

## **QUALITY PAYS OFF**

Twelve local bed and breakfast operators recently attended a very successful quality awareness course hosted by Bev Ashdown at the Exmoor Lodge Guest House in Exford. The delegates represented eight businesses from a wide area (Exford, Dulverton, Monksilver, Lynmouth, Watchet, North Molton and South Molton).

The course was organised by Exmoor National Park Authority's QUEST Project Manager, Julie Lovett, as part of a drive to encourage more accommodation providers to discover more about national quality assurance schemes which enable potential visitors to choose their accommodation with confidence knowing that it has been visited and graded by an independent assessor from the AA or VisitBritain. Julie Lovett said: "We were delighted by the response to the quality assurance day. The next one for self catering businesses, is already full and there will be another course for serviced accommodation in November, so if anyone is interested they should contact me as soon as possible."

The course was led by Carl Smith, South West Tourism's South West Tourism's Quality Development Manager (who was previously an accommodation inspector).

The group spent the morning looking at the property and giving their opinions on what worked well and where improvements could be made. In the afternoon they toured again with Carl who explained how an assessor would view the accommodation. The whole day gave plenty of opportunity for sharing best practice and networking with people running similar businesses.

This course normally costs £50 per person, but delegates were charged only £5 due to subsidies from the QUEST project and the Tourism Skills Network.

South West Tourism have successfully bid into the Exmoor Sustainable Development Fund to pay the cost of pre-assessment advisory visits to businesses who would appreciate some more advice before signing up to the quality assurance scheme. These visits normally cost £95 but the funding will cover the full cost of the visit for up to 50 businesses. Anyone attending the Quality Awareness course or taking up the offer of a free advisory visit will also be entitled to a voucher giving £75 off the cost of their initial assessment visit.

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