Inclusive Tourism

VisitAberdeenshire

Contents

Introduction to inclusive tourism

Introduction

Responsible Tourism is not just about sustainability, it's also about being as inclusive and welcoming as possible.

While much emphasis in this section will be on accessibility, "inclusive tourism" also covers other important aspects such as community engagement, recruitment and inclusivity.

What is inclusive tourism?

Inclusive tourism involves developing and managing tourism services and experiences that are accessible and beneficial to everyone, regardless of their physical abilities, socioeconomic background, age, gender, or other factors.

The aim is to remove barriers and create welcoming environments where everyone can participate in and enjoy tourism activities.

This includes:
- Providing accessible facilities, both on-site and online.
- Offering diverse travel options.
- Ensuring that all members of the community, including marginalised and underrepresented groups, can benefit from tourism opportunities.

In essence, inclusive tourism strives to promote equality, diversity, and social inclusion within the tourism industry.

Insights from VisitScotland

The UK Government has the ambition for the UK "to become the most accessible tourism destination in Europe by 2025". Their key measure of success is a 33% increase in inbound visits by disabled people.

VisitScotland has identified the key to unlocking the potential of inclusive tourism, summarised under four key components (the "Four Ps"):

Prioritisation → People first → Product information → Promotion

1) Prioritisation
Many tourism businesses struggle to find the time to review their inclusivity practices, but it's worth the effort, not only from the perspective of being welcoming, but also commercially (return on investment).

In the UK, it is thought that some 7 million people of working age have a disability, representing significant spending power. Taking the time to improve accessibility and inclusivity can yield substantial returns, and there are many quick wins that won't take too much time or effort (see below).

2) People first

Good customer service is always important, but sometimes we are unsure how to welcome people with disabilities or those from minority groups.

It's important to give your staff the confidence to provide the best possible welcome. A quick win here is to review and update your customer service training, giving your staff the confidence and skills they need to welcome everyone.

3) Product information

Are you providing information about your accessibility and inclusivity? A quick win is to check your website, are you highlighting your accessibility features?

If you don't already have accessibility information online, you can read more about creating accessibility guides here: **Creating accessibility guides**

4) Promotion

You need to communicate your inclusivity and accessibility efforts, so ensure that this information is easily accessible to your visitors / guests. Your website is your main shop window, but you should also share your inclusivity message on social media.

You can read more about telling your story here: **Telling your Responsible Tourism story**

What can you do?

- Review and update your website – highlight your access facilities and services. Create an "access for all" page or section to summarise what you offer.
- Create an accessibility guide – describe in detail your access facilities and services, such as hearing loops, quiet spaces, wheelchair access etc.
- Make sure that your accessible bedrooms are available to book online, with images so people can see how they are laid out.
- Arrange staff training, for example Purple Tuesday offer free customer service training, NESS offer sensory awareness training, and Welcome to Excellence offer a full day course called "Welcoming All Customers".
- Add your business to Euan's Guide (read more: **Resources – Euan's Guide**).
- Measure your success and ask for feedback from your customers. People will return to venues that make an effort and listen to their needs.

Training your team and updating your website with your accessibility are quick wins, and you can then build on this over time.

An excellent resource to help you is available here: VisitScotland Accessible and Inclusive Tourism

Source: VisitScotland

Data and insights

The "Purple Pound"

The "purple pound" is the term used to describe the collective spending power of disabled people and their households.

$13 trillion Worldwide, this market is currently estimated to be worth $13 trillion (2024) **14%** This number increases by an average of 14% per year.	**£274 billion** In the UK alone, households with at least one disabled person have a combined spending power estimated at £274 billion per year.	**£17.7 billion** When it comes to the value of accessible tourism in Britian, the total market value is £17.7 billion.
	£106 million £106 million is spent by international visitors to Scotland with an impairment.	**£1.69 billion** The estimated total spend on all tourism trips in Scotland by those with an impairment is £1.69 billion per year.

10% So, the "purple pound" is immensely valuable, yet only 10% of businesses have a targeted strategy for this huge market.

75% Even more concerning, a massive 75% of disabled people and their families have walked away from a business due to poor accessibility, disability awareness or customer service.

Disabilities

The universal sign for disability is a wheelchair user, so it's natural to associate disability with mobility issues. However, it's important to remember that accessibility is not just about wheelchair users:

- 17% of the global population have a disability.
- Only 8% of those use a wheelchair (9% in the UK).
- And up to 80% of those have "hidden impairments" or "hidden disabilities".

It's important to consider how to accommodate not just wheelchair users, but also visually impaired or hearing-impaired visitors, as well as those with mental health conditions or other hidden disabilities.

- 9% of children in the UK have a disability.
- 21% of working age people in the UK have a disability (approximately 7 million people)
- 59% of people aged over 80 have a disability in the UK
- 1 in 3 people over 60 have hearing loss in the UK

Source: Purple Tuesday and VisitScotland

Hidden disabilities

According to Hidden Disabilities Sunflower, there are more than 800 hidden disabilities and health conditions.

1 in 5 people live with a disability - that is around 11 million people in the UK alone - and of those, 70-80% are hidden disabilities. These hidden disabilities can be situational (e.g. a nut allergy), temporary (e.g. recovering from an injury) or permanent (e.g. dementia, hearing loss, autism).

Source: Hidden Disabilities Sunflower

Hearing loss

12 million people in the UK are D/deaf or have some form of hearing loss.

Visual impairments

The World Health Organization estimate that about 285 million people are visually impaired worldwide: 39 million are blind and 246 million have low vision.
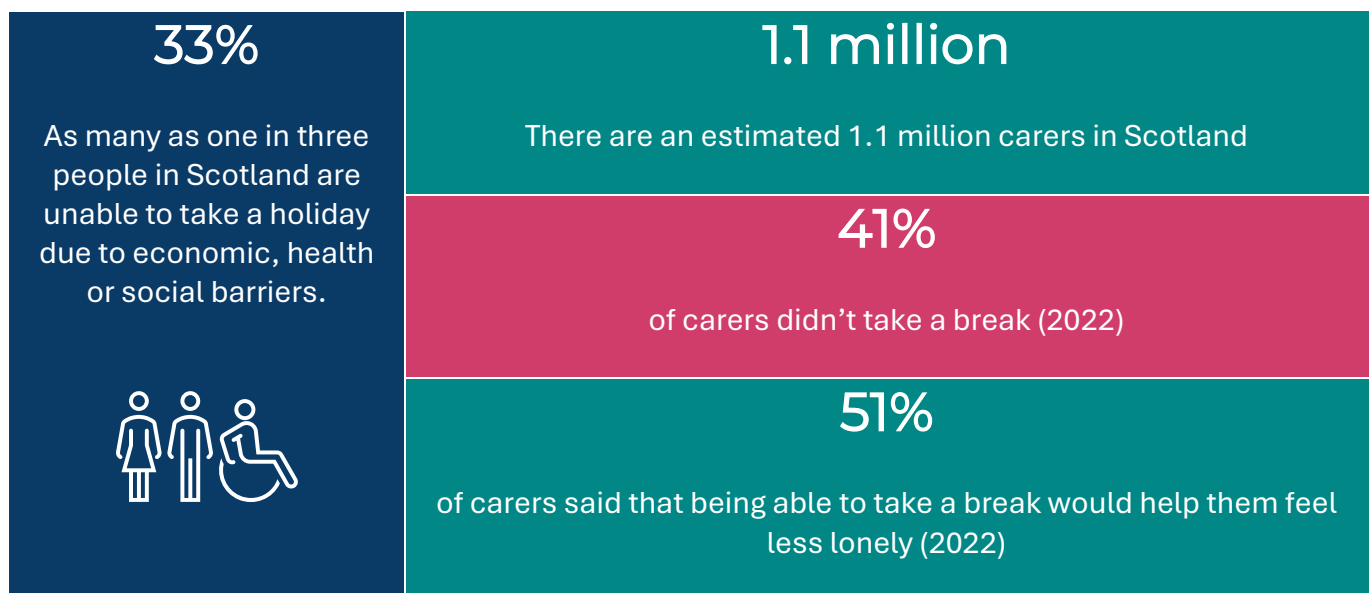
In the UK, over 2 million people live with visual impairments severe enough to disqualify them from holding a driver's licence. 320,000 people are registered blind or partially sighted.

Colour blindness affects 8% of the male population and 0.5% of the female population globally.

Inclusive to all

Inclusive tourism is not only about accommodating people with disabilities, it also covers socioeconomic background, age, gender, sexual orientation etc.

Social tourism

33%	1.1 million
As many as one in three people in Scotland are unable to take a holiday due to economic, health or social barriers.	There are an estimated 1.1 million carers in Scotland
	41%
	of carers didn't take a break (2022)
	51%
	of carers said that being able to take a break would help them feel less lonely (2022)

Source: VisitScotland

Why should you be inclusive and accessible?

We all want to be as welcoming as possible and provide excellent customer service, but there are additional benefits of accessible and inclusive tourism:

Growth potential and increased demand

As the population ages, the demand for inclusive tourism is set to grow.

Businesses and destinations that cater to this market stand to benefit significantly.

Spending power

Disabled and senior travellers tend to spend more on holidays than other market groups. As outlined above, the 'Purple Pound' is valued at $13 trillion worldwide per year, so there is a lot of disposable income to be spent on your services.

Loyal, repeat customers

Inclusive businesses often enjoy higher occupancy rates and a more loyal customer base.

Customers who feel welcome are more likely to return and recommend your business to their family and friends. In fact, 86% of this market will make a return visit, which is higher than the return rate of many other demographics.

Source: VisitScotland

Customer satisfaction

Becoming more inclusive can improve the experience for a wide range of customers.

Consider the unique needs of people with hearing loss, visual impairments, wheelchair users, senior travellers and families with young children. They will appreciate you being more understanding of their needs, which will improve the customer satisfaction.
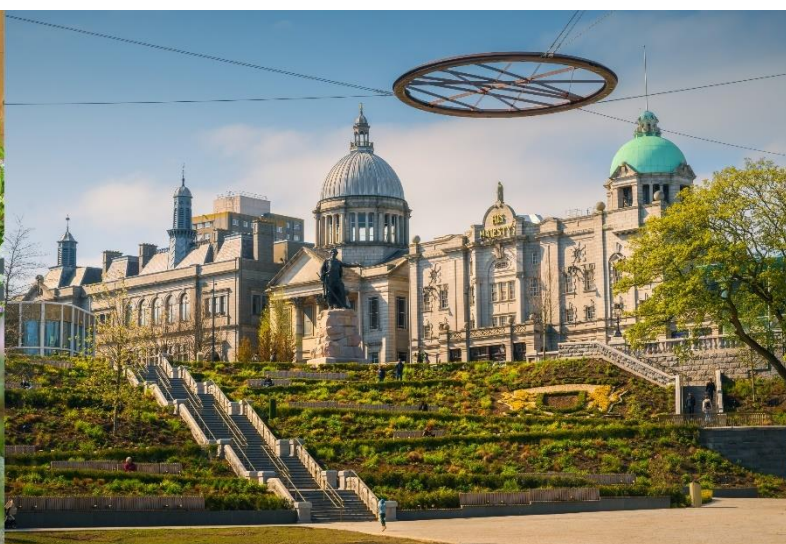
Understanding your customers' needs

The first step in providing an inclusive customer experience is to understand your customer needs.

As we have already covered, accessibility and inclusivity cover a wide range of demographics:
- Age
- Families with children
- LGBTQ+
- Ethnicity
- Gender
- Socioeconomic background
- People with disabilities and impairments

Hopefully, you are not doing anything to exclude visitors based on their age, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation, so the focus of inclusive tourism often naturally shifts to accommodating people with disabilities and impairments.

Introduction to different impairments

When we think of people with disabilities, wheelchair users often come to mind. However, there are many other disabilities and impairments to consider.

As mentioned in the introduction, 1 in 5 people live with a disability (that is 11 million in the UK alone), and out of those, 70-80% have hidden disabilities.

There are three main types of impairments:
- Situational (e.g. allergies)
- Temporary (e.g. injuries and recovering from surgery)
- Permanent (this could be physical, neurodevelopmental, cognitive, respiratory, neurological, mental health, sensory etc)

With more than 800 hidden disabilities identified by Hidden Disabilities Sunflower, here is a small sample of different impairments your customers may live with:

Situational	Temporary
Allergies and intolerances - Nuts - Dietary (e.g. gluten, lactose) - Pets - Bees	**Injuries** - Broken bones **Recovering from surgery**

Permanent

Physical impairments:
- Wheelchair users
- Those using mobility equipment (e.g. walking frames, crutches)
- Arthritis

Sensory impairments:
- Visually impaired (blind or partially sighted)
- Colour blindness
- Deaf or hearing loss
- Lack of spatial awareness
- Vertigo
- Other sensory impairments (e.g. loss of smell, touch, taste, and sensory processing disorders)

Respiratory conditions:
- Asthma

Neurodiversity and neurodevelopmental conditions:
- Autism
- Learning disabilities
- ADHD
- Dyslexia

Cognitive:
- Dementia
- Alzheimer's

Mental health:
- Depression
- Anxiety

Neurological:
- ME (myalgic encephalomyelitis)
- Parkinson's

Important considerations:

- Some customers may have multiple impairments.

- Only 17% of people with disabilities were born with the disability, so it's important to keep in mind that the needs of your customers will change over time. They may also have good and bad days, so their needs may vary depending on the day.

- Assistance dogs are not only for the visually impaired, they also assist people with hearing loss, epilepsy, diabetes, autism, allergies and other physical impairments.

Social tourism

As highlighted in the data and insights section, as many as one in three people in Scotland are unable to take a holiday due to economic, health or social barriers. Many of these individuals – around 1.1 million – are carers.

Social tourism aims to provide those who can't take a break with the chance to enjoy tourism experiences.

Beyond promoting inclusivity, offering social tourism brings other advantages to a business – it can boost low season bookings and improve staff morale by making a meaningful impact, for example.

If you are interested in getting involved, simply fill out this form on the VisitScotland website, and a representative from Shared Care Scotland will get in touch: Social Tourism application form

Halal tourism

"Halal tourism" refers to tourism that caters to Muslims. There are two billion Muslims worldwide, and halal tourism is projected to be worth $300 billion by 2030.

If you are interested in attracting halal-conscious travellers, there are certain steps to take to make sure you are "halal tourism ready". For instance, consider providing a quiet space for prayer, and if you run a hotel, consider offering a list of nearby restaurants that serve halal or vegetarian food and removing alcohol from the mini bar. Read more here: **Resources - Halal Travel Network**

> **For 99% of customers, it is all about the context rather than what is said.**

> **"How can I help you?"**

Be part of the solution

Create an environment where your customers feel comfortable asking for help. Ask if they need assistance, and don't be afraid to ask the question "how can I help you", without expecting them to justify why they need your help. People with disabilities are often frustrated with having to constantly explain themselves.

Speak directly to the visitor with a disability or impairment, not to their companion. And don't speak quickly, shout or speak patronisingly slow.

Don't assume that everyone's needs are the same. For example, if someone asks for directions even though there are clear signs, they may have dyslexia and need someone to tell them where to go. Don't just point to the sign.

Providing an inclusive customer experience

Once you understand your customers and their diverse needs, consider how you can provide an inclusive customer experience.

An inclusive welcome means being honest about your accessibility, and offering assistance when needed, for example, by asking visitors if they have access requirements when they book.

While you may not be able to meet everyone's needs, aim to be as welcoming as possible. Remember, no one expects you to be an expert, so don't hesitate to ask questions and learn from people with lived experience.

There are three main areas to consider when evaluating your accessibility and inclusivity:

- **Onsite (at your venue, in person):** consider not just your own venue, but also the surrounding area, and how to get to your venue.
- **Online (digital):** make sure your website, booking system, social media and accessibility guides are both inclusive and accessible.
- **Printed materials (non-digital):** this includes guidebooks, leaflets, brochures, menus, letters and signs.

On site (at your venue):

Here are a few things to consider at your venue:

Provide access for wheelchairs and walking frames – ensure that ramps, elevators, and accessible restrooms are available wherever possible.

Offer access information about the general area as well, not just your venue – can visitors easily get to you?

Consider colours and patterns – calm colours are generally better than bright ones, and try to avoid too many clashing patterns. Contrasting colours, e.g. for door fixtures and switches, can help visually impaired people navigate buildings safely and independently.

Offer sensory-friendly options – do you have quiet spaces, or can you provide noise-cancelling headphones or sensory guides?

Use clear signage - display signs with large text, high contrast, and simple language.

Train your team - provide training on assisting visitors / guests with disabilities and promoting inclusivity. For example, Purple Tuesday offer free online training, NESS provide sensory awareness training, and Welcome to Excellence can arrange in-person training.

Provide assistive technology – consider offering hearing loops, braille menus, and audio guides. The RNIB (Royal National Institute of Blind People) and the RNID (Royal National Institute for Deaf People) provide excellent advice on assistive technology.

Manage noise levels – avoid playing loud music in the background.

Emergencies - make sure your emergency evacuation plans consider all customers.

Providing an inclusive welcome in person:

Here are a few examples of how to be inclusive in person:

Visitors with hearing impairments	Face the person you are speaking to and don't cover your mouth. Speak clearly and use gestures to support what you are saying. If someone asks you to clarify, try rephrasing it with clear and concise language. Don't shout, instead, move to a quieter area if necessary. If it helps, write down what you are trying to say.
Visual impairments	Introduce yourself and explain that you work at the venue and are there to help. Don't grab their arm, they will hold on to you if they need to, usually by taking your arm or shoulder. This gives them control of the situation. Use clear and descriptive language, and describe the layout and surroundings.
Autistic visitors	Offer them the opportunity to prepare for the visit or stay. This may involve coming for a pre-visit or providing a video tour of your venue. If plans change, make sure to inform them as soon as possible. Provide quiet areas or offer noise-cancelling headphones if needed. Be patient and calm, and answer any questions they have, even if you have already provided the information.
Visitors with dementia	Provide quiet spaces, away from busy areas like check-in desks, using calm colours. Make sure they know where the toilets are located. Speak clearly and concisely, and check that they understand. Be patient. Provide written confirmation of their booking, including all relevant details and payment instructions, as they may forget that they have already paid. Include a name in the confirmation email, so they know who to reach out to.

Online (digital):

You should also review how accessible and inclusive your online presence is, including your website and social media.

Here are a few key points to consider:

Make your website accessible

Digital accessibility laws are relatively new in the UK, and can be quite unclear compared to other laws, but the basic expectation is that any organisation with a website should make it accessible to disabled users.

How do you know if your website is accessible?

The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (known as WCAG) are an internationally recognised recommendations for improving web accessibility: Understanding WCAG

If you used a web designer, ask if they followed these guidelines when they created your website.

If not, you can perform a "basic accessibility check" to see if your website complies with the guidelines: Doing a basic accessibility check

Ideally, users of your website should be able to:
- Use a keyboard instead of a mouse to navigate the site.
- Adjust browser settings to make content easier to read.
- Use a screen reader to 'read' (speak) content out loud.
- Use a screen magnifier to enlarge parts of a screen.
- Navigate the site using voice commands.

Top tips for things to consider on your website:

- Provide sufficient contrast using colours and textures.
- Limit the number of colours you use.
- Avoid background and font colours that make your pages difficult to read for colourblind users.
- Allow font size adjustment.
- Don't rely on colour alone to communicate important information.
- Enable keyboard accessibility and shortcuts, rather than having to use a mouse to navigate.
- Use descriptive labels for links and buttons, avoid vague labels such as "click here". Instead, provide context such as "click here to book".
- Provide alt text descriptions for images.
- Use headings to organise page content.
- Use descriptive titles for every page.
- Offer clear navigation. Use simple menus and clear calls to action for easy navigation.

Accessibility software

If your website isn't accessible, there are accessibility software that can help you conform to WCAG standards and make your website more inclusive, for example "TextHelp" and "Recite Me".

Here is a handy guide to accessibility software: Guide to accessibility software

Screen readers

The internet is inherently visual, so how do people with visual impairments access it? The simple answer is that they often use screen readers (also known as text-to-speech software). This is why it is important to make sure your website is accessible to screen readers.

If you want to learn more about screen readers and how they work, here is a fact sheet from AbilityNet: Introduction to screen readers

Booking systems

Even if your website is accessible, your booking system may not be. Many booking system vendors are still developing their systems to meet the WCAG 2.2 level AA accessibility requirements.

It's important to provide accessible booking options. Ideally, your online booking system should be easy to use and accessible to everyone, but if it is not, offer alternative ways to book, such as by phone or email.

Remember, this doesn't just apply to visually impaired visitors or people with dyslexia. Many older people may not have smartphones, so not everyone can access online information or booking pages. Some may also be unable or unwilling to pay online.

We would recommend that you check with your booking system provider to see if their system is accessible, or if they have a timeline for meeting these guidelines.

Social media

There are different ways to make your social media more accessible, for example:

- Capitalise words in hashtags on social media, to make them readable by screen readers.
- Add captions to videos and provide transcripts for audio content.
- Provide alt text to describe images.
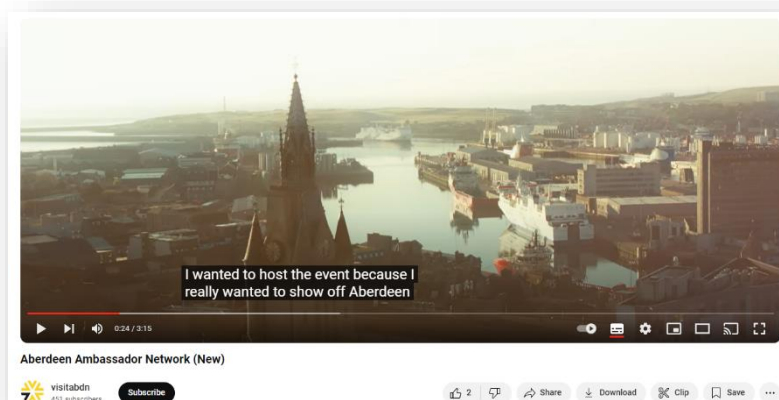
In writing (non-digital):

In the next couple of chapters, we will cover accessible text and design, as well as inclusive language, so you are aware of the key considerations when creating printed materials like guidebooks, brochures, leaflets, menus and signs, as well as when sending letters.

The goal is to make sure that the non-digital aspects of your service are accessible too.

What can you do?

- Instead of only directing customers to your website for information, offer other options to contact you. This could include in writing (text message, email) or in-person assistance, such as using a BSL translator for Deaf or speech-impaired users.

- Provide multiple formats, for example by offering brochures and promotional materials in large print, braille, or easy-read versions.

- People with visual impairments should have the option to contact you by phone.

- If possible, provide an email address on your website, as not everyone is able to fill out forms online.

- If you send out letters as part of your service, make sure you can also provide these in accessible formats, such as large print, braille, or audio CD.

Source: gov.uk

Accessible texts

When writing texts – whether for your website, documents, or accessibility guides – it's important to follow some basic principles to ensure the texts are accessible to your audience.

There are two key aspects to consider when it comes to accessible texts: Is the text easy to understand (writing)? And is it easy to read (design)?

Accessible writing

In this context, accessible writing means using language that can be understood by the widest possible audience, including people who use screen readers, and those with autism or dyslexia.

Here are some tips to make your text as accessible as possible:

Headings
- Use a clear structure, including proper headings. For example, in word processing documents and website builders, use Heading 1, Heading 2 etc.
- Use descriptive headings to guide your readers.

Structure
- Write short, simple sentences. Aim for an average sentence length of no more than 15-20 words, and no more than three pieces of information per sentence.
- Break your text into paragraphs.
- Align text to the left to ensure even spacing between words. Avoid justifying your text, i.e. don't distribute the text evenly between the margins.

Language
- Use simple language. Write in a simple, clear style.
- Avoid jargon and "corporate words". Consider your audience's knowledge level and adapt your language accordingly.
- Use consistent terminology to avoid confusion.
- If you need to use abbreviations or acronyms, provide an explanation when they first appear.
- Provide clear and concise instructions.
- Write in an active voice to make sentences more direct. An example of an active sentence is "I will send you a confirmation email". A passive sentence would be "a confirmation email will be issued at the time of booking".
- Avoid using All Caps (i.e. capitalising all letters in a word).

Lists
- Format lists properly with numbers or bullet points.
- Use bullet point lists or numbered lists to break down complex information into digestible chunks.

Numbers
- Numbers from one to nine are easier to read in normal text if they are written as words, while numbers from 10 upwards should be numerals.

Highlighting text

- Use bold or large font for emphasis rather than italics or underlining, which can make the text more difficult to read.

Social media

- Capitalise each word in your hashtags on social media to make them easier for screen readers to interpret. For example, #VisitAberdeenshireResponsibleTourismToolkit is easier to read than #visitaberdeenshireresponsibletourismtoolkit.
- And don't rely on emojis to get your message across, make sure the text is clear and makes sense on its own.

Readability and accessibility tests

Consider asking someone else to read your text before publishing, to make sure the text is as clear and easy to understand as possible.

There are also different tools available to check your text's readability and accessibility:
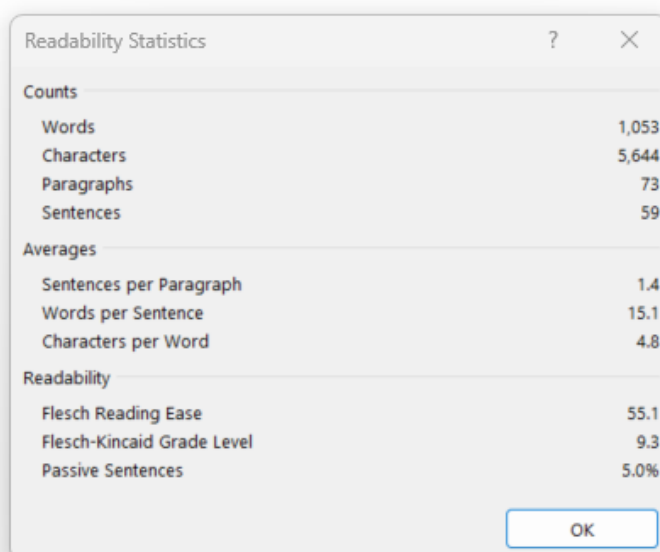
Readability check

You can assess the readability level of a text using tools like "Editor" (Home > Editor > Document stats) in Microsoft Words.

Two common tests are:

- **"Flesch Reading Ease"** – aim for a score of 60 - 70 (the higher the number, the easier the text is to understand).
- **"Flesch Kincaid Grade Level"** – aim for a score of 7.0 - 8.0 (the lower the number, the easier it is to understand).

In this example, the text is a little bit too complicated for a general audience:

Readability Statistics	? ✕
Counts	
Words	1,053
Characters	5,644
Paragraphs	73
Sentences	59
Averages	
Sentences per Paragraph	1.4
Words per Sentence	15.1
Characters per Word	4.8
Readability	
Flesch Reading Ease	55.1
Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level	9.3
Passive Sentences	5.0%
	OK

Accessibility checker

Most word processing software include an inbuilt accessibility checker, that offers tips on how to make your document more accessible.

For example, if you use Google Docs, click on **Tools** in the menu, and choose **Accessibility**.

In Microsoft Words, click on **Review** in the toolbar menu, and then **Check Accessibility**.
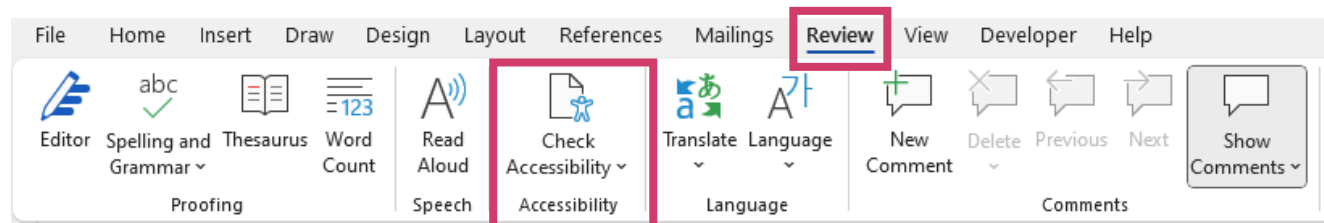
Resources

AbilityNet

AbilityNet offers an excellent online resource for creating accessible documents, both for print and online: Creating accessible documents

Accessible and inclusive design

You also want to make sure that your design doesn't affect the readability of your text.

Font

Use a common, plain font, ideally a clear "sans serif" font such as Arial, Verdana or Helvetica. Try to avoid light or thin fonts, and fonts with a lot of flourishes.

Text size (especially in printed documents) should be at least 12 points. Consider providing "large print" versions of documents or brochures, which should be 16 points or larger.

Colours

Keep in mind that many people are colourblind, so avoid using colour alone to convey meaning. Include text instructions as well.

Colour contrast

Make sure that there is sufficient contrast between the background (image or colour) and the text.

Microsoft's Accessibility Checker (see above) can help identify and fix colour contrast issues.

There is also an excellent online tool to check how accessible a colour combination is. You need to know the hex codes for your colours to use this tool: WebAim Contrast Checker

For example:

WCAG 2.0 level AA requires a contrast ratio of at least 4.5:1 for normal text and 3:1 for large text (14 point or larger).

Images

Images can be a great way to convey complex information, after all, "a picture is worth a thousand words". This is especially true for people with dyslexia or other learning difficulties.

Alt text

However, not everyone reading your document or website will be able to see your image.

To assist visually impaired users, make sure images have alt text descriptions. This is a text that describes the image, which can be interpreted by screen readers.

Make sure the description is meaningful and descriptive, and try to keep the alt text to less than 150 words. There is no need to mention that it is an image in the alt text, as the screen reader will announce that it is an image.

For example, for the screenshot below, instead of writing "an image of a bridge", you might say:

A screenshot from a website, showing an old stone bridge over a river, surrounded by trees, on a sunny day, with the text "welcome to Aberdeen" across it.

Diverse images

Use images that represent diverse abilities, ages, and backgrounds. For instance, why not feature images of a same-sex couple or people with disabilities on your website and on social media? Your images should reflect your audience, so they can picture themselves visiting you.

Closed captions

If you use videos, make sure to add closed captions, so that they are accessible to those who are deaf or hard of hearing. It also benefits people who prefer watching videos without sound or those who speak English as a second language.

Most video platforms like YouTube and Vimeo offer easy-to-use tools to add closed captions. These tools can automatically generate captions (which you may need to edit) or allow you to type in or upload a transcript. It's a small step that can make a big difference.
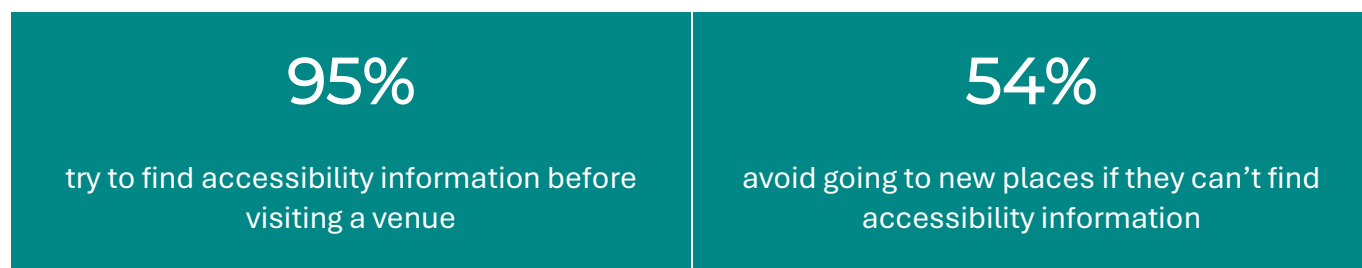
Creating accessibility guides

One of the key actions identified by VisitScotland is to provide honest and clear information by creating an Accessibility Guide. This guide should be available as a link or a dedicated page on your website.

Why should I have an Accessibility Guide?

Both Euan's Guide (the accessibility review site) and AccessAble (a website with detailed access guide listings) have conducted surveys showing that over 95% of disabled people check for accessibility information before visiting a venue, and up to 76% of them decided not to visit because of lack of accessibility information.

Additionally, VisitScotland found that 73% of customers have found information on a venue's website to be misleading, confusing or inaccurate.

Euan's Guides' access survey:

95%	54%
try to find accessibility information before visiting a venue	avoid going to new places if they can't find accessibility information

AccessAble survey:

98%	81%
check for accessibility information in advance	expect to find the information on the venue's website
76%	**98%**
have decided not to visit a venue because of a lack of access information	more likely to visit if access information is available

How do I create an Accessibility Guide?

VisitScotland have joined forces with AccessAble to provide an access guide service for tourism businesses.

AccessAble can either conduct a survey via video call or carry out an in-person audit. Afterward, they will create a detailed Accessibility Guide for you, which will also be listed on their website.

You can learn more about this VisitScotland and AccessAble collaboration, including guideline rates for this service, here: Enhancing Information Provision

Read more about AccessAble here: **Resources - AccessAble**

Some things to include in your Accessibility Guide:

- Information about accessibility for both your physical venue and online (e.g. website and booking system).
- Directions to your business and access details (e.g. level access, parking, drop off points, signage).
- Do you offer virtual or video tours of your venue?
- Details about toilet facilities, and any available changing places (adult and child).
- Services and equipment you offer, such as hearing loops, braille brochures, visual fire alarms, quieter times, and quiet spaces.
- Facilities for assistance dogs (e.g. water bowls, nearby parks).
- All the different ways to contact you.
- Any accessibility training your team have completed.
- A listing of any specific accessibility features you provide, including measurements.

Promote your Accessibility Guide

Once you have created an accessibility guide, make sure it's accessible online. Ideally, include a link to the guide on your website, or a dedicated Accessibility page.

You might also consider listing your business on Euan's Guide. If you are not already listed, you can upload your own accessibility guide and information. If you are already listed, you can update your listing for free.

Link: **Resources – Euan's Guide**

And don't forget to share the news that you have an accessibility guide on your social media.

Sources: VisitScotland, AccessAble, Euan's Guide

Inclusive language

One of the main concerns regarding inclusivity is the fear of unintentionally offending customers by using the wrong terminology or simply saying "the wrong thing". For example, how should you refer to different ethnic minorities and orientations, and is it OK to say "see you later" to a visually impaired person? *

This concern applies across all demographics – age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability etc.

Identity is very personal, so if in doubt - listen, learn, and politely ask about preferences.

Recommendations change frequently, and language continuously evolves, but here is some general advice with links for further information:

Disabilities

Refer to individuals as "disabled" or "people with disabilities", rather than handicapped.

Try to avoid negative or emotionally charged expressions. For instance, instead of saying that someone "suffers from dementia", say they are "living with dementia".

Terms like 'fully accessible' aren't very helpful - fully accessible to whom? You need to provide detailed information about accessibility, so people can determine if it suits their specific needs.

Purple Tuesday have created an excellent resource to help you know what to say about different disabilities: Hello can I help you

Race or ethnicity?

There is often confusion around when to use these words. The simple answer (and the government's advice) is to use "ethnicity", rather than "race" when speaking in general terms.

Some expressions, such as "BAME", "non-white", "mixed-race" and "coloured people" are now considered problematic and should be avoided. The most common general term used today is "BPOC" (black people, and people of colour), but it's generally best to refer to ethnic minority groups individually, rather than as one single group.

If in doubt, The Law Society provide some general advice: A guide to race and ethnicity terminology and language

The government also offers good advice on their website: Writing about ethnicity

LGBTQ+

Acceptable umbrella terms are LGBT, LGBTQ or LGBTQ+ (the Q stands for queer or questioning). You should refer to it as "sexual orientation", or just "orientation".

When referring to a specific person, use the term (and pronouns) they are comfortable with – usually gay or lesbian, rather than homosexual – but this is up to the individual, so don't be afraid to ask.

NICE have compiled a useful list of terms for all demographics, including LGBTQ+: Talking about people

By the way, the answer is yes...
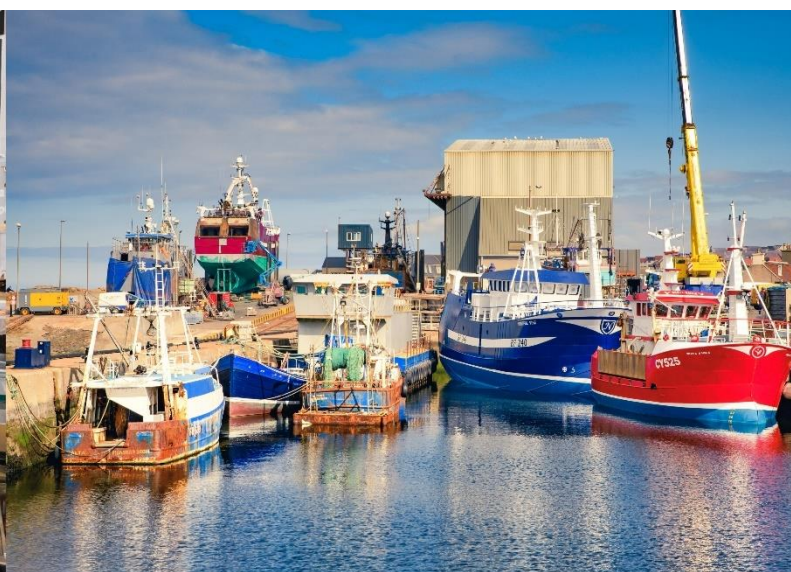
Community engagement

Supporting your local community can take many forms. The goal is to make the area more attractive to visitors, while strengthening the local economy. You can achieve this by supporting local businesses, protecting and conserving the area's natural and cultural heritage, and providing job opportunities for local people.

Remember, you are part of the local community too. Other local businesses and organisations might be able to support you as well.

Here are some ways you can get involved:

Sponsorship: Is there a local festival or event you could sponsor?

Partnerships: Could you stock products from local artisans or producers in your shop? Or use locally sourced ingredients for your breakfast or dinner menu?

Working with local suppliers and artisans helps build stronger community connections and adds something special to what you offer. By featuring authentic, locally made products, you create a more unique and memorable experience for your visitors.

Local recruitment: Are there local schemes that help long-term unemployed people or recent school leavers find work? Could you recruit through these?

Apprenticeships: Could you offer training opportunities to local people and recent school leavers?

Conservation charities: How can you support conservation efforts in your area?

One approach is to connect with anchor organisations like Historic Environment Scotland or the National Trust for Scotland, to explore opportunities for involvement.

Fundraising: Are there local causes or charities you could help by fundraising or hosting events?

Community business networking: Can you connect with other local businesses to share ideas, resources, and opportunities?

Check if there is a local business network already or consider starting one for your local area if not. Building strong networks benefits everyone.

Encouraging local visitors: Sometimes locals don't think about visiting nearby attractions or staying at local accommodations. Could you offer a community discount or organise open days to welcome them?

One reason locals may not visit is the perception that your attraction or activity is too expensive. Could you offer taster experiences at a lower price, so that more people have the opportunity to experience it?

Inclusive recruitment

Supporting the local community also means making your recruitment process more inclusive, giving everyone a fair chance to secure work. Here are some initiatives to consider:

Inclusive recruitment – people with disabilities

The disability employment rate in the UK was just over 50% in 2022, and many employers feel they lack the confidence to employ disabled people.

There are several myths about hiring disabled people. For example, some believe it's expensive to hire employees with disabilities. While you might need to make some reasonable adjustments, many disabled people don't need them, and the average cost of a reasonable adjustment is less than £80.

Another common misconception is that disabled people are more likely to take time off work. In fact, some studies have shown that disabled employees are less likely to miss work.

Being an inclusive employer has many benefits and can open up more opportunities for your business.

A few things to consider when recruiting:

- Review your job descriptions and requirements, and make sure they don't unnecessarily exclude anyone. For example, does this role really require a driver's licence?
- Use inclusive language in your job adverts, and mention that you encourage applications from people with protected characteristics.
- Keep the application process simple and straightforward.
- Make sure the interview venue is accessible, including being accessible by public transport.
- Provide constructive feedback after the interview.
- If the applicant is successful, discuss any support or adjustments they might need before their start date.

If you want to learn more about inclusive recruitment, or explore the support available to employers, the government offer a scheme called Access to Work: Access to work guide for employers

There is also the "Disability Confident" employer scheme, which can help your business recruit and support employees with disabilities: Disability Confident

Source: Disability Confident

Inclusive recruitment – young carers

A recent Carers Trust survey showed that over 41% of young adult carers worry about their future job prospects. Young carers are less likely to go on to higher education or secure jobs, compared to others their age without caring responsibilities. Their education is often disrupted, which means they may miss out on qualifications.

However, their caring roles help young adult carers develop a wide range of skills and attributes that can be invaluable in the workplace. Constantly juggling schoolwork with their caring duties often turn young adult carers into natural multi-taskers, who know how to effectively prioritise tasks.

Carers Trust offer specialist support to young carers, in partnership with local organisations.

Read more about what they do here: Young Carers Futures Hub

Inclusive recruitment – disadvantaged young people

Currently, 40,000 young people in Scotland struggle to succeed after leaving school and are unfairly disadvantaged by their circumstances. In 2019, a 10-year youth employment fund called Our Future Now (OFN), delivered by the charity "Inspiring Scotland", was founded to support these young people.

Working with other charities, the fund supported almost 25,000 young people aged 14-25 in its first 5 years, with over 62% of those successfully securing an employability outcome, either of work, education, training, or volunteering.

Read more about OFN here: Inspiring Scotland - Our Future Now

Checklists – inclusive tourism

Introduction

We have summarised the suggested actions in three checklists for you.

The first one covers quick wins – actions that will only take a few minutes or involve a simple behavioural change. The second checklist includes actions that require a bit more effort and may involve some cost.

When you are ready for more, there is an advanced checklist with actions that may take longer, and could also involve an investment or external assistance.

You can track your progress too. We have included three columns of tick boxes so you can tick off what you have already done (completed), what you are currently implementing (in progress), and highlight the things you have left to implement (to do).

If you need support at any stage with your checklists and actions, contact the Tourism Development Team at VisitAberdeenshire who are there to help. Their email address is: industry@visitabdn.com

1. QUICK WINS
Actions that will only take a few minutes or involve a behavioural change.

Action	Completed	In progress	To do	Read more here	Action plan if not completed
Do you ask visitors if they have access requirements when they book?	☐	☐	☐	Link here	
Do you include a name in confirmation emails to provide a contact for the visit / stay?	☐	☐	☐	Link here	
Do you offer pre-visits or provide a video tour of your venue?	☐	☐	☐	Link here	
Do you design and display signs with large text, high contrast, and simple language?	☐	☐	☐	Link here	
Do you manage noise levels, for example by avoiding playing loud music in the background?	☐	☐	☐	Link here	
Do you provide an email address on your website, as not everyone can fill out forms online?	☐	☐	☐	Link here	
Do you share your inclusivity message on social media?	☐	☐	☐	Link here	
Do you use alt text to describe images when you post on social media?	☐	☐	☐	Link here	
Do you capitalise each word in hashtags on social media?	☐	☐	☐	Link here	
Do you add captions to videos and provide transcripts for audio content you post on social media?	☐	☐	☐	Link here	
Do you use diverse images that represent different abilities, ages, and backgrounds on social media?	☐	☐	☐	Link here	
Do you involve your team in inclusivity efforts; do you ask them for ideas and feedback?	☐	☐	☐	Link here	
Do you use language that can be understood by the widest possible audience?	☐	☐	☐	Link here	

2. MEDIUM TERM

May require some more time and may involve a cost.

Action	Completed	In progress	To do	Read more here	Action plan, if not completed
Review your website and any other information source, to make sure you are honest about your accessibility.	☐	☐	☐	Link here	
Update your customer service training, giving your staff the confidence and skills they need to welcome everyone.	☐	☐	☐	Link here	
Train your team on assisting guests with disabilities and promoting inclusivity.	☐	☐	☐	Link here	
Ensure your venue offers quiet areas or sensory-friendly spaces for those who need them.	☐	☐	☐	Link here	
Consider colours and patterns in your venue.	☐	☐	☐	Link here	
Provide noise-cancelling headphones and sensory guides.	☐	☐	☐	Link here	
Provide assistive technology, for example hearing loops, braille menus, and audio guides.	☐	☐	☐	Link here	
Research and offer access information about the general area, not just your venue.	☐	☐	☐	Link here	
Review and update your website to highlight your access facilities and services.	☐	☐	☐	Link here	
Review how accessible and inclusive your website is.	☐	☐	☐	Link here	
Explore accessibility software to improve your website accessibility if necessary.	☐	☐	☐	Link here	
Make sure that your accessible bedrooms are available to book online, with images so people can see how they are laid out.	☐	☐	☐	Link here	
Add alt text to any images on your website.	☐	☐	☐	Link here	
Source diverse images that represent different abilities, ages, and backgrounds, and use them on your website and on social media.	☐	☐	☐	Link here	
Check with your booking system provider to see if their system is accessible.	☐	☐	☐	Link here	
Offer alternative ways to book, such as by phone or email.	☐	☐	☐	Link here	
Provide brochures and information in large print, braille, or easy-read versions.	☐	☐	☐	Link here	
Review your website and any printed materials, and make sure you use accessible designs (fonts, colours, and colour contrasts)	☐	☐	☐	Link here	
Use accessible format and structure for texts, making sure your content is easy to read and understand.	☐	☐	☐	Link here	

Use tools to check the readability and accessibility of texts on your website and promotional materials.	☐	☐	☐	Link here
If you used a web designer, check if they followed the web accessibility guidelines when they created your website.	☐	☐	☐	Link here
If not, perform a "basic accessibility check" to see if your website complies with the guidelines.	☐	☐	☐	Link here
Look into sponsorship of local events.	☐	☐	☐	Link here
Look for local partnerships with suppliers and artisans to support community initiatives.	☐	☐	☐	Link here
Join community business networking groups to engage with local businesses and share best practices.	☐	☐	☐	Link here
Help fundraise for local charities.	☐	☐	☐	Link here
Engage with local anchor organisations, such as NTS or Historic Environment Scotland.	☐	☐	☐	Link here
Recruit locally and consider hiring people with disabilities, young carers, or people from disadvantaged backgrounds.	☐	☐	☐	Link here
Review your recruitment process - job descriptions, application process, interview format, etc - to make sure it is inclusive and accessible.	☐	☐	☐	Link here

3. LONGER TERM

May require investment, external help, and commitment.

Action	Completed	In progress	To do	Read more here	Action plan if not completed
Create an accessibility guide, describing in detail your access facilities and services.	☐	☐	☐	Link here	
Make your accessibility guide available on your website.	☐	☐	☐	Link here	
Engage with AccessAble to explore the services they provide.	☐	☐	☐	Link here	
Promote your accessibility guide on your website and social media.	☐	☐	☐	Link here	
Create an accessibility and inclusivity policy, and add to website and staff training.	☐	☐	☐	Link here	
Create an "access for all" page or section to your website to summarise what you offer.	☐	☐	☐	Link here	
Review your access on-site, and make sure you provide access for wheelchairs and walking frames; ensure that ramps, elevators, and accessible restrooms are available wherever possible.	☐	☐	☐	Link here	
Invest in assistive technology to make your venue and services more accessible.	☐	☐	☐	Link here	
Encourage local visitors, for example through a community discount or by organising open days.	☐	☐	☐	Link here	
Join local conservation or social initiatives to engage with the community and promote inclusive tourism.	☐	☐	☐	Link here	
Support conservation charities through donations or fundraising efforts.	☐	☐	☐	Link here	
Add closed captions to all video content on your website, and ensure transcripts are available for audio content.	☐	☐	☐	Link here	
Consider hiring a photographer to provide a diverse range of images, to be used in your promotional materials, on your website and on social media to reflect the inclusivity of your business.	☐	☐	☐	Link here	
Offer apprenticeships or training opportunities to local people.	☐	☐	☐	Link here	
Measure your success and ask for feedback from your customers.	☐	☐	☐	Link here	
Add your listing to Euan's Guide.	☐	☐	☐	Link here	
Apply for inclusivity awards.	☐	☐	☐	Link here	
Join Green Tourism.	☐	☐	☐	Link here	

VisitAberdeenshire

c/o P&J Live
East Burn Road
Aberdeen
AB21 9FX

Tel: 01224 900490
Email: industry@visitabdn.com
Website: industry.visitabdn.com

VisitAberdeenshire