

The Great Tapestry of Scotland Centre – a five star visitor attraction

The new Great Tapestry of Scotland centre has been given the highest possible rating from VisitScotland after its first Quality Assurance inspection, which is an exceptional achievement for a new visitor attraction.

This recognition comes less than five months after the visitor attraction first opened its doors in Galashiels and shortly after the centre's purpose-built building received a commendation from the Glasgow Institute of Architects.



Picture Phil Wilkinson

The tourism attraction was given five-star visitor attraction status by Paula Ward, VisitScotland's Regional Leadership Director. She said: "Congratulations to the team at The Great Tapestry of Scotland and Live Borders on this fantastic achievement. To receive this 5-star Quality Assurance award just a few months after opening is testament to the exceptional visitor experience on offer.

"Quality Assurance is more than just stars on the door, it is about the entire visitor experience. Our stars represent world class excellence, helping businesses shine, enabling visitors to make informed choices and driving investment in quality.

"The Great Tapestry of Scotland is already one of Scotland's must-see national visitor attractions and a fantastic example of how tourism really is a force for good, creating wealth and social benefits for businesses and people in the south of Scotland, and enhancing the wellbeing of everyone who visits."

Director, Sandy Maxwell-Forbes, who led the development of the new centre, said: "I am absolutely delighted we were awarded

five-stars from VisitScotland who have helped to create our wonderful new visitor centre. I am incredibly proud of all that we have achieved and continue to achieve, particularly amidst a global pandemic.

“It is apt that our new purpose-built centre is firmly cemented as one of Scotland’s leading visitor attractions as we enter 2022 – the Year of Stories. Just three miles from Abbotsford, the home of the renowned novelist Sir Walter Scott, The Great Tapestry of Scotland is truly where Scotland’s story begins.”

The Great Tapestry of Scotland is operated by the charity Live Borders, which manages many of the cultural and leisure facilities in the Scottish Borders, including the five-star Jim Clark Motorsport Museum and the Heart of Hawick entertainment venue.

The charity’s Chairman Bill White said: “I’d like to congratulate The Great Tapestry of Scotland visionaries, centre director Sandy Maxwell-Forbes and her team, Scottish Borders Council and all those who have worked on the project for their dedication, commitment and determination to create and deliver a truly world-class visitor experience, in spite of a global pandemic. And I’d like to thank everyone who has helped us secure this brilliant accolade – from the Tapestry’s creators, stitchers and funders to the brilliant architects and exhibition designers, and of course the Galashiels businesses who have welcomed our visitors to the town.”

Cllr Euan Jardine, Executive Member for Wellbeing, Sport and Culture, said: “Accolades like this five-star rating do wonders to help promote the national significance of this visitor attraction across the country and places Galashiels firmly on the map. This national recognition can act as a springboard for further tourism to the local area and the wider region through 2022 and beyond, providing wide-ranging

benefits to businesses and communities alike.

“I’d like to place on record my thanks to all the partners who collaborated together to deliver this stunning attraction and to the Tapestry staff who work incredibly hard to contribute to its continued success.”

It was author Alexander McCall Smith who had the idea for the tapestry and The Great Tapestry of Scotland is one of the world’s largest community arts projects. It was hand-stitched by a team of 1,000 stitchers from across Scotland, using 160 linen panels and over 300 miles of wool (enough to lay the entire length of Scotland from the border with England to the tip of Shetland).

The panels were designed by artist Andrew Crummy, based on a narrative written by Scottish Borders-based award-winning writer and historian Alistair Moffat.



Paula Ward hands over the five stars Picture Phil Wilkinson
In addition to the Tapestry itself, the visitor centre houses visiting exhibits, a café and workshops that allow

participants to meet and learn from makers in one of the UK's premier textile regions.

Architects Page\Park were recently presented with a commendation from the Glasgow Institute of Architects for their design of the new centre, which was purpose built by contractors Ogilvie Construction for Scottish Borders Council. It is a critical town centre regeneration project which has received investment from the Scottish Government through its Regeneration Capital Grant Fund, the Borders Railway Blueprint programme and the Council. And there is evidence that the attraction is already supporting footfall to other businesses in Galashiels.

Naomi Harrod owner of Unwind Yarns, an independent retailer located in Galashiels, said: "We're delighted to have the Galashiels' first ever five-star visitor attraction right here on our doorstep. Since it opened in August, we have seen our own customer footfall increase with many of those visiting saying they have come to see The Great Tapestry of Scotland. It's a wonderful visitor experience and fantastic for our local economy."

The visitor centre is currently open to the public from Thursday to Monday, 9.30am to 5pm and The Stitchers Café is open Thursday to Monday 10am to 4pm. From 4 April 2022, the Centre will be open 7 days a week. Ticket prices to view the Great Tapestry of Scotland vary.

greattapestryofscotland.com



Picture Phil Wilkinson