

11TH ANNUAL



**BEER
MATTERS**
CONFERENCE
AND DINNER
2026



SCOTTISH
BEER
AWARDS
2026

ENTRY GUIDE

REGISTRATION AND WRITTEN ENTRIES DEADLINE
THURSDAY 21ST MAY 2026

www.scottishbeerawards.co.uk

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ABOUT THE SCOTTISH BEER AWARDS & BEER MATTERS CONFERENCE

The Scottish Beer Awards, now in its 11th year, is Scotland's largest beer competition and the national celebration of the business of beer. Each year, over 300 beers from around 35 breweries and brewing businesses compete in a process that is independently chaired, rigorously blind-tasted, and free from commercial influence. With only three medals awarded per category, these accolades are among the most respected in the industry.

In 2026, the Scottish Beer Awards forms the climactic conclusion of the Beer Matters Conference & Dinner, a full-day event bringing together brewers, suppliers, and industry leaders in one place. Taking place at the DoubleTree by Hilton, Glasgow Central, this combined event offers a unique platform for networking, business development, and insight into the latest trends and innovations shaping Scottish brewing.

Join us for this one-day celebration of Scotland's brewing excellence, where education, industry connections, and the very best in beer are recognised in a single landmark event.



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KEY DATES

THURSDAY 21ST MAY 2026

DEADLINE FOR WRITTEN AND TASTE ENTRIES

THURSDAY 20TH & FRIDAY 21ST AUGUST 2026

PRODUCT DELIVERY DATES FOR TASTE ENTRIES

TUESDAY 6TH OCTOBER 2026

BEER MATTERS CONFERENCE & AWARDS

DOUBLETREE BY HILTON, GLASGOW CENTRAL



CONTENTS**OUR CHARITY PARTNER**

The Scottish Wine and Spirit Merchants' Benevolent Institution was founded in Glasgow in 1864 and the East of Scotland Licensed Trade Benevolent Institution in 1887. They joined forces in 1976 to form the Benevolent Society of the Licensed Trade of Scotland, shortened to THE BEN.

The BEN has 14 Directors from every section of the trade. They give of their time freely, helping to raise funds, manage the Charity and visit each of their beneficiaries in their own home every year.

Each of the 50 beneficiaries receives a Christmas Gift and a Holiday Gift together with an Annual Pension. Grants for temporary emergencies are also paid to any former or current drinks and hospitality employees, or their dependants, where there is a need, at the discretion of the Directors.

The BEN also contribute to HIT scholarships to assist young people within the trade in improving their careers and also support Hospitality Health by donating funds to aid with their online mental health courses together with the association with Breathing Space, a confidential phone helpline run by the NHS.

The charity owns 18 bungalows on Duke of Edinburgh Drive, Pitlochry, permanent homes for retired and people in employment, giving a much needed roof over many who work in the trade. In order to continue a high standard of maintenance a subsidised rent is charged

In 2022 the BEN introduced a cost of living grant for those working within the trade who were finding difficulties with the increased prices for food and fuel. If you work or have worked in the trade and need financial help contact the BEN.

All funds raised in Scotland stay in Scotland.

www.bensoc.org.uk

Charity Number: SC005604

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TASTE CATEGORIES

ENTRIES ARE INVITED IN THE CATEGORIES BELOW.

IN EACH CATEGORY, THE TOP THREE PRODUCTS WILL BE PRESENTED WITH GOLD, SILVER AND BRONZE MEDALS.

BEST BRITISH-STYLE ALE

For British Styles, including Dark Mild, British-style Bitter, Brown Ale or Golden Ale, English-style IPA, Irish-style Red Ale, Scottish-style Ale.

Strong examples (e.g. Barley Wine, Wee Heavy) should go into Best Strong Beer.

BEST FRUIT OR SPICED BEER

For beer with added fruit or spice, including Fruit Beer, Spice Beer, Herb Beer, Vegetable Beer, Grape Ale.

Sour fruit beers (such as Kriek) should go into Best Sour Beer.

BEST IPA

For IPAs, including American-style IPA, Specialty IPA (e.g. Belgian IPA, Black IPA). English-style IPA should go into Best British-style Ale. Double IPA should go into Best Strong Beer.

BEST JUICY OR HAZY BEER

For Hazy IPA/New England IPA. Hazy Pale Ales should go into Best Pale Ale.

BEST LAGER

For lager styles, including Altbier, American-style lager, Cream Ale, Dunkel, Festbier, Hellers, International Lager, Kölsch, Märzen, Schwarzbier, Vienna Lager.

BEST LOW ALCOHOL BEER (0.6% TO 3.4% ABV)

For low alcohol beers (e.g. Small Beer, Table Beer).

BEST NO ALCOHOL BEER (0.5% ABV AND UNDER)

For no or zero alcohol beer.



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TASTE CATEGORIES**BEST PALE ALE**

For Pale Ales, including American-style Blonde Ale, American-style Pale Ale. British-style pale ales should go into Best British-style Ale.

BEST PILSNER

For pilsner styles, including Czech-style Pilsner, German-style Pilsner.

BEST PORTER OR STOUT

For porters or stouts, including American-style Porter or Stout, English-style Porter, Irish-style Stout, Oatmeal Stout, Sweet Stout, Tropical Stout.

Can contain flavourings (e.g. coffee, chocolate). Strong examples, such as Imperial Stout, should go into Strong Beer.

BEST SESSION BEER (3.5% to 5.4% ABV)

For session beers, including Session IPA, Weissbier, Witbier.

Beers <3.5% should go into Best Low Alcohol Beer. IPA >5.4% should go into Best IPA.

BEST SOUR BEER

For sour beers, including Berliner Weisse, Flanders Red Ale, Fruit Lambic (e.g. Kriek, Framboise), Gose, Gueuze, Lambic, Oud Bruin.

BEST STRONG BEER (ABOVE 6.5% ABV)

For strong beers, including Baltic Porter, Barley Wine, Bock (e.g. Dunkles Bock, Doppelbock), Double IPA, Foreign Extra Stout, Imperial Stout, Monastic Ales (e.g. Dubbel, Tripel), Old Ale, Wee Heavy.

May include barrel-aged beers. Can include fruit beers or spiced beers.



CONTENTS**BUSINESS CATEGORIES**

We would recommend submitting at least 500 words for each question in each category, along with any relevant supporting documents. Judges will have access to the tasting results, so we strongly encourage entering products into the tasting categories as well, where appropriate, to help support your business award entries.

SCOTTISH BREWERY OF THE YEAR**SCOTTISH SMALL BREWERY OF THE YEAR****PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT TEAM OF THE YEAR****BEST BEER DESTINATION****EXCELLENCE IN BRANDING**

CONTENTS**SCOTTISH BREWERY OF THE YEAR**

The ultimate award in the competition, the Scottish Brewery of the Year award will be presented to a brewery that has demonstrated an outstanding year of business.

This category is not open to entry and will be decided by the judging panel who will shortlist breweries from those that have entered our taste competition. The judging panel will invite selected breweries to complete an entry form and the chosen breweries will be informed in June 2026.

The judges will be looking for examples of good brewery management, product quality, contribution to the community, sustainable practices, investment in people, sales success, collaborative relationships with suppliers and customers and best practices shared across the industry. The judges will use the written entry, their own knowledge and the breweries taste performance to make their decisions.

Breweries are welcome to put themselves forward or recommend another business by emailing John@kdmedia.co.uk before the entry deadline. Shortlisted breweries will be contacted in June.

BACK TO CATEGORIES

CONTENTS**SMALL BREWERY OF THE YEAR**

The Scottish Beer Awards will present an award to a small brewery producing less than 5,000hl a year. This category is not open to entry and will be decided by the judging panel who will shortlist breweries from those that have entered our taste competition.

The judging panel will invite selected breweries to complete an entry form and the chosen breweries will be informed in June 2026. The judges will use the written entry, their own knowledge and the breweries taste performance to make their decisions.

Breweries are welcome to put themselves forward or recommend another business by emailing John@kdmedia.co.uk before the entry deadline. Shortlisted breweries will be contacted in June.

BACK TO CATEGORIES

CONTENTS**PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT TEAM OF THE YEAR**

This award will recognise the efforts of a brewery to invest in new product development by delivering a programme of new and exciting beer launches in the last 12 months.

ENTRY CONTENT:

- Describe each of the new beers created in the last 12 months and explain their concept and development including flavour profile and branding.
- Outline how consumer trends been considered in the development of the new products.
- Provide details of your sales and marketing activity and the impact this has had.
- Tell us more about the team behind the products.
- Give details of any partnerships, events or educational initiatives carried out in the last 12 months and what was their impact.

*We recommend a submission of approx 500 words per question, plus supporting documents.

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BEST BEER DESTINATION

This award will recognise the efforts of a brewery, tap room or beer bar to establish a popular destination dedicated to the enjoyment of Scottish beer.

ENTRY CONTENT:

- Describe the destination, the range of beers, the design and build and customer experience.
- Describe the sales and marketing activity carried out including special offers, events and promotions and the impact these have had.
- Describe your approach to staff support and development and outline how this has improved morale, retention and productivity.

*We recommend a submission of approx 500 words per question, plus supporting documents.

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CONTENTS**EXCELLENCE IN BRANDING**

This category will recognise a brand with a creative edge that is implemented throughout the business including in the product creation, packaging, staff training and marketing and communications plans.

ENTRY CONTENT:

- Describe the brand and give details of vision, mission and values.
- Describe how was the brand created and brought to life.
- Describe how the brand is reflected in the product packaging.
- Outline how you communicate your brand to the customer and the impact this has had.

*We recommend a submission of approx 500 words per question, plus supporting documents.

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JUDGING PROCESS

THE ROLE OF THE JUDGES

The judging panel is a vital and high-profile part of the Scottish Beer Awards, ensuring that all decisions are fair, independent and based solely on the quality of entries submitted. All judges are experienced industry professionals and are entirely free from commercial influence. No single judge determines a winner; all outcomes are decided collectively through a structured and transparent process.

TASTE JUDGING

All taste categories are judged through a strict blind tasting process to ensure complete fairness and objectivity.

Every product entered into a taste category is assigned a unique three-digit code by our independent Technical Advisor. This code is used throughout judging in place of brand or product names.

During the tasting sessions, judges are aware only of the category they are assessing — they never see the product, packaging or branding. This ensures that all scores are based purely on the liquid in the glass.

Judges score each entry on Appearance, Aroma, Taste and Overall Quality, allowing for a balanced and comprehensive assessment of every product.

BUSINESS JUDGING DAY

Judges are allocated a number of entries to assess in advance of judging day. Each entry is reviewed independently and individually scored via the secure judging portal, with written comments provided against the relevant criteria.

Judges prepare a factual summary and professional assessment of their allocated entries to support informed discussion on judging day.

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JUDGING PROCESS

BUSINESS JUDGING DAY AND VOTING

Judging day involves a private panel debate, chaired to ensure fairness, balance and consistency. Lead judges introduce each category, followed by structured discussion.

Once discussion concludes, all judges submit their decision via a blind ballot vote. Votes are counted and verified by the Chair. As all decisions are made collectively, responsibility for selecting winners is shared by the full panel.

The scores of remote judges who do not attend the debate are also included, with their highest scoring entry counting as their vote in each category assessed.

Judges will have access to the tasting results, so we strongly encourage entering products into the tasting categories as well, where appropriate, to help support your business award entries.

THE ROLE OF THE CHAIR

The Chair guides discussion, manages timings, resolves ties, oversees voting and ensures all entries are eligible and fairly considered. Where appropriate, the Chair may recommend Highly Commended or Judges' Awards of Merit.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Any conflicts of interest must be declared. Judges with direct involvement in an entry will not participate in discussion or voting for that category. This ensures impartiality and transparency at all times.

OUR COMMITMENT

Through independent judging, blind voting and clear scoring guidelines, the Scottish Beer Awards delivers a robust, transparent and trusted judging process that entrants can have confidence in.

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HOW TO ENTER

Please visit: www.scottishbeerawards.co.uk

BEFORE ENTERING

- All entrants must register as a user at www.scottishbeerawards.co.uk
- All entries are completed and submitted online using the online entry form.
- A one-off registration fee of £350 for entry of 1 beer and 2 full day places at conference and awards dinner or £95 for entry of 1 beer. Additional beers will be entered at £12 per beer.
- A separate form will be required for each entry.

PRODUCT DELIVERY

Please deliver 12 x 330 / 12 x 500 / 12 x 440 of each entered beer to the Edinburgh Corn Exchange on Thursday 20th and Friday 21st August 2026 during the hours of 9.00am and 4.00pm. An event manager will meet you.

A maximum of three beers per category per brewery will be accepted.

HOW TO ENTER

THE ENTRY PROCESS

- Please include a summary statement that can be used by the Scottish Beer Awards for PR purposes to promote the entry, as indicated in the entry form.
- Please use appendices for relevant supporting material and evidence such as marketing materials, statistics or financial reports.
- All entries must include company logo in high resolution JPEG, PNG and EPS formats. Please attach to the entry as indicated.
- A maximum of 4 high resolution images can be included with your entry, where appropriate.
- All taste entries must include a clear pack shot image of the product with a transparent background.
- All images and appendices must be provided using a fileshare platform such as WeTransfer or Dropbox.
- The closing date for taste and business awards is Thursday 21st May 2026. No late submissions will be accepted.

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Can I enter multiple categories?

Yes. There is a one-off entry fee of £95 + VAT, which includes one beer entry. Additional beers can be entered at £12 + VAT per beer. Alternatively, you can purchase an entry package for £350 + VAT, which includes one beer entry and two full-day conference and awards tickets. Any additional beers can be entered for £12 + VAT per beer.

How much does it cost to attend to the Conference and Awards?

Scottish Beer Awards registration fee plus two-day all-day tickets £350 + VAT. Beer Matters Conference and Dinner tickets £145 + VAT. Scottish Beer Awards Dinner tickets £95 + VAT. Beer Matters Conference ticket £75 + VAT

How much time should I put into writing my entry?

This should not be a rushed task. Take your time planning out your key points and supporting materials. The judges can tell when thought and time has gone into a submission.

Can I enter the business categories without submitting to the taste category?

Yes you can, however judges will have sight of the taste results, and we recommend entering taste categories as well to support written submissions.

Is there a word limit?

There is no word limit, however we recommend a guideline of 500 words per question. When writing your entry, you should be consistent, clear, and answer the question fully. Each section gets marked out of 100, so make sure you fully explain and expand your points and back it up with evidence.

CONTENTS**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS****What are the judges looking for?**

Judges like to see well-rounded answers with supporting evidence. This is very important as the judges can verify the statements made. Evidence can be in the form of statistics, year-on-year comparison, sale records, screengrabs, testimonials, images, videos etc.

Remember to always proof your work before submitting the final version. Get a fresh set of eyes to look over your entry, so you don't miss any simple mistakes.

What images should I attach to my entry?

The entry should contain a high resolution png of the company logo and at least one png main image or transparent pack shot – whichever is best suited to the category. These will be used in marketing material should you become a finalist.

A maximum of 4 high resolution images should be included with your entry to showcase the entry. However, other supporting images can be used also but no more than 20 images should be attached in the Dropbox file.

Do the taste results go towards the business judging?

The business judges will have access to taste results, we do recommend entering taste categories to support your business entries

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TERMS & CONDITIONS

- Entered beers must be brewed in Scotland.
- Entered breweries must be based in Scotland and in possession of an HMRC license.
- Entered beer must be commercially available, on or off trade, between 1 March 2026 and 31 December 2026.
- Breweries in planning, home-brewers and other breweries not meeting these criteria are not eligible and will not be considered.
- The judges reserve the right to move entries into other categories, to remove categories or create new awards.
- The judges' decisions are final and no correspondence will be entered into.
- By entering the Scottish Beer Awards you give permission for the images included in your submission to be used at the awards ceremony and in the awards marketing materials.
- The information contained in each entry is kept strictly private and confidential unless approval from the entering company is received. All entries must include a summary statement that can be used by the Scottish Beer Awards or KDMedia for PR purposes to promote the entry, as indicated in the entry form.
- Late submissions will not be considered.
- All products being entered into the competition must be delivered on the stated delivery dates. Any registered product arriving late may not be accepted. It will only be entered at the discretion of the Event Director and subject to an administration fee of £50 per product.
- Any product which is delivered and without registration fees paid will not be accepted without a late registration fee of £125.
- Following the completion of judging, any surplus unopened product will be gifted by organisers or donated to charity.
- The Scottish Beer Awards is owned and operated by KDMedia Ltd registered in Scotland SC244168.

All queries should be directed to KDMedia by email to john@kdmedia.co.uk



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