Green Tourism Standard

The Green Tourism Standard: Governance and Independent Certification

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How the Standard is set, how businesses are audited and certified, and how the two are kept independent.

Established in Scotland in 1997, Green Tourism has carried out more than 18,000 audits and is now in its 30th year, certifying businesses ranging from guest houses and self-catering cottages to hotels, holiday parks, venues and visitor experiences.

This document explains who sets out the Green Tourism Standard, who audits and certifies businesses against it, how certification is kept independent, and how the scheme meets EU and UK requirements for sustainability certification. It is written for certified businesses, their guests and stakeholders, and anyone who wants to understand what Green Tourism Certified stands for.

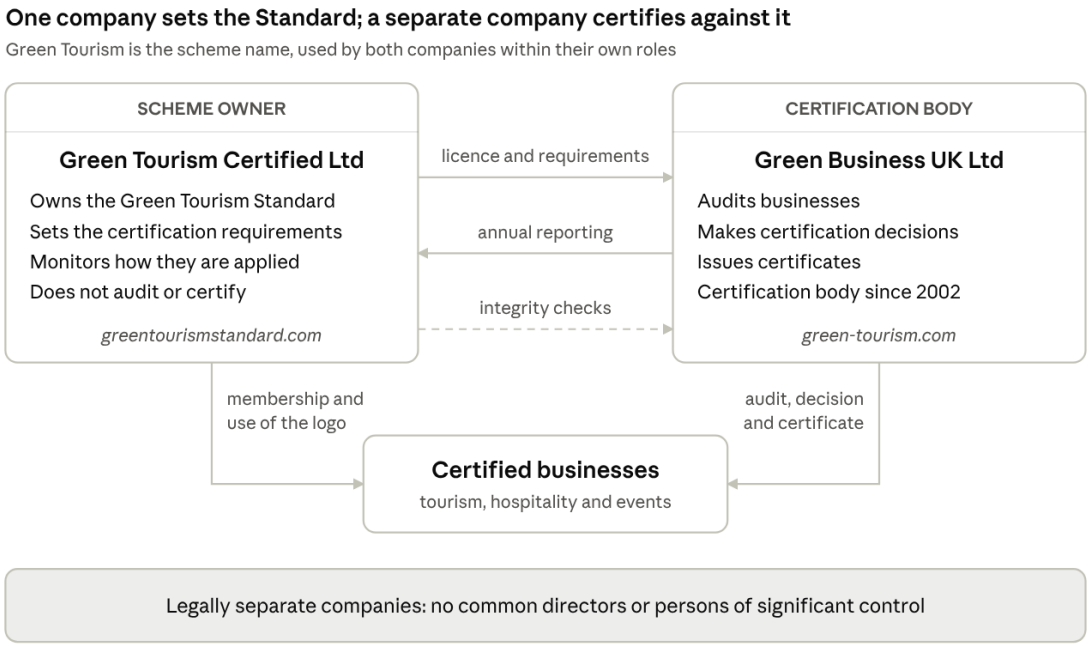
Who does what

The Green Tourism Standard is owned by one company and certified by another.

- **Green Tourism Certified Ltd (scheme owner)** owns the Green Tourism Standard, sets out the certification requirements and monitors how they are applied. It does not audit businesses or make certification decisions.

- **Green Business UK Ltd (certification body)** has been the scheme's certification body since 2002. It audits businesses, makes certification decisions and issues certificates, under licence from the scheme owner, and is the only certification body appointed under the scheme.

The two companies are legally separate, with no common directors and no shared persons of significant control. Green Tourism is the name of the scheme, used by both companies within their own roles.



How certification works

Every certified business is audited against the published criteria for its type of business, and certification is decided by someone other than the auditor.

1. **Preparation.** Businesses build their evidence module by module in GreenCheck, our online platform. They can use a readiness check and get support from our Green Tourism Advisors before applying.
2. **Independent audit.** When a business applies, its submission is locked and passed to the certification team. Auditors review the evidence against the criteria in a separate auditing module that only the certification team can access.
3. **Certification decision.** A decision-maker who did not carry out the audit decides whether to certify.
4. **Ongoing checks.** Certificates are valid for three years from the date of issue. Between full audits, each business completes an annual check-in, and complaints or concerns can be followed up at any time.
5. **Non-compliance.** A business that stops meeting the Standard is given time to put things right. If it does not, its certification is suspended or withdrawn, it must stop using the Green Tourism Certified logo, and it is removed from the public register.

Keeping certification independent

Independence is built into the people, the process and the platform, and set out as binding requirements on the certification body.

- **Auditors never advise the businesses they audit.** Support before audit comes from our Green Tourism Advisors, who take no part in audits or certification decisions.

- **Conflicts of interest are declared.** Auditors and decision-makers declare any potential conflict before they are assigned.
- **Distance from past relationships.** No auditor audits a business they have worked for or with in the previous two years.
- **Auditor rotation.** The same auditor audits a business for no more than three consecutive cycles.
- **Separate decisions.** Certification decisions are made by someone who is not involved in the audit.
- **A locked audit stage.** Once a business submits, its submission cannot be changed, and the audit takes place in a module only the certification team can access.

The scheme owner monitors how its requirements are applied, through integrity checks and annual reporting from the certification body, without taking part in any certification decisions.

Meeting EU and UK requirements

Green Tourism Certified meets the four conditions the EU sets for sustainability certification schemes.

Since 27 September 2026, the EU's Empowering Consumers for the Green Transition Directive (Directive (EU) 2024/825, also known as EmpCo or ECGT) requires sustainability labels shown to consumers to be based on a certification scheme with independent third-party verification. It does not require the certification body to be accredited.

EmpCo condition	How Green Tourism Certified meets it
Open to all on transparent, fair and non-discriminatory terms	Any tourism, hospitality or events business, anywhere in the world, can apply. The criteria are free to read and the terms are published.
Requirements developed with experts and stakeholders	The criteria were developed with independent sustainability and certification specialists, shaped by feedback from businesses and industry partners, and are reviewed regularly.
Procedures for non-compliance, including suspension and withdrawal	Businesses are given time to correct non-conformities. If they do not, certification is suspended or withdrawn, and they are removed from the public register.
Compliance monitored by a third party independent of the scheme owner and the business	Audits and decisions are made by Green Business UK Ltd, a legally separate certification body, under published requirements based on ISO/IEC 17065.

Outside the EU. The Directive protects consumers in the EU, so its rules can apply to businesses elsewhere that market to EU consumers, for example through booking platforms or EU-facing websites. Businesses must also follow consumer protection and advertising law in their own country, such as the Green Claims Code in the UK and the Empowering Consumers for the Green Transition Regulations 2026 in Ireland.

ISO/IEC 17065

ISO/IEC 17065 is the international standard for bodies that certify products, processes and services. The scheme's certification requirements are based on it.

The current Certification Body Requirements and Certification Process Requirements took effect on 1 September 2026. They were developed with independent ISO/IEC 17065-accredited specialists and are published in full. Green Business UK Ltd is not accredited to ISO/IEC 17065. The core independence requirements described above are already in place, and Green Business UK Ltd is working towards full conformity with the standard.

Recognition and talking about your certification

Green Tourism Certified is included in Travalyst's list of sustainability certifications, used by Booking.com and other travel platforms.

Certified businesses can describe their certification as:

- ***"Certified to the Green Tourism Standard following an independent third-party audit."***
- ***"[Business name] has been independently audited and certified to the Green Tourism Standard."***

Certification confirms that a business meets the Green Tourism Standard. It does not by itself support broader claims such as "eco-friendly" or "carbon neutral", which must be substantiated separately.

Find out more

The criteria for each type of business, the Certification Body Requirements and the Certification Process Requirements are published at greentourismstandard.com/the-standard. Where this summary and those documents differ, the published documents apply.

The register of certified businesses, the certification terms, and the non-compliance procedure are available at https://www.green-tourism.com/certification-terms/

	Scheme owner	Certification body
Company	Green Tourism Certified Ltd	Green Business UK Ltd
Company number	SC895325	SC227139
Responsible for	The Standard and scheme governance	Audits, certification decisions, complaints and appeals
Contact	info@greentourismstandard.com	enquiries@green-tourism.com

Directors and persons of significant control of both companies are on the public record at Companies House. This document is reviewed at least once a year and whenever the scheme changes.