

Industry representatives from organisations across the hospitality and tourism sector discuss their thoughts and views.

MORAG GARDEN, CEO THE ENGLISH WHISKY GUILD

From Grain to Glass: The Story of English Whisky



The English Whisky Guild (EWG) was established in 2022 with the overarching vision of having English whisky recognised globally as a respected choice for whisky drinkers. The Guild's CEO, Morag Garden joined a year later in April 2023, bringing her knowledge and experience in both Scotch whisky through her work in the SWA (Scotch Whisky Association), as well as her expertise in sustainability which has been the focus throughout her career. The Guild continues to grow, and currently represents a collective of 26 distillers dedicated to showcasing the remarkable diversity and quality of English whisky.

SUSTAINABILITY AT THE CORE

It is vital for the English Whisky Guild to play an active role in nurturing the environment that sustains our much-loved product. Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles are integral to the mission of English Whisky touching many elements of our regional localities and operations.

Sustainability is much more a journey than a destination, and all members have

their own route map on how best to support the sector's sustainability ambitions. Examples include North Yorkshire's Cooper King Distillery, the first in England to distil whisky using net zero energy. Since 2018, Cooper King has been powered by 100% renewable energy. Similarly, Ellers Farm Distillery, also in North Yorkshire, became a certified B Corp in 2023, investing heavily in carbon reduction projects and reforestation schemes.

The Spirit of Yorkshire Distillery, producing Filey Bay Whisky, emphasises sustainable farming by planting barley and wheat using direct drilling, which helps maintain soil health and reduce carbon emissions, while the Cotswolds Distillery has invested in a bio-diverse wetlands ecological treatment system, further demonstrating our members' commitment to sustainability.

TOURISM: A KEY TO GROWTH

Tourism plays a pivotal role in the Guild's strategy. Since the inception of the Guild, we have worked closely with VisitEngland exploring possible collaborative activities which will promote and support the sector, as well as raise the profile of the individual distilleries as best in class tourist destinations (see page 30 for more on Spirit of Yorkshire Distillery). One future plan is to develop regional whisky trails that will highlight the unique offerings of each distillery within the wider regions, with an aim to encourage whisky enthusiasts and distillery ambassadors, as well as those new to whisky. Our distilleries provide visitors with immersive experiences, including tours, tastings, and access to on-site shops, cafes, and bars. Distilleries are not just production sites; they are destinations that amplify the sense of place and serve as event spaces for local communities. Tourism is critical for brand development, engaging with consumers, and creating future ambassadors for English whisky.

The breadth and quality of English whisky distilleries are increasingly being recognised as destinations that amplify the sense of place such as Northumberland's Ad Gefrin, which is in the running to be North East England visitor attraction of the year 2025.

BUILDING A COMMUNITY

The Guild is also focused on building a business focused community for the English whisky sector. We have recently created an Associate Members programme and have invited a handful of key supporters to join the Guild, with the aim of fostering collaboration and knowledge sharing. Other core areas for the Guild are to share members' achievements and learnings, and also raise awareness of the English whisky category among stakeholders, Government and the wider whisky consumer community.

LOOKING AHEAD

We are positive about both the English whisky category as well as the Guild as it establishes itself as a critical UK Spirits Trade Association. A highlight from 2024 was the successful launch of the first **Annual Review**, supported by VisitEngland, which has provided a platform to raise awareness and celebrate the achievements of English whisky and our amazing distilleries. As the Guild continues to grow, it remains dedicated to promoting best practices, supporting education, and ensuring that English whisky is enjoyed by enthusiasts around the world.

By championing sustainability, community, and tourism, the English Whisky Guild is not only shaping the future of English whisky but also enriching the cultural and economic fabric of the wide range of English regions we represent.

<https://www.englishwhiskyguild.com/>