



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Tourism Investment Support Scheme

Upgrade Scheme

www.cymru.gov.uk

The objective of this scheme is to stimulate increased demand from new and existing markets by encouraging the upgrading and improvement of facilities in existing tourism businesses that have traded for a minimum of 3 consecutive years immediately prior to the date of application.

Under this scheme the following capital expenditure improvements will be encouraged:-

- Ensuite facilities and bedroom upgrading in the serviced sector.
 - Imaginative new visitor experiences/ interpretation in tourist attractions.
 - Upgrading of toilets/showers, central amenities, catering facilities, electric hook ups, environmental and site design improvements in caravan and camping parks.
 - Upgrading of self catering unit clusters (minimum 5 units).
 - Upgrading golf clubs to improve visitor facilities.
 - Upgrading to provide a Sense of Place (SOP) in accommodation and restaurants (that are visitor related).
 - Upgrading in the activities sector to improve the visitor experience and competitiveness.
- The prime objective of this scheme is to improve the **quality of facilities**. Applicants will need to be aware of the following criteria/conditions:-
- All businesses must achieve Croeso Cynnes Cymreig status within two years of project completion.
 - All businesses must participate in the relevant Visit Wales' quality grading or accreditation scheme for a specified period on completion of the project. Attractions will be expected to join the Visit Wales' VAQAS accreditation scheme.
 - Where Visit Wales does not offer a quality assurance scheme for a particular sector (e.g. adventure activities and restaurants) a suitable alternative scheme must be followed where it exists (please enquire for further information), otherwise appropriate conditions relating to quality will be attached to the offer of assistance.
 - All Serviced accommodation will have to achieve an improved quality grade as a result of the investment, or evidence a significant quality change (e.g. a spa facility, leisure and conference facility). All cases will be appraised on their own merits; as a general rule the target level for hotels will be to achieve three/four star on completion, and four/five star in all other cases.

- All camping and caravan parks will have to achieve an improved quality grade as a result of the investment under the British Graded Holiday Parks Scheme, be at least four star on project completion, or evidence a significant quality change (e.g. a leisure facility).
- Self catering facilities (minimum 5 units) will have to achieve four stars on completion, an increased quality grade if four stars at the time of project, or evidence a significant quality change (e.g. a spa facility).
- Other accommodation such as hostels and similar accommodation must be at least four star on project completion.

NB – quality grading schemes change from time to time and in such cases equivalent ratings or quality benchmarks will apply based on the then current Visit Wales scheme or equivalent.

A complementary objective of the scheme is to encourage tourism businesses to develop facilities, or procedures, which directly result in energy efficiency and environmental improvements. We encourage, and will prioritise, upgrading proposals that complement this objective. If eligible for investment, applicants must also show that funding is not available from alternative dedicated environmental funding schemes.

We will also prioritise upgrading schemes which can demonstrate:-

- that the rationale for the project is to realise specific marketing opportunities that add value rather than displace existing business.
- an excellence in the quality of design and specification.
- the creation or safeguarding of employment opportunities.
- increased competitive advantage for Welsh tourism in both UK and overseas markets.
- a professional management team with commitment to skills training and staff development.

- a commitment to ensuring access for people of all abilities.
- a commitment to providing a distinctive Welsh experience.
- a commitment to operating in an environmentally sustainable way.

The scheme is aimed at private sector tourism businesses and the maximum level of support allowable will vary according to the location and size of the business. We will only provide the minimum amount necessary to ensure the project is completed to the planned quality, scale or timescale.

There are two application procedures depending on the eligible cost of the project:-

1. Existing businesses with an eligible project cost of under £100,000.

A simplified application procedure applies for businesses seeking a minimum of £5,000; assistance will not normally exceed 25% of eligible project cost (subject to State Aid rules).

Investment at this level will not be linked to employment, although businesses will be required to maintain existing employment levels. Those proposals with an employment output will be prioritised in the application process.

2. Existing businesses with an eligible project cost over £100,000.

If your project falls within this category you will need to provide a fully documented business plan including detailed financial projections, marketing and staff development plans.

Assistance will not normally exceed 25% of eligible project costs (subject to State Aid Rules) and is limited to £12,500 per full time equivalent job created/ safeguarded, whichever is the lesser. Assistance will be in the form of a grant/ or repayable grant up to a maximum of £300,000 per project.

To register an enquiry for financial assistance under this scheme you must complete an Introductory Questionnaire (IQ), which is available from the address and telephone number noted below. On receipt of your completed IQ (which represents an 'informal' enquiry only, not an application) we will determine your eligibility under the scheme, and any further information needed at this stage. If an application is invited, we will advise you of the information we will require in order to process your application, and send you the application form relevant to your circumstances.

Applicants are strongly advised, before incurring any significant costs, such as professional fees, to discuss their proposals with our staff in order to determine whether or not a project meets our priorities and eligibility criteria. It is unlikely that an application will be decided without planning permission being in place, and it is important that you note that any preliminary fees incurred or defrayed related to the project, such as planning application fees, before a decision on support is given, are not eligible for support.

Completed applications will be appraised carefully to ensure that public funds are being used effectively and efficiently. Decisions will be made as speedily as possible without prejudicing the need for proper financial prudence and accountability.

Further information is available from
Visit Wales by telephoning **0845 010 8020**
or emailing **tiss@wales.gsi.gov.uk**
