

Bishop's Palace and Gardens

Bishop's Palace and Gardens, WELLS, Somerset, BA5 2PD, England

Summary

RATING	SCHEME	OVERALL QUALITY SCORE
Quality Assessed	Visitor Attraction	94%

VISIT DATE	VISIT TYPE
10 February 2025	Day Assessment

DEBRIEF CONTACT
Ms Merryn Kidd Chief Executive

The Bishop's Palace and Gardens once again passes the assessment and continues to be a quality assured visitor attraction under the VisitEngland scheme. On this visit the overall score has reached 94% which is a 4% increase from the previous visit in 2023. Enhancements have taken place that were suggested in past assessments and further improvements have been talked about at the debrief. A nomination for a Gold Accolade has been triggered - well done!

The Attraction also continues to offer an excellent dining experience in delightful surroundings and is again nominated for the VisitEngland Quality Food and Drink Accolade. Nominations for accolades will be reviewed in the latter part of 2025 and awards will be made to successful attractions thereafter.

On this occasion the assessment comprised of a walk around the gardens, guided tour around the Palace and gardens with one of the volunteer guides, a lunch, a try out of the new interactive guided tour, and a visit to the shop. The weather was cold and wet limiting visitor numbers and a fire alarm cut short the assessment, although enough information and visitor experience had been had to provide a proper assessment score.

The day was relatively quiet, but the café was proving very popular with visitors and non-visitors alike. The guided tour had about ten people, including a wheelchair user, and proved to be very interesting and informative. The guide also encouraged victors to go back and do a self guided tour or try the new interactive tour.

The service provided in the café and by the volunteers encountered throughout the visit was excellent.

A number of improvements have been made since the last assessment, as this was the first visit to

the attraction by the assessor, Chief Executive Merryn Kidd kindly listed them before the visit:

- Total refurbishment of café decoration and furniture to give it a more modern feel, more space, less heavy/crowded furniture, more covers etc

- Refurbishment of the ladies and accessible toilets in the stableyard area

- The Book Nook – a second hand bookshop in a previously disused part of the free-to-enter area adjacent to the Gatehouse. The refurbishment work was carried out by Volunteers and the shop is being run by Volunteers

- New physical Interpretation in the Palace includes: The Wynne Willson Room – a room reimagined as the study of Wynne Willson in the late 1930's, a new top for Bishop Ken's table (of which the legs were original but it had a hard more modern top and no one realised the significance of it), dressing of the Long Gallery table in the style of Hervey's daughter's wedding feast, and dressing of the tables in the Undercroft.

At the debrief with Merryn, it was good to hear the intention to engage with the "Starring Great Britain" film location initiative, and English Tourism week, as well as encouraging to hear that events are really taking off and increasing visitor numbers.

Further improvements to look into are changing the alignment of one of the footbridges in the gardens and re-siting the Ticket Office to the Stable Yard

As a first time visit the assessor was most impressed, and future improvements are anticipated with interest. A big "well done" to all the team for a very enjoyable visit experience.

