can enhance quality.
- The type of surfacing should be suitable, possibly a loose fill material, such as hardwood chips, or a synthetic material with some 'give' to it. The playing area may be edged to contain loose fill material.
- Cleanliness will be an important consideration in play areas and there should be suitable refuse bins and regular litter sweeps, especially where loose fill material is used.

Accessibility

- Consider providing a viewing point on hard standing for play areas to enable visitors who use a mobility aid with wheels to get close enough. Loose chips etc are not easily negotiated with a wheeled mobility aids.
- Consider play equipment with varying colours, tactile areas and sounds for disabled children.

3.9 Cleanliness

Cleanliness and tidiness will impact in the quality of the visitor experience by either enhancing or detracting from the overall quality of the attraction.

- Attractions should consider the frequency of cleaning to ensure high standards are achieved and maintained, especially during busier periods.
- Consideration should be given to effective litter sweeps, which can cater for wet waste, as well as dry, for example, spilt ice cream and drinks.
- Known litter traps, such as wind blown areas, will require additional attention.
- In outdoor attractions, such as theme parks, zoos and gardens, 'hidden' areas, such as refuse areas can be screened to maintain a tidy appearance.

- Consideration could be given to providing recycling bins to sort plastic, paper, cans and other waste. Suitable receptacles may also be provided for cigarette ends or for dog litter. It is acknowledged that some attractions have very effective litter policies without any receptacles being provided.

Accessibility

- Cleanliness could also impact on disabled visitors, for example picking up chewing gum and sweeping up loose gravel and twigs etc would make it easier to use wheeled mobility aids and would prevent wheels jamming.
- The provision of recycling bins, refuse bins and their location should be considered as they may be a hazard to visually impaired people or block routes for those using a wheeled mobility aid.
- Consideration of the height of refuse bins should be considered for example they should be accessible from a lower height i.e. a seated position – also helping children or people of smaller stature.
- Foot pedal operated bins are not suitable for all to use particularly for those with restricted mobility in their legs.
- Refuse bins etc should not require too much manual dexterity to open/use.

Sustainable Tourism

- Consider using environmentally friendly and chlorine free cleaning products, such as micro fibre cloths that reduce the amount of cleaning liquid required.

4 Toilets

This includes

- Layout and Design
- Fixtures and Fittings
- Maintenance and Cleanliness

Core criteria

- Where provided, toilet facilities should be in a suitable location, adequate for the size of the attraction and may be unisex.
- The toilet facilities must include the provision of WC's, wash hand basins, toilet paper, toilet roll holders and hand drying facilities.
- The décor, fixtures and fittings must be maintained in an acceptable condition with facilities adequately ventilated.
- A good standard of cleanliness must be maintained at all times.

Quality Guidance & best practice

Where toilets are provided, the quality and range of the facilities and of baby changing and facilities for disabled visitors (if available) will have an impact on the quality of the visitor experience. Direction to and location of facilities should be highlighted and should be considered within the visitor journey e.g. if the majority of visitors have a long journey before arrival it would be advisable to have toilets close to the entrance or where appropriate in the car park. Toilets near catering facilities are normally advisable.

4.1 Layout and Design

In many attractions the design of facilities may be constrained by the overall size and shape of the building. In all cases, consideration should be given to the ease with which the visitor can use the facility.

- The design of the facilities should allow easy access to all areas, such as cubicles and hand dryers, and easy use of all fixtures, such as washbasins and soap dispensers. In more family friendly attractions, fixtures should be suitably positioned for children to use, with for example, low set wash basin, soap dispenser and urinal. Alternatively, a step up could be provided.

- Lighting should be appropriately positioned to allow easy use of all areas, such as by mirrors and over cubicles. Sensor lighting and low energy light bulbs could be considered.
- Overall quality may be enhanced where baby changing facilities are accessible to both sexes and, if space allows, this could be in a dedicated area. Space could allow easy manoeuvring with a push chair.
- Facilities for disabled visitors will be suitably designed. Consideration may need to be given to facilities being used by visually impaired visitors with contrasting coloured fittings and fixtures and wall or floor finishes (avoid all white finishes). Facilities for disabled visitors may also be used by visitors with restricted mobility but not wheelchair users. The location of fixtures, including handrails, mirrors and hooks, should therefore allow easy use by all users.
- Decoration may be styled to match the general theme of the attraction. In a baby changing facility, wall decoration or mobiles could be used to hold babies' attention. At dwell points, suitable information could be fixed to promote events and other facilities.

Accessibility

- Where toilets are provided consideration should be given to providing as much accessibility as possible. Careful design will enable maximum benefit to all. Consider the height of everything in cubicles and ensure that shelves, toilet flush, toilet roll, sanitary disposal are all within an arms reach of the toilet, but should not intrude on the transfer space.
- Disabled facilities should never be used for storage as it cannot be known when these facilities will be needed, sometimes quite urgently by some disabled people.
- Paths to and from the facilities should be clear from obstacles and hazards.
- Standard cubicles should provide colour contrast and support rails where feasible.
- Within accessible toilets items such as rubbish bins, sanitary bins etc should not be located in the transfer space next to the toilet.
- Accessible toilets should preferably be unisex to allow access to carers of the opposite sex to the person they are caring for.

4.2 Fixtures and Fittings

A higher standard of quality may be achieved where a greater range of fixtures are provided and the quantity of fixtures is sufficient for visitor numbers.

- Fixtures could be matching and of high quality including, for example, mixer taps and liquid soap dispensers.
- A wide range of fixtures and fittings may be provided including hooks on cubicle doors, mirrors, flat surfaces and waste and sanitary bins, where appropriate.
- Baby changing facilities may include a hygienic and secure changing surface with safety straps and disposable covers. There may be adequate work surface and bag hooks, nappy sacks, a nappy vending machine and suitable waste bins. Where space allows the facility may also contain a WC for the parent to use and a toddler seat. If appropriate, a baby feeding room could be available.
- Where there is a positive approach to the environment, this may be evident with the use of sensor taps, energy efficient hand driers, dual flush WC's and low energy light bulbs.

Accessibility

- Consideration could be made to providing adult changing facilities for those whose disability leaves them incontinent. For more information refer to www.changingplaces.org
- Heights and location of all fixtures and fittings are key for people with disabilities, consider those in a seated position and those with a visual impairment where fixtures may cause a hazard e.g. hand dryer protruding into the exit route.
- Consider tactile taps labelled with hot or cold as appropriate.
- Directional signs should also be in large print, tactile and/or Braille.

Sustainable Tourism

- Use could be made of water saving devices such as 'Hippos' in toilet cistern and self closing/sensor taps with or without water flow restrictors.
- Use thermostatically controlled radiators and consider lower temperature settings for hot water.
- Source environmentally friendly paper hand towels, or install energy efficient hand driers.

4.3 Maintenance & Cleanliness

It is not only an expectation, but also an assumption of the visitor that facilities will be sound, well ventilated and clean.

- The quality of the finish will often complement the quality of maintenance and cleanliness. This may include the use of 'splash backs' by washbasins and hand dryers, tiled walls and tiled wall/floor junctions, where appropriate.
- Excellent standards of cleanliness will be achieved where there is attention to detail, including areas above and below eye level. Cleaning schedules could be displayed and kept up to date.
- Facilities should be well ventilated and could also be fresh smelling with the use of aerosol dispensers.
- Additional touches such as plants, flowers or potpourri could be appropriate in some circumstances, depending on the size, scale and type of attraction to further enhance overall quality standards.

Accessibility

- Floor coverings should be carefully considered so as not to cause a hazard to all, particularly those with an impairment.
- Wet areas should be regularly cleared and location of signage needs to be considered so as to not cause a hazard for visually or mobility impaired visitors.

Sustainable Tourism

- Consider using environmentally friendly and chlorine free cleaning products, such as micro fibre cloths that reduce the amount of cleaning liquid required.

5 Catering

This includes

- Layout and Design
- Range, Presentation and Quality of Food
- Appearance, Attitude and Efficiency of Staff
- Maintenance and Cleanliness

Core criteria

- The décor, fixtures and fittings may be functional but must all be well maintained with furniture in a sound, stable condition and appropriate for the purpose intended.
- Where seating is provided, there must be adequate circulation space, free of obstructions, for visitor's' comfort.
- Indoor seating areas should be adequately heated and ventilated to ensure the comfort of visitors and suitably illuminated to ensure a safe environment.
- All cooked food should be served at the appropriate temperature with menu descriptions accurate and prices clearly displayed.
- Staff need not be in a designated uniform or wearing a name badge, but must be easily distinguishable from visitors, appropriately dressed, clean and provide competent service dealing promptly and courteously with all visitors.
- A high standard of cleanliness maintained at all times.

Quality Guidance & best practice

Where catering facilities are available, the quality and staffing of the facility and range and quality of the menu will impact on the visitor experience. The catering may be operated by the attraction, a franchise or under separate ownership. In all cases, the visitor will often perceive the facility as an integral part of the attraction.

5.1 Layout and Design

In many attractions the scale and design of indoor catering facilities may be constrained by the shape and size of the building. Important considerations should therefore centre on visitor comfort and the ease with which they can use the facility.

- The visitor should be able to manoeuvre comfortably around the facility including between seating. This may be more important where the targeted market includes families with pushchairs, wheelchair users or elderly visitors with mobility impairment. Additional facilities such as high chairs could be provided.
- Where counter or self-service is in operation, there may be effective queue management. This could be either forced flow or free flow depending on the style and size of the facility. There should be a logical layout to the counter with items clearly visible, priced and within reach. Where there are tray slides, customers should be able to use these easily. Where cutlery and condiments are located separately, a tray slide (or rest) should also be provided.
- Where counter or self service is in operation, assistance or table service could be offered for disabled visitors.
- Menus should be visible and easy to read. For visitors with impaired sight large print or Braille versions could be available, where appropriate. The use of separate menu boards or table menus may be appropriate to highlight choices and aid ordering.
- Where take-aways are available, considerations could include:
 - multiple service points
 - nearby outdoor seating
 - conveniently located waste bins.
- Indoor areas should be well decorated, possibly themed to the general theme of the attraction and containing suitable relief, whilst outdoor areas could be landscaped. Fixed menus, which could enhance the decoration, need to be clearly visible and legible.

Accessibility

- Where barriers exist e.g. bollards, and tape for queues the width and turning space around these should be considered for people using mobility aids e.g. wheelchair.
- Barriers need to be located so that they do not cause a hazard for visually impaired people.
- A range of seating should be provided. Providing seating with and without arms will enable more people to be catered for. Some people need arms to guide them to the seat and some do not need them to enable transferring etc.
- Consideration of colours and contrast is important for people with a visual impairment and those with colour blindness. Care should be taken when writing on a black board – various colours cannot be seen and key information should always be written in white.

5.2 Range, Presentation and Quality of Food

The menu range will vary considerably between attractions depending upon their size, style and visitor mix. Different options could be available for different age groups, times of day and dietary requirements. Consideration could also be given to the quality of crockery, cutlery, glassware, napkins and, where appropriate, the presentation of food counters and plated dishes.

- The menu range could offer variety. This could include vegetarian options, child portions, afternoon teas and light lunches. Consideration should be given to visitors with food allergies or dietary needs e.g. wheat intolerance. Drink options (licensed and unlicensed) could include speciality teas, low sugar drinks, mineral waters and wine.
- Menus may be thematic containing traditional recipes or promoting local produce. The availability and promotion of 'freshly made', 'homemade', or 'locally produced' products can add distinction to the menu and further raise overall quality standards. Where items are produced locally or ingredients sourced locally, the supplier could be profiled to highlight the local connection and add further interest for the visitor. Consideration should be given to providing healthy options.
- Where table menus are provided, there should be sufficient quantity. Where items are displayed on a counter, they should all be clearly labelled.
- Where prepared food is displayed or plated, it should be of fresh appearance and served at the appropriate temperature, with items replenished as needed.
- Higher quality extras can enhance the presentational aspect, for example, matching crockery, cutlery and utensils. A range of sauces, dressings and other condiments may be provided. These could also be available for purchase in the shop.

Accessibility

- The colour and tone of crockery and cutlery should be selected to contrast with the tables to improve the experience for visually impaired visitors.
- Consider providing some large cutlery for people with limited dexterity in their hands e.g. arthritis sufferers.
- Consider providing for different food choices e.g. dairy free, wheat free, lactose free, nut free.

Sustainable Tourism

- In an attempt to support the local economy and reduce food miles, food and drink ingredients and products could be sourced locally.
- Staff dealing with food and food service should be fully briefed on the source and characteristics of local food and drink products.
- Menus containing local specialties could highlight the connection with local producers and really help differentiate your offering from your competitors. So highlight the connection with the local producers where-ever possible, and incorporate a little description of where ingredients are sourced, who the producer is and why you've chosen them.
- Opportunities exist in many areas through local farmer's forum, or local producer networks to build-up sustainable and rewarding relationships with local producers.

5.3 Appearance, Attitude and Efficiency of Staff

Training of all catering staff will be especially important to ensure consistency in customer service performance. It should include training that enables staff to respond positively to questions about other areas of the attraction as well as their own area. Training should include disability awareness to offer service to disabled visitors.

- There should be a positive attitude to customer care achieved where appropriate through staff training. Training could include all staff who may come into contact with customers, including chefs and cleaners.
- Staff should never be heard complaining and should be appropriately dressed, especially if handling food, well groomed and easily identifiable. This may be achieved with uniforms, name badges or a consistent style of dress.
- Staff should be knowledgeable of the menu, ingredients, prices, and where appropriate, the provenance of source ingredients or speciality dishes. Staff should be competent with any equipment, such as coffee machines or cash tills and a general knowledge of the attraction would also be important.
- In larger attractions staffing levels may be high and management should ensure that roles are clearly defined to maximise efficiency and ensure a smooth operation of the facility throughout service at all times. Where appropriate, the attraction should be geared up for coach or school groups and appropriate staffing levels, facilities and area to cope with a group.

- Where there is a distinctive service system the visitor's 'role' should be made clear. A system that can sometimes cause confusion is where hot food orders are taken at a self service counter. To assist, there could be clear information indicating the visitor's role, for example, 'locate your table first and then order' or there may be numbered tickets or table 'flags'. Calling out customers' names or dishes should be avoided. Where table service is provided, an efficient system to meet and greet customers should be in place.
- Disability awareness training is key to providing good customer service and is essential for all front line staff to ensure that they are aware of customers needs and are able to recognise when help is required.

Accessibility

- Disability equality training is key to providing good customer service and is essential for all front line staff to ensure that they are aware of customers needs and are able to recognise when help is required.

Sustainable Tourism

- Staff dealing with food and food service should be fully briefed on the source and characteristics of local food and drink products.

5.4 Maintenance and Cleanliness

An assumption of the customer will be for well maintained, clean and comfortable surroundings. Attention should be given to all areas, including areas which are visible to the customer yet inaccessible, such as open plan kitchens.

- All areas should be well maintained and particular attention should be given to outdoor furniture which can suffer from greater wear. Seating could be of matching quality and, whether indoors or outside, offer variation suitable for solo visitors, couples or family groups.
- Indoor areas should be effectively heated and ventilated and any outdoor seating may have umbrellas to provide shade.
- Lighting should be effective and could be imaginative, highlighting architectural points of interest.
- High standards of cleanliness could be achieved with close attention to detail, efficient clearing of tables (where appropriate, self clearing could be encouraged) and with all areas kept neat and tidy.
- Particular attention should be given to clearing outdoor tables and bins to reduce problems with wasps and birds which can impact on the quality of the visitor experience.

Sustainable Tourism

- Consider using environmentally friendly and chlorine free cleaning products, such as micro fibre cloths that reduce the amount of cleaning liquid required.
- White goods used front of house such as fridges and freezers, as well as any used back of house, e.g. washing machines, tumble dryers, dishwashers, should ideally carry EU energy ratings of either, A or B. If replacements are being sourced for broken down products please consider these options. Also, most Local Authorities should be able to advise on, or assist with the safe disposal of redundant white goods, please contact them for assistance. The website [directgov.uk](https://www.direct.gov.uk) signposts you to your local authority's contact details.

6 Retailing

This includes

- Layout and Design
 - Range and Presentation of Merchandise
 - Appearance, Attitude and Efficiency of Staff
 - Maintenance and Cleanliness

Core criteria

- The décor, fixtures, fittings and furniture all maintained in a sound condition.
- Prices accurate and clearly displayed.
- Staff need not be in a designated uniform or wearing a name badge, but must be easily distinguishable from visitors and deal promptly and courteously with all visitors.
- A high standard of cleanliness and tidiness maintained at all times.

Quality Guidance & best practice

At some attractions retailing may be a major reason for visiting, such as at a craft centre or factory, and at others retailing may be more limited in scale. In all cases, the comfort of the visitor and quality of customer care will be important to ensure a high quality visitor experience.

6.1 Layout and Design

Many attractions will try to ensure visitor flow includes the retailing section to encourage secondary spend. As with other areas of the attraction, such as catering, the scale of the retailing may be constrained by the shape and size of the building. Consideration should be given to how easily customers are able to browse, access merchandise and make purchases. This should include manoeuvring of mobility aids, buggies and wheelchairs.

- Where the retail pay point is shared, for example with admissions, the pay point should be obvious. This may be achieved with dedicated tills, separate points for each use or very clear signage. In larger retailing areas, there may be multiple pay points in various locations to minimise queues.

- Where visitor flow is high it may be managed with a one-way system for entry and exit.
- Where space is restricted some visitors, such as those with prams or in wheelchairs, may be deterred from browsing and more open aisles could be a consideration. Where narrow aisles or pinch points are unavoidable, an alternative service could be considered.
- The positioning of merchandise should consider the target markets, such as child related items low down. The location of some items may benefit from being separated, such as books and children's toys.
- The retail area should be well decorated, possibly styled to match the general theme of the attraction.
- The style of display units may vary but there could be consistency in design and quality.

Accessibility

- Aisles should be free from clutter.
- Lighting levels should be adequate to enable visitors to read prices, details etc. They should be diffuse and not cause glare. Pay areas should be well lit to enable lip reading where required.
- Routes into and out of the retailing should be accessible and free from obstacles or barriers. If this is not possible alternatives should be offered.
- Heights of counters should be considered and a lower section provided to be more inclusive to all visitors.
- The height of merchandise should be considered for people who will be viewing in a seated position or children, and other visitors of short stature. This will also ensure maximisation of stock sales.
- There should be good signage with routes where necessary. Entrance and exit signage should be viewed from all areas of the retail outlet.
- Doors should be as wide as possible to enable as many people as possible to enter the retail store/outlet.

6.2 Range, Quality and Presentation of Merchandise

The range and quality of merchandise will vary considerably between attractions, depending on their style, size, visitor mix and opening times. The style of presentation may vary but it should always be attractive and eye catching with items clearly visible.

- The range and quality of merchandise should be suitable for the visitor mix whether they be children, adults, laymen, enthusiasts, specialists or overseas visitors. For example, pocket money items for children, foreign format DVD's for overseas visitors.
- Where locally made products, such as pottery or art, are sold, thought could be given to displaying information about the artist.
- In larger attractions the range may be more extensive but should still suit the style of the attraction meeting visitors' expectations, such as bird guides at a nature reserve and model cars at a motor museum.
- Displays may be enhanced with the use of imaginative lighting, different display units and where appropriate, full and tidy stock levels. Some units may allow circulation around the display, and these can present merchandise on all sides. Merchandise should always face the visitor, for example labels facing front on jars of preserve, and thematic sections could be considered with the use of colour, symmetry and height used to create eye catching displays.
- For some products, such as fragrances, testers may be available. Where clothing is sold, such as caps, mirrors could be located close by.
- Consideration could be given to visitor 'essentials', which could include:
 - stamps, where post cards are for sale
 - memory cards and batteries for digital cameras, films or disposable cameras
 - branded or souvenir items, including carrier bags
 - where necessary, shopping baskets may be provided and where appropriate suitable trolleys provided for example a plant centre.
 - Health products e.g. sanitary products, tissues,

Accessibility

- Where possible labels should be in large print.
- Lighting should be adequate in areas of presentation and should not cause glare or face visitors.

- Ease of circulation should be considered for all to ensure there are no bottle necks or areas where turning a wheelchair, trolley, mobility aid or buggy etc is impossible.
- Staff should offer assistance where it may be needed to carry merchandise, particularly for someone who has restricted mobility or visual impairment.
- Where baskets are provided (or trolleys) these should be (where possible) compatible with wheelchairs or mobility aids or assistance offered where this is not possible.

Sustainable Tourism

- Sourcing locally produced food, drink, arts, crafts and gifts products for the attractions retail outlets will help to reinforce the corporate commitment to sustainable management and support the local community/economy.
- Sustainable alternatives to plastic bags could be sourced and packaging on gift items reduced as far as possible.

6.3 Appearance, Attitude and Efficiency of Staff

As with the other areas of the attraction, the importance of well trained staff cannot be overstated. The attitude and efficiency of staff when dealing with customers will impact greatly on the visitor experience. Staff should be easily identifiable and effective training should ensure consistent standards of customer care and efficiency. Training should include disability awareness to offer service to disabled visitors.

- There should be a positive attitude to customer care achieved where appropriate through staff training to ensure consistency in customer service.
- Staff should never be heard complaining and should be smartly presented, well groomed and of a neat and tidy appearance appropriate to the style of the attraction. This may be achieved with the use of uniforms, name badges or wearing tops featuring the attraction's logo. At some attractions, staff could be in costume to link the theme of the attraction with the retail area.
- Where retail areas are temporarily unmanned, there should be clear signage to ensure staff can be easily summoned.
- In larger attractions where there are multiple retail areas and higher staffing levels, supervision may be needed. This may include clearly defining staff duties and effective training to ensure staff are knowledgeable regarding the merchandise and have a good general knowledge of the attraction and events.
- Staff should be competent in the use of any equipment, for example, tills and credit card machines.

- Where the attraction has specialised retailing, such as a plant centre, specialised knowledge should be readily available.

Accessibility

- Disability equality training is key to providing good customer service for all staff who have contact with visitors.

6.4 Maintenance and Cleanliness

As with all other areas of the attraction, the customer expectation will be for well maintained, clean surroundings.

- The retailing section will often contain many dust traps because of the numerous displays, some of which may be semi-permanent. Attention to detail will be important and regular cleaning will be needed to establish and maintain high standards. This may include attention to the following:
 - areas above and below eye level
 - the merchandise itself and any units and shelves
 - inaccessible, yet visible areas, such as behind the serving counter or in storage areas
 - the area should be well ventilated and fresh smelling
 - in outdoor areas, such as at plant centres, areas should be swept.

Accessibility

- Remember that wheelchair users will see the cleanliness of a place from a different height/angle. Consider looking at the retail outlet from a different height/angle to ensure that the displays are attractive to all.

Sustainable Tourism

- Consider using environmentally friendly and chlorine free cleaning products, such as micro fibre cloths that reduce the amount of cleaning liquid required.
- White goods used front of house such as fridges and freezers, as well as any used back of house, e.g. washing machines, tumble dryers, dishwashers, should ideally carry EU energy ratings of either, A or B. If replacements are being sourced for broken down products please consider these options. Also, most Local Authorities should be able to advise on, or assist with the safe disposal of redundant white goods, please contact them for assistance. The website [directgov.uk](https://www.direct.gov.uk) signposts you to your local authority's contact details.

7 Case Studies

7.1 New Developments

Situation

A large zoo attraction with an extensive animal collection was in the process of developing their enclosures. The original enclosures were showing their age and reflected an outdated appearance. A number of new enclosures had been developed for some of the larger animals. These enclosures had generated widespread publicity and provided more natural environments for the animals and a more exciting experience for visitors.

The next for redevelopment was the sea lion enclosure. The construction could have a negative impact on the overall quality of the visitor experience. The disruption for the visitor would include noise disturbance, dust and visitor flow around the zoo.

Analysis and Objectives

The main objective was to avoid excessive disruption. The intention was to turn a negative situation into a positive one. At the same time, excitement had to be generated and information provided on how the changes would enhance the sea lion's environment.

While it was acknowledged that the changes were going to create short-term disruptions, the longer-term benefits far outweighed these. What was required was communicating these changes positively to the visitor. Plans had been developed for the new enclosure and artist's impressions created to portray full colour views. The artwork showed the new enclosure from different angles, including views of a walk-through under water tunnel with sea lions swimming above and visitors (reflecting the core family market) viewing below. The dates of the construction work was planned to take place during one full calendar year.

Action

The new development was promoted at the zoo entrance under the heading of 'The Changing Face of Your Zoo'. The date for the construction work was advertised with information and two of the artist impressions displayed. On entering the zoo all visitors were provided with a hand-held orientation plan. This was redesigned each year to show changes and the new development was highlighted as 'New Sea Lion Enclosure, Coming Soon'.

At the location for the new enclosure the site was fenced off and during the course of the year the site became a very active area of the zoo. Towards the end of the year soft landscaping was added and the thematic design began to take shape.

Throughout construction an update board kept visitors informed of the work. The board was in the same style as that at the entrance, 'The Changing Face of Your Zoo'. The board showed the timetable for the works with the expected completion date. More artist impressions of the new enclosure were displayed, this time showing the underwater tunnel. A photo board was kept up to date showing progress of work from the initial site to the first excavations to the current situation.

Alongside the information boards on the new development was information of zoo membership, season tickets and the child membership, the 'Tiger Club'. All changes were featured in the quarterly membership newsletter sent to all season ticket holders and 'Tiger Club' members.

The current enclosure for the sea lions continued to display the animals and feed or talks continued three times a day. The one change made to the talk during this period was the advice at the end on the exciting new home being built for the sea lions, and the final farewell including '...don't forget to see us again soon in our new home.'

Results and Benefits

The works did create the expected disruptions with noise and dust and diversions needed to guide the visitor around the site. The promotion of the changes generated interest from visitors. Anecdotal feedback from staff indicated that season ticket holders took a keen interest with enquiries regarding the development. The information boards caught visitor's attention at the entrance and the construction site became a stop on many visitors' journey around the zoo. The dwell time at the information boards was measured as equal to the dwell time at some of the enclosures.

Membership sales were up that year (whether this was directly caused by the development was uncertain, although it was perceived as a positive factor).

7.2 Orientation

Situation

A large city centre science attraction is based in five large buildings within a defined site. Each building is themed on a different subject and could be visited as stand alone museums or all five could be visited during a single visit. Dwell times in each vary considerably, from walk-through galleries to interactive displays. In some buildings visitors can watch demonstrations and have an opportunity to ask questions. A recognised problem, which is commonly brought up during customer research and visitor surveys, is the difficulty in orientating yourself through the site and within the individual buildings. Visitors have commented that they had missed a demonstration because they could not find it. Some galleries were infrequently visited and research has shown that many visitors were unaware of the full range of exhibits to be seen.

Analysis and Objectives

The main objective was to improve signage throughout the site and ensure visitors did not leave wondering whether they had seen everything. It was realised that if all aspects of the museum were seen, the dwell time could be more than 1 day and this could be promoted as a strength of the museum. Frequently asked questions to staff included "where are the toilets?", "where is the loom demonstration?" and "is there a good café nearby?". This last question was especially frustrating as the attraction had two catering outlets; one offering light snacks and drinks.

Action

The starting point for developing effective orientation was visitor needs. All visitors would need to know the layout of the site, the location of the main buildings, the range of content available, and the location of key facilities, such as toilets, cafes, restaurants and shops. Each building followed a theme and the visitor could decide to visit one, some or all during a single visit. The important point was to ensure they clearly knew where to go, and possibly where they may want to go on their next visit.

The solution most favoured was based on simplicity. A numbering system for the buildings was developed with the main entrance (and usually first building visitors saw) identified as Building 1. A logical visitor flow from this point was identified and provided the basis for numbering the other buildings. Linked to the numbering was colour. Each number was represented in a coloured circle and positioned above the main entrances. A series of orientation boards were developed which depicted a bird's eye view of the entire site. Each building was shaded in the appropriate colour with the number superimposed clearly. Alongside

the orientation plan was a listing of what to see in each building. These were listed on the appropriate coloured shaded background. On the plan, the location of the facilities was shown with symbols rather than words; a cup and saucer to represent the coffee shop, a knife and fork to represent the restaurant. The orientation boards were located outside each entrance to each building and on each a large red dot with the words 'You Are Here' identified the visitor's position.

Within each building floor plans were developed. These were bordered with the appropriate plan colour to continue the theme and showed in more detail the location of facilities, such as toilets, with appropriate symbols. The time of demonstrations was displayed using the face of a clock. In this way clearly understood information was displayed.

Staff were also viewed as an integral part of the exercise. Staff performed a variety of roles from ticketing to stewards/demonstrators and roles were rotated on a weekly basis. This ensured that all staff were as familiar with operating the tills as they were with other areas of the attraction. The main entrance was seen as the most important part of the visitor journey and invariably it was at this point that the most frequently asked questions were answered. Staff were themselves encouraged to use the attraction and were provided with free meal vouchers for use in the restaurant and coffee shop.

Beyond the entrance and ticketing was a member of staff with a further supply of hand-held orientation plans of the attraction. This staff member pointed out facilities and gave advice on any special events occurring that day.

Staff throughout the attraction wore bright tops with the attraction's logo clearly visible on the reverse and staff name badge clearly visible on the front.

Results and Benefits

Visitor flow throughout the museum was definitely improved. Visitor numbers in the previously less visited areas increased as visitors became more aware of what there was to see. The 'meeters and greeters' role developed and staff throughout the museum wore tops with 'ask me' printed to encourage customer interaction.

The most recognisable change was the increase in secondary spend within catering outlets, where demand for both coffee shop and restaurant increased.

Over the course of the year visitor comment cards were handed to visitors and two research interview days were conducted. These both indicated that visitors found the new orientation easy to understand. Repeat visitors expressed surprise at how much there was to see, some even thought the museum had expanded in size!

7.3 Enlivened Interpretation – Live Commentary

Situation

A boat cruise operator specialising in river tours through an historic city provided recorded commentaries on the river views to visitors. The information was all relevant to the tour but lacked spontaneity. If something different happened during the cruise, such as heron taking flight, there would be no reaction on the commentary. Visitor satisfaction was of a generally good standard but it was felt the tour lacked animation. A live commentary was required which could inform and entertain in the right balance.

Analysis and Objectives

The river cruise lasted an hour and took in many varied sights. The cruise allowed scope for interpreting these sights within an historical context, explaining the growth of the city and important events in its history. The cruise also allowed interpretation within a geographical context, explaining the river course and landscape, within and just outside, the city limit. A number of important facts were central to both contexts and would need to be incorporated into the final 'live' guided tour. It was also necessary to know more than just the tour's content to answer any specific questions, which could arise.

Action

New roles of tour guide were created within the organisation and existing staff were retrained. Those chosen for the new role were provided with the salient points needed for the tour 'script', but told to research the history of the city and the river. The research allowed them each to develop a tour in their own words. All guides practiced their scripts on each other and elements from each were used in the final 'script'. The 'script' was kept loose to ensure delivery would be natural and in their own words. This aspect was seen as essential in introducing a personal element into each cruise.

The tour guides positioned themselves at the front of the boat facing the visitors. As they spoke they pointed out points of interest and were able to react to the unexpected from a kingfisher to a university rowing boat passing by.

Results and Benefits

The effect of the new guided tour was a definite increase in the quality of the visitor experience, making the tour more memorable. The tour allowed the visitor to gain live information and ask questions. Staff were more enthused, gaining a higher degree of job satisfaction.

7.4 Creative Participation

Situation

A small palaeontology/geology museum had undergone major development. The museum had moved to a purpose built museum within landscaped gardens. The new building had won design awards and provided a striking first impression on arrival. It also provided a recognisable landmark in the location, drawing visitors in through curiosity.

Analysis and Objectives

The museum attracted a wide range of visitors from very young to very old and an objective was to offer interpretation that would engage all visitors. A strength of the attraction were fleshed-out, life-size models of dinosaurs, which appealed strongly to the family market, proving especially exciting for children. However, more interactive interpretation and visitor involvement was needed for the more specialised visitors and for very young visitors.

Action

The two objectives were met through similar solutions.

To appeal to the very young market, an interactive display was required which linked closely with the work carried out by the curators yet maintained younger visitors' interest. The solution was a raised sandpit on which were attached a number of paintbrushes. Concealed within the sandpit were 'fossils' and the game was to brush away the sand to discover the fossils.

To appeal to more specialist visitors, whatever their age, the curator's area was open to view through large windows and an opening. Visitors could see the long process of preserving fossils. Work was carried out by volunteers who were happy to answer questions and explain their work. A range of fossils were on show for visitors to touch. Each one was labelled with the name of the dinosaur it came from and a small diagram showed the animal in outline with the limb's location shaded. In addition, the work being carried out was described on an 'update' board. This was handwritten on a whiteboard with exciting new finds and up to date progress listed.

Results and Benefits

The main focus for the visitors remained life size dinosaurs, models which moved and made sounds to add realism. However, the new displays brought added interest for visitors. An interesting observation was how the sand pit designed for very young children also proved very interesting for adults. Similarly, the tactile interpretation provided by the displayed fossils interested all visitors. The 'update' boards were maintained throughout the year, which ensured there was always something new and exciting to see. This aspect encouraged repeat visits, especially during the main holiday season.

7.5 Staff Customer Interaction

Situation

When new management took over the daily operation of an aquarium they wanted to enhance the quality of the visitor experience. They realised that not enough interaction existed between staff and visitors and the vital 'people' factor was not being exploited to full effect. The keepers were obviously very knowledgeable and enthusiastic about the collection. However, it was noticeable that staff rarely initiated conversation with visitors although they would happily answer questions when asked. Customer care was reactive rather than proactive.

Analysis and Objectives

Many of the operational activities performed at the aquarium were done out of hours. This allowed some feeding and cleaning to be performed without any interference and ensured jobs were done quickly and efficiently. However, it was recognised that these activities created activity amongst the fish and animals and could become the basis of an impromptu talk or demonstration for visitors. Structured talks and feeds did occur during opening hours at regular intervals during the day. These were restricted to specific areas where a group of visitors could congregate and the keeper could stand and be seen.

Action

The management decision was to adapt working practices to perform some of the out of hours operational activities during opening hours. It was felt that the quality of the visitor experience could be enhanced if they could watch these activities being performed.

Feeding and cleaning were performed at regular intervals, as appropriate. A variety of animals, including octopus, Moray Eel and lobster were displayed and some of these would often hide from sight. When tanks were cleaned or feed added greater activity could be seen.

Keepers were encouraged to talk to visitors and point out interesting features or tell interesting facts. Specific training was provided on customer care skills.

At the entrance to the aquarium a sign advertised the times of the structured talks and feeds. The following sentence was added to the sign.

'During the day you may see us feeding or cleaning our tanks. All our keepers are happy to deal with any questions you may have.'

Lighting levels in many areas of the aquarium were low and staff uniform was changed to a light blue coloured t-shirt with 'Keeper' printed in large letters on the back.

Results and Benefits

The immediate result of the changes was an increase in visitor stimulation. This was borne out through observations, feedback forms provided to each visitor with their ticket and feedback from the keepers themselves. The effect on staff was noticeable. Enthusiasm was more evident and staff expressed greater job satisfaction. The quality of the visitor experience was also enhanced. Potential frustration at missing a structured talk was alleviated by being able to watch the keepers feeding or cleaning. These activities became much more personal as the keeper was able to establish more of a rapport with the smaller audience.

7.6 Toilet Facilities

Situation

A family owned and operated farm attraction had been operating for over 10 years and had a loyal customer base with high local repeats. The targeted market was families and a typical family unit would often include three generations, from toddlers and babies to grandparents. In addition to families, the attraction appealed strongly to school groups, from nursery to primary school. Many activities, including milking demonstrations and pat-a-pet sessions had been developed to cater for the younger market.

Analysis and Objectives

Over the years the farm had developed from offering just viewing of the farm animals with a rather basic car parking area in a field, to developing a reputation for higher quality. The car park had been gravelled over, both indoor and outdoor play areas had been developed and a farm shop had grown in size and profitability.

An area that had drawn comments from visitors, and which had been recognised as a weakness were the toilet facilities. These were one of the first developments at the farm when the attraction was opened. They were adopted facilities in an existing farm building at a time when visitor numbers were much lower and, although always kept clean, the facilities were in need of major refurbishment. In places, the tiling was cracked, fixtures were old and mirrors had silvered. To cope with higher demand in peak months, a portacabin toilet had been installed and had become a permanent fixture, providing very basic but much needed extra facilities.

Action

The owners recognised the need to change and modernise their facilities. One obvious development would be to refurbish the existing facility and remove the portacabin, although this would leave them short of facilities. They knew that the visitor profile was wide, from babies to the elderly, and included less mobile visitors. The needs of visitors were therefore very varied and a consideration in any new development was to meet all needs and planning requirements.

It was decided that the existing facility could form the basis of a baby changing room, baby feeding room and a facility for disabled visitors. A new facility would also be required.

The adaptation of the existing facilities allowed the construction of a baby changing room in what had previously

been the ladies facility. This room was unisex, allowing it to be used by mothers and fathers. The changing area contained a large flat surface with changing mats. A 'lip' was fixed to the edge of the flat surface to provide added safety. The room was brightly decorated and mobiles hung from the ceiling above the changing surface; an idea gained from the owner's own experience. Nappy bins were provided and a nappy dispenser was added, providing convenient emergency extras.

The previous gent's facility was divided into two separate rooms. One was developed into a dedicated baby feeding room, with a privacy bolt. The second was developed into a facility for disabled visitors. The design and décor mirrored the other facilities so as to avoid an 'antiseptic' feel, and suitable handrails were added. It was realised that facilities for disabled visitors might be used by a variety of less mobile visitors, not just wheelchair users. Elderly visitors might also need to use the facilities and the design would have to meet all needs. The room was designed with a full-length mirror, suitable for a wheelchair user or someone with a walking stick, low set hooks, easily reached by all, easy grip taps and a sensor activated hand dryer.

The new facilities were purpose built and took into account the needs of the family market. In the ladies, cubicles were spacious enough to allow easy use. Hooks were fixed on the reverse of each door. Soap dispensers were positioned between each set of washbasins and hand dryers placed in two locations, slightly to one side of the basins so as not to block access. A large mirror was positioned across the wall above the washbasin and spot lighting located throughout the facility to provide a well-illuminated and easy to use area.

The gent's were similarly designed. Two of the urinals were set lower for easier use by children. In both facilities one washbasin and a hand dryer was set lower to allow children to reach them more easily.

In all facilities décor was light and fresh. A unique aspect in each was a mural on one wall. This was painted by a local artist and reflected various animals and activities at the farm, including the hay cart ride and the cow milking.

Results and Benefits

The overall quality of the visitor experience was improved by the addition of the new toilet facilities. The needs of all visitors had been carefully taken into account when planning the development and feedback from regular visitors reflected that the owners had met their needs. Especially gratifying were comments on the small touches provided; the nappy dispenser and mobiles in the baby changing facility, the low set hooks in the facility for disabled visitors and the child height washbasins in the general facilities.

7.7 Catering

Situation

A major heritage attraction had a restaurant/tearoom, which at busy times did not seem to work efficiently. The staff were well motivated and they worked hard but the layout and the style of facility did not lend themselves to the smooth working of the operation.

There had been customer complaints about service. It was recognised that this needed to be addressed and that there was potential for increasing revenue. In common with many like attractions, different customers had differing needs and expectations of the catering operation.

Analysis and Objectives

There was a continual line self-service counter starting with a tray point and ending with a pay point. The self-serve units featured, in order: -

- Cold soft drinks in a cabinet with outward opening door
- Ice cream fridge
- Cakes
- Ready filled sandwiches and cold savoury items, including pre-plated salads and Ploughmans
- Hot drinks dispenser, hot food orders with a chalkboard menu, orders for freshly made 'special' sandwiches and wine sales all next to pay point

When hot food was ordered customers were asked where they would be sitting.

The main objective was to improve customer service, reduce complaints and improve revenue.

Action

The first steps were to determine the types of customer demand and how the operation met the demands at different times of day. This was not complicated but it was established that there were many differing types of customer including: -

- Soft drink only take-aways
- Ice cream only take-aways
- Snack lunches
- Hot lunches
- Coffee/Tea to table
- Tea/Scones/Cake

A large part of the visitor profile was made up of the more mature, but relatively affluent market groups (as illustrated by retail sales), and a growing family market.

Different demands came at different times of day with the heaviest customer flow at lunchtimes, but never exclusive to one type of customer. What was needed was to improve the flow. This was met in two ways; improved layout and better information provision leading to faster customer decisions.

The changed layout featured an extended counter with a right-angle three-quarter way along. This area featured a new hot food selection point. Some choices were moved and the revised order between tray and pay points was: -

- All cold drinks – in lift-out dispenser
- Sandwiches and savouries
- Hot food selection – reduced range, with a daily special
- Cakes
- Hot drinks dispenser with some self-service pre-wrapped biscuits/flapjacks
- Ice cream added to pay point for impulse sales

The position of menus was changed and chalkboards used to promote 'homemade' and locally produced ingredients. Staff roles were redefined to improve efficiency and menu choices changed during the day to reflect time-of-day sales.

Results and Benefits

Customer dwell time at the counter was reduced without any reduction in spend per head. Take-away sales for canned and bottled drinks were processed with greater speed as these customers were going directly to the till, taking the shorter route of what was now a dual flow over three sides of a 'triangle'.

8 Accessibility in Visitor Attractions

Within this section of the **Core Criteria and Quality Guidance Booklet** you will find advice on the **Disability Discrimination Act (DDA)**. Three steps are suggested to aid compliance with the Act, followed by three composite case studies. Advice is also provided on learning disabilities. It is recognised that some attractions have in-built physical features that may restrict accessibility. However, all attractions can take steps to make practicable changes for the benefit of all visitors.

The function of this section is mainly signposting, but this is an important proactive step in guiding operators towards formulating access policies. This can help towards meeting the requirements of the DDA and contribute to enhancing the quality of the visitor experience for all.

About the DDA

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (updated 2005), is a law that aims to reduce the discrimination many disabled people face including accessing goods, facilities and services. The act has been introduced in three phases, with the first two stages being implemented in 1996 and 1999 respectively. The DDA states that service providers must not discriminate against people with a disability and must make reasonable adjustments to how they provide their services. From October 2004, all providers of goods, facilities and services must have taken 'reasonable steps' to remove, alter or avoid a physical feature that makes it impossible or unreasonably difficult for a disabled person to make use of a service. All tourism operators are service providers. This includes visitor attractions.

What does the Act mean by

'reasonable steps'?

The DDA covers any disability that affects people's day-to-day lives. The Act requires you to take 'reasonable steps', but does not list access improvements expected of each type of organisation. It does not only cover visitors with mobility impairment, but also more common disabilities, such as visual and hearing impairment and learning disabilities.

It is difficult within this leaflet to define the term 'reasonable' but the following two examples help illustrate how the Act may be regarded by contrasting attractions.

- A new museum building and its services could be reasonably expected to be fully accessible to all visitors including those with disabilities. Conversely, an existing museum, in an historic building, may be unable to make physical adjustments to be fully accessible to all visitors

but may be able to take reasonable steps for the type and size of attraction. For example, amongst many measures, it may provide audio guides and large print guidebooks and information.

- A large theme park could be expected to make many areas of the park and its rides and facilities accessible to disabled visitors, and to provide clear information on any restrictions and warnings (e.g. where users need good balance to access the ride or where there is strobe lighting). Conversely, a visitor attraction that is part of a working farm, open during summer months only, is likely to be expected to take reasonable steps relative to the type and size of attraction. For example, it may provide disability equality training for all staff and provide a wheelchair for visitors' use.

The business case

Most disabled people are able to take holidays and visit places of interest and will usually be accompanied by family members, friends or a carer. Previous tourism research found that 66% of disabled people had taken at least one holiday or short break in the last year.

Consider the following facts:

- There are an estimated 11 million adults in the UK who have a disability - 1 in 5 of us
- Approximately half are adults aged 65 or over
- By 2011 nearly 30% of the population will be aged 55 or over and the ageing profile of our population suggests the incidence of physical and sensory impairment may continue to increase
- Under 5% of disabled people in the UK are wheelchair users
- More than 95% of disabled people are not wheelchair users and more common disabilities are mobility but not necessitating the use of a wheelchair, learning, visual and hearing
- Only 12% of us have 20:20 vision.

By meeting the needs of disabled visitors you benefit all visitors. It widens your market base and maximises sales, an important consideration for all attractions and a point that reinforces the business case for developing accessibility.

Three steps to take –

- 1 an Access Audit
- 2 an Access Statement
- 3 an Access Plan

Step 1 – Access Audit

An Access Audit will show how suitable your attraction is for visitors with different disabilities. It will help you identify any areas where it is possible to make improvements, either immediately or in the longer term. An audit may be self-completed or completed by a recognised access consultant.

An Access Audit will need to consider all aspects of the 'visitor journey', including retail, catering and toilet facilities. It is important to involve all staff and ensure they are aware of the attraction's suitability for visitors with different disabilities. You may want to discuss welcoming disabled visitors with staff to help identify any regular problems encountered and approach a local disabled group to provide additional advice. Any identified improvements will need to be made within set timescales.

The result of an audit is the development of an Access Statement and an Access Plan.

Step 2 – Access Statement

An Access Statement is a clear and accurate description of the facilities and services offered. It should allow a potential visitor to make an informed decision on whether your attraction will meet their particular access needs and expectations. It is Visit Wales policy that provision of an Access Statement is a condition of VAQAS grading.

For more help, advice and further contacts visit www.visitbritain.com/accessstatements. There is a template provided on this site to help you compile your Access Statement in a structured format. The template is designed for use by all tourism businesses and examples of Statements are available.

Step 3 – Access Plan

Your Access Plan will need to be time specific, but could be divided into immediate and longer-term developments. These may be at low cost, for example: -

- Disability equality training
- Larger print/clear signs
- Large print visitor information and menus
- Audio-tape tours/commentaries
- Wheelchair for visitors' use
- Additional seating around attraction
- Portable ramp
- Handrails on stairs/steps
- Clear price signs and till total display in shop
- Dog bowls and useful information for owners
- Use of touch, smell and sound where appropriate.

Composite Case Studies

The following three case studies have been compiled to illustrate how differing attractions have taken steps to become more accessible. Each study is based on real examples, with more than one attraction used to compile the final study. In each study, a situation is described followed by the Access Audit. The findings of the Access Audit lead to the Access Plan. With each study, the wider benefits of the changes are also described.

Hearing Impairment

Situation

A town centre museum was closed for a year for a major redevelopment. During the work new display galleries were created, existing ones redesigned and new interactive interpretation provided. As part of the changes a conscious development was to ensure that the museum became as accessible as possible for all visitors. The museum was located within an historic building, which was affected by planning regulations. These restricted the improvements that could be considered. For example, it was impossible to install a lift due to the physical design of the building. However, other improvements were investigated.

Access Audit

Local social services were contacted for details of local disabled groups who in turn were asked to create a focus group for consultation. One of their action points concerned the needs of visitors with hearing problems. The museum had previously offered guided gallery tours and this was to continue. The guided tours became a developed area to aid deaf visitors. Various ideas were suggested including staff training and sign language tours. Each point was considered to see what steps could be reasonably taken.

Access Plan

The Access Plan was a considered result of the Access Audit and incorporated those steps considered reasonable, within the scale and budget of the attraction. The plan contained the following: -

- All tour guides received training to aid communication with deaf and hearing-impaired visitors.
- All tour guides and front of house staff attended Welcome All training courses run by their regional tourism organisation.
- An introductory fact sheet about the museum tour was developed for visitors with hearing impairment to read before the tour.
- Some of the new interactive interpretation included audio interpretation. Written transcripts were placed alongside with a seat provided for visitor's comfort. The transcripts were attached to the wall by a long cord to ensure they were not removed.

Wider benefits

All visitors benefited from the changes; the seating by the audio points provided added comfort and the transcripts were often used as an alternative to the audio.

Mobility Impairment

Situation

The owners of an historic house were aware of the requirements of the DDA and realised the importance of taking action to improve access. They aimed at changes that would benefit all visitors, not just those with a disability. The house allowed access to ground floor rooms with a number of rooms open on the first floor. These rooms were reached by a staircase of 30 shallow steps. Visits to the house could be self-guided by audio, or by guided tour.

Access Audit

Visiting the upstairs rooms was a difficult option for visitors with mobility problems. Staff and visitors' comments identified a level of frustration, but various planning regulations prevented the installation of a lift and an alternative means of interpreting the upstairs rooms was needed. The Access Audit, amongst other things, recommended a virtual tour and various means for providing interpretation were considered. These included commentaries, a photo album, audiovisual screens, a computer with 360-degree room views, enlarged guidebooks, talks, slide shows and a video.

Access Plan

A number of the points raised by the audit were desirable but difficult to implement in the short term. Less costly steps were adopted first with the access policy identifying how other steps could be achieved in the longer term. One action point contained in the plan was a photo album. The album contained detailed photographs of the first floor rooms and included 'hidden' details. These enlivened the information provided and contributed to the albums offering a suitable alternative to the audio. The albums also followed the route of the audio guide, allowing it to be used in conjunction. The album was placed on a table and seating provided added comfort. An enlarged font was used to aid those with visual impairment. All staff received customer care training with specific emphasis on welcoming disabled visitors. A longer term project was the development of a multi-media interpretation point which would contain touch screen technology to enable a virtual tour of the upstairs rooms with still and moving images.

Wider benefits

The album proved to be a popular form of interpretation and a second one was produced to supplement the first. Users of the albums included visitors with varying degrees of mobility impairment including pregnant mothers, people with young children in prams and the elderly.

Sight Impairment

Situation

A small zoo appealed to a wide market from children to grandparents. There was a continual programme of refurbishment and each year the attraction developed to encourage repeatability. The owners were fully aware of the DDA and they acknowledged that there was more that could be done. Changes were identified that would appeal to many visitors, including those with disabilities.

Access Audit

An Access Audit was undertaken. One area raised by the audit was interpretation. Most interpretation was visual, mainly information boards. A development highlighted by the audit was the provision of sensory interpretation to aid visitors with impaired vision.

Access Plan

The Access Plan set out various sensory interpretation developments. A sensory trail was developed to take visitors through the zoo and this included the following: -

- Tactile interpretation was used to complement visual interpretation. For example, the difference in animal skin was interpreted with reproductions of alligator, rhino and elephant hide.
- Three-dimensional models of some animal facial expressions accompanied interpretation on animal communication.
- Where appropriate, Braille signs were added. Aware that many visitors with sight loss had some degree of residual vision and were not Braille readers, additional large print was also made available.
- Large print versions of the guidebook and additional large print information sheets were produced.
- Signage throughout the zoo was a key development. General signs were replaced with highly visible ones. These consisted of large black lettering on a yellow background.
- Added interest was also provided in the picnic area with raised beds of fragrant plants, including herbs.

Wider benefits

All visitors with impaired vision benefited from the improved signage, including short and long-sighted visitors. The sensory interpretation proved especially popular with younger visitors.

Helping Visitors with a Learning Disability

The accessibility of cultural activities is a particularly important issue in a society with such a vibrant tourism industry. For many visitor attractions children and families are key to their success, particularly during school holidays. But for many people with a learning disability (and their families) there are many obstacles preventing them from enjoying the full visitor experience.

Some of these obstacles are to do with practical things like transport, getting to destinations and toilet facilities. But there are also many social obstacles. The dual nature of these, both practical and social, reflects the difficulties that people with a learning disability and their families and carers face.

The following recommendations illustrate practical steps that could be taken in a visitor attraction. The recommendations have been reproduced with kind permission from Mencap's publication 'Arts for All? The accessibility of arts and cultural venues for families with children with a learning disability'.

Amongst the recommendations are the following: -

- Staff should be trained to a standard level of competence on awareness of general access issues, not just wheelchairs.
- Information should be easily accessible with helplines able to answer queries from visitors with a learning disability.
- Attractions should develop a checklist for staff to enable them to cover all the relevant points at the time of enquiry.
- Signs should be clear and at the correct height, particularly for wheelchair users.
- There should be seating areas in waiting areas.
- Accessible toilets should be big enough for a wheelchair user plus at least one other person. They should not, where possible, be coupled with baby changing facilities and should not be solely in either male - or female-only toilet blocks.
- There should be designated seating areas in restaurants with space for wheelchairs.
- Menus should have pictures to make it easier for independent choices to be made.
- Ticketing policies should encourage families with disabled children to try new experiences. For example, rather than charging for all day tickets, there could be a taster ticket offering access for a limited amount of time.

You can download the entire publication from Mencap's website at www.mencap.org.uk

Useful websites:

- Royal National Institute for the Blind
www.rnib.org.uk
- Royal National Institute for the Deaf
www.rnid.org.uk
- Radar – The Disability Network
www.radar.org.uk
- Tourism for All
www.tourismforall.co.uk



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