

Good Beer Guide Selection Process

This document sets out how Lichfield, Sutton and Tamworth (LST) branch of CAMRA select which venues to include in the Good Beer Guide (GBG). It aims to provide a transparent and consistent approach with the opportunity for any branch member to be involved.

Underpinning Policy

Commercial Policy Document (April 2024): *The main criterion shall be that the pub or club serves Live Beer of good quality at all times. Branches should use all beer scores submitted via the National Beer Scoring Scheme to assist in selecting pubs.*

Stage 1 – Monitoring venues throughout the year

Members are encouraged to visit venues across the branch geography throughout the year and to record their beer scores via the National Beer Scoring Scheme (NBSS). This is used to generate an average beer score for the venue which will be used to determine if the venue should be shortlisted for the next edition of the GBG. In addition, at monthly branch meetings, members are invited to suggest venues for targeted visits.

No use is made of the CAMRA-recommended but mathematically invalid ‘confidence ranking’.

Stage 2 – Drawing up a shortlist for each county (October)

The LST branch area has territory in three counties – Staffordshire, Warwickshire, and West Midlands. Licensees, and any individuals with a relevant vested interest in a venue, will not be permitted to participate in the selection process for the county that the venue is in. However, they may participate in the other counties.

At the October branch meeting, the Beer Scores Co-ordinator (BSC) will present the beer scores for the previous 12 months – typically from 1st October – 30 September. This score information will be made available prior to the meeting so that attendees have time to digest the information. The BSC will be responsible for data quality checks and cleansing the data to exclude irregularities, such as redundant scores prior to a change-of-licensee or duplicate scores. An anonymised version of the excluded data will be made available which will illustrate the classification used for excluding irregularities.

Per county, venues will be ranked in order of average beer score. Venues will be expected to have an average beer score of at least 3 (“Good”) to be considered for the initial shortlist. Venues will need to have X scores (surveys) from Y unique scorers (surveyors) to be included in the initial shortlist. Otherwise, it is felt that there is insufficient data to enable the beer scores to be used. This is why it is important to identify potential venues, and to submit beer scores, throughout the year.

A minimum value for X and Y will be agreed at the meeting and may vary each year depending on the number of scores and scorers participating. The BSC will propose X and Y values as part of information presented to the meeting.

A shortlist of venues per county will be agreed at the meeting. The shortlist will be used in the next stage. The shortlist has two sources:

1. an initial shortlist generated from ranked beer scores
2. other venues as proposed by members which are not on the initial shortlist but which are nevertheless agreed worthy of further attention

The beer scoring data and the resulting rankings used in source 1 will be recorded (retained for at least a year) for traceability and transparency.

Source 2 is not expected to clash significantly with source 1, but is deemed useful where, for example, the scoring does not give a clear enough picture (such as the case of low X or Y values for rural pubs). It also reflects the principle that while scores are important, they should not be used unconditionally where they appear to clash with accumulated branch experience. To reiterate the wording of the underpinning policy: beer quality is the ‘main’ (but not necessarily the only) criterion to be used, and scores should ‘assist’ (but not necessarily dictate) the selection.

This means that the final shortlist as agreed at the meeting will be driven primarily but not exclusively by the ranked venue scores.

It is recommended that the shortlist be a maximum of 150% of the GBG allocation per county, which with current allocations gives:

County	Allocation	Recommended shortlist maximum
Staffordshire	9	14
Warwickshire	6	9
West Midlands	6	9

Note that allocations are subject to reviews at regional level, and that the branch cannot move allocations between counties.

Stage 3 – Assessing venues on the shortlist (October – February)

Any branch member can volunteer to be a branch GBG assessor by advising the GBG Co-ordinator. Branch members can volunteer to be assessors for one, two, or three counties. It is expected that most of the assessors will volunteer at the October meeting, but assessors may join later as long as there is sufficient time to carry out the role.

While it is highly likely that assessors will mostly come from the active branch members (i.e. those that generally attend meetings and events), general branch members will be encouraged to get involved via the various means at our disposal: email, website, magazine etc.

During the assessment window, assessors should visit all shortlisted venues (in the relevant county) at least twice. Assessors are encouraged to submit beer scores during their visits, but this is not compulsory.

Stage 4 – final selection (end February)

A meeting of the assessors will be arranged for a date suitably in advance of the submission deadline. Assessors who are unable to attend can submit their results by email.

For a county with an allocation of N, we should aim to select N+2 venues, with the idea that the ‘lowest’ (as below) two become the county reserves.

Selection is made by a simple yes-or-no vote: for a county with an allocation of N, each assessor selects N+2 pubs to go in the GBG. Each assessor is free to decide whether to base their votes on beer scores alone, or a more general approach (the overall beer-and-pub experience). The votes per venue are tallied and those with the highest number of votes go into the GBG, with the two below becoming reserves.

Where this does not give a clear result (typically with two venues tying for the last slot), then the voting is repeated but after having removed the clear winners (i.e. those with adequate votes to go in) and the clear losers (those with inadequate votes to even be reserves).

If this still does not resolve the issue, then this is done by discussion among the assessors, possibly guided by beer scores over the assessment period. To support this, the BSC will come prepared with average beer scores per venue over the assessment period.

The approved results will be verbally communicated at the March branch meeting, with the understanding that they are under embargo. For this reason they will not be minuted. Similarly the votes cast for each venue will be recorded (for traceability/transparency) but not published. Assessor names by county will also be recorded, again for traceability/transparency only.