Sustainability

Holiday Villages

Sustainable Tourism
Management Good Practice Guide

Two boys fishing in Hatfield forest, Hertfordshire
Sustainability: Doing Business Even Better

Whether you are motivated to cut utility bills, want to improve your environmental impact or enhance the guest experience, taking a ‘green’ or ‘sustainable approach’ makes good business sense.

Rather than being a separate ‘bolt on’, ‘building in’ a sustainable approach is about improving the management of your business – using resources more efficiently, adding to the offer you provide guests and improving your relationship with your neighbourhood and any staff.

VisitEngland’s commitment to sustainable management and quality improvement

VisitEngland is committed to encouraging a sustainable approach among participants in its National Quality Assessment Scheme for Accommodation.

Questions sometimes arise as to how a sustainable approach can complement improving quality and, more specifically, how it relates to the requirements of quality standards.

This guide aims to demonstrate how these two approaches can be complementary as has been demonstrated by numerous businesses across the country.

A guest perspective

Relaxation, comfort and even indulgence are likely to be the motivations for guests, which may seem at odds with a sustainable approach.

So how can a sustainable approach be complementary with a high quality experience?

• While most guests do not actively seek ‘green accommodation’, research indicates that accommodation businesses taking action do have added appeal. This mirrors a trend for incorporating ethical credentials within products as an added element of quality rather than as a separate ‘ethical’ product.

• There are many opportunities for ‘win-win’ situations. Eliminating draughts will improve guest comfort as well as reducing energy bills. Offering locally-produced food adds to the distinctiveness of the guest’s meal. Providing information on accessing the accommodation by a range of means of transport opens up your business to new markets.

• Where guest expectations for indulgence have the potential to increase business costs and consumption, using efficient equipment, or renewable energy, will mean this can be accommodated with a lower impact.

1 59% of visitors stated that having green credentials had a positive impact on their likelihood to choose a tourism business compared to 41% stating that it would make no difference (SW England Visitor Survey 2009).
Putting it Into Practice

Plan for success
Make the most of precious time and money by understanding your starting point and prioritising action.

• Measure to manage
  • Monitor use – record meter readings/fuel deliveries and combine with guest nights sold over the same period to compare performance over time (software packages, or even building management systems, for larger sites, may help).
  • Sub-metering can create a better understanding and control of consumption and costs, with effectiveness increased further if specific staff are made accountable for their energy use.

• Review your business
  • VisitEngland’s Green Start website at better-tourism.org provides a checklist, identifies gaps and develops a tailored plan for your business.
  • Walk round each part of your property looking for, and noting, problems/opportunities.

• Make a plan
  • Be realistic – identify some immediate ‘quick wins’ and longer term actions.

Communication
Good communication can add appeal and enhance the guest experience. Done poorly it can feel tokenistic or preaching.

• Communicating your credentials
  • Let guests know the actions you’ve taken and, whenever possible, how it will improve their stay.
  • Be creative and visual in ‘telling your story’ rather than technical.
  • The ‘drip feed’ of social media provides a great opportunity for examples to be presented.
  • Never exaggerate on actions taken. Make use of annual awards and/or certification schemes to provide independent proof.
  • Make sure staff are familiar with your policies so that they can explain what the business is doing.

• Getting guests involved
  • Guests are more likely to join in if they first see your efforts and are aware that other guests are taking action.
  • Prioritise a handful of actions and present them positively as choices rather than rules.

Information to enhance your guests’ stay
Information provided in reception and/or bedroom folders can help guests enjoy the best of the area, providing a richer experience while improving the impact on the local economy and environment.

• Local culture & heritage
  • Although guests may spend a high proportion of their time within the holiday village most will be interested to explore further afield. Providing examples of specific areas/attractions will give guests a richer experience of the surrounding area.
  • Highlight current events taking place in the local area.

• More than ‘A to B’
  • Promoting on-site facilities/activities could improve revenue generation while reducing travel.
  • Focussing on destinations closer to you will save fuel costs and provide a more relaxing stay.
  • Promote the full range of ways that people can explore. Include any available public transport, not forgetting to mention any scenic journeys, the name of relevant bus stops and any special tickets, along with local walks, cycle hire/horse-riding or guided tours.

• Visitor donations
  • Join, or set-up, a voluntary ‘gifting’ scheme where a business collects funds for a local charity.
  • Alternatively make a corporate donation to a local environmental or educational charity.
**Customer care & housekeeping**

- **A warm welcome**
  - If guests are shown to their room/unit take time to explain how they can control the heating for their comfort (if not, ensure it is highlighted in a bedroom/unit folder). Pay particular attention to explaining any storage heaters (which can be complicated to use) or underfloor heating (which takes longer to respond).
  - Consider the installation of key card systems to avoid wasted energy.

- **Cleaning products**
  - Consider using low impact phosphate and chlorine free cleaning products, alongside microfibre cloths, that reduce the amount of cleaning liquid. Look for the EU eco-label and buy concentrated to reduce packaging and costs.

- **Recycling**
  - Many guests will be willing to recycle during their stay if opportunities are simple.
  - Provide clear and attractive signage and think about which items are best in individual rooms and which would be best in dedicated recycling areas.
  - Alternatively a business may choose to do their own segregation as part of their housekeeping or use a waste company that segregates as part of the service.

- **Brief staff**
  - Make sustainable practices part of induction/ongoing training and invite suggestions.
  - Consider forming a ‘green team’ and make sustainability a standard item on management meetings/reporting.

**Extterior**

- **Grounds, gardens and frontages**
  - Consider using materials that are in keeping with the local environment and encourage wildlife through bird boxes, wildlife areas etc.
  - Provide information on any wildlife to look out for or create a trail/activities if you have particularly good opportunities in your grounds. This could be something guests do independently or led by a member of staff.
  - Use water butts and other water saving gardening products. Time watering for the start and end of the day.

**Bedrooms**

- **Towel and bedlinen agreements**
  - Allow guests to choose how frequently their bedlinen or towels are changed.
  - Signs could be made in-house or sourced externally and must be kept in good condition.
  - Ensure requests to re-use are followed rather than automatically changing linen.

- **Reduce packaging**
  - Items on hospitality trays (e.g. sugar, biscuits) don’t need to be individually-wrapped – airtight containers are acceptable alternatives for dried goods.
  - When possible, choose locally-produced/home-made goods and let guests know where they can buy more.
  - Assessors will look at the quality of the contents and style of presentation.
  - Spare bedding doesn’t need to be wrapped; freshness can be indicated by tying the folded bedding with a re-useable ribbon, or other tie, placing in a re-useable bag, or simply folding neatly.

- **Curtains**
  - Thermally lined curtains/blinds both help retain heat within a room and provide a darker room for sleeping in.

- **Visitor information folder**
  - Each room could contain an up-to-date visitor information folder (see earlier section on content).
**Bathrooms – guest & public**

- **Toilets & urinals**
  - Older toilets (without dual flush) can be retrofitted with a water-saving device. Use this guide to choose the appropriate device.
  - Ensure all urinals have controls (ideally presence detectors)
  - Fit basin taps in public bathrooms with push taps/infra-red controls. Add aerators to mixer taps.

- **Heated towel rails**
  - If using electricity rather than plumbed in, check they are not left on throughout the day.

- **Reduce packaging**
  - There is no need for individually wrapped soaps/products – presentation in suitable dispensers is acceptable. Assessors will look at the contents and style of presentation.
  - Spare drinking cup – there is no need for this to be either plastic, or wrapped.

- **Showers**
  - Showers generally use significantly less water than baths (unless a power shower).
  - Aerated shower heads add air to provide the same force with less water. Tests show 40% savings, with 80% judging the shower experience as better/as good as previously.

- **Towel agreement**
  - See previous advice on towel/bedlinen agreements.

**Public areas**

- **Décor**
  - Use could be made of local art and/or photography including images depicting local scenes, historical, or heritage related images – it all adds to a visitor’s enhanced sense of place.

- **Heating**
  - Allow space between heating panels/radiators and furniture to allow heat to circulate.

**Lighting**

- **Natural light** – Ensure that windows/skylights are kept clean, curtains are fully drawn and consider suntubes. Keep lampshades/fittings clean to improve performance.

- **Prioritise** – Focus improvements where lighting is on for longest – typically external lighting, corridors and other public and ‘back of house’ areas.

- **Lighting** – LEDs (available in a range of formats) cost a fraction of tungsten/halogen lighting to run and last much longer. Unlike compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs) they are instantly bright. Check for the brightness (measured in lumens) and the warmth of the colour (measured in kelvins).
Continued **Putting it Into Practice**

**Leisure facilities**
- **Pool/Spas**
  - Ensure recommended temperatures are followed: 29°C leisure pool, 40°C spa with air temperature 1°C above the pool temperature for guest comfort and to reduce condensation.
  - Ensure covers are used for pools and hot tubs/Jacuzzis. Liquid covers can also help outdoor pools.
  - Ensure insulation is maximised and that heat loss through draughts/door opening is minimised.
- **Leisure facilities**
  - Floodlighting has a high energy consumption. Metal halide lighting is generally the recommended format but should still only be switched on for the minimum time required.

**Dining**
- **Local produce**
  - Guests will appreciate the opportunity to taste some of the specialities of the local area and the use of local products.
  - Build up relationships with local producers and promote their use to guests, providing some interesting information about where the food is sourced from. Make sure staff are briefed to have an awareness of the sourcing of the food.
  - Make guests aware of nearby opportunities to buy products as souvenirs, such as farmers’ markets, farm shops or other specialist food shops that are nearby. You could even invite some local producers onto the village as a regular event and have a range of local products in your on-site shops.
- **Guest kitchens**
  - Install energy and water efficient equipment – particularly in the case of fridges, freezers and dishwashers. Look for the Energy Savings Trust and EU energy label (A+++ is now the highest).
  - Encourage guests to use dishwashers when full as a means of saving water and energy.
  - Make guests aware of recycling opportunities (see earlier section).
- **Food preparation**
  - Choose energy efficient kitchen equipment, researching running, as well as purchase, costs and look into capital allowances (see ‘website’ section).
  - Consider heat recovery (especially for commercial dishwashers).
  - Keeping equipment clean improves efficiency as does keeping heating and cooling equipment apart whenever possible.
  - Check seals on oven, fridge and freezer doors to ensure that they are performing efficiently.

**Food waste**
You pay twice for waste – once to purchase, once to dispose – so minimisation is essential. On average 21% of food waste arises from spoilage; 45% from food preparation and 34% from consumer plates.
- **Monitor** – Analyse which are the key food items that are getting wasted. In most accommodation it is potato, bakery, fruit and vegetable products.
- **Portion sizes** – Offering choices will better match the serving to the portion desired.
- **Focus on the food delivery, storage and use of items with a short shelf life** – these are most vulnerable to being wasted.
- **Have clear waste separation in the kitchen so that items are disposed of in the correct containers.**
- **Sign up to the ‘Hospitality and Food Service Agreement’** which aims to reduce packaging and increase the proportion of food-related waste that avoids landfill.
Useful websites

If you’d like to find out further information about the following areas please access these useful links.

General advice & help
bettertourism.org – A self-check audit that produces a tailored plan for your business, along with case studies and other resources.
coastproject.co.uk – Information on a wide range of topics and opportunities to post questions and participate in discussions with fellow tourism businesses through this networking site.

Energy
carbontrust.com – Aimed at larger businesses but containing detailed topic guides, including a hospitality guide information on tax relief for new energy efficient appliances.
hes-unwto.org.uk – An online auditing and benchmarking tool for large scale accommodation, including advice and resources.
yougen.co.uk – Accessible information on renewables (and increasingly energy efficiency) which includes blogs and help on finding a recommended installer in your area.
which.co.uk – While only members can access product reviews, the website also contains excellent advice on a range of energy efficiency areas such as choosing appliances, lighting and boilers.

Water efficiency
wrap.org.uk/content/rippleffect-water-efficiency-businesses – An initiative providing free business support (mainly online and phone based).
europeanwaterlabel.eu – products that have achieved water efficiency standards.

Waste (including food waste)
wrap.org.uk – Information on actions that can be taken to reduce waste and the opportunity to sign up to the Hospitality and Food Service Agreement.

Food and drink
localfoods.org.uk – Useful search tool for farmers’ markets and farm shops near your business.
soilassociation.org – information on organic food and food miles.

Travel
transportdirect.info – National travel planning website offering door-to-door journeys by car, bike or public transport, a day trip planner, nearest car parks, carbon emission calculators and much more.
traveline.info – Choose your region and the website provides the opportunity for individual bus stop timetables, lists of public transport within a 20 minute walk and journey planning options.
travelengland.com – Highways Agency website with the latest road conditions & roadworks.

Certification, awards and communications
visitengland.com/green – Links to all certification schemes currently endorsed by VisitEngland.
visitenglandawards.org – The annual national awards include a ‘sustainable tourism’ category.
visitengland.com/green – Read ‘Keep it Real’, a comprehensive guide on communicating sustainability to guests.
futerra.co.uk – Research, examples and advice on how to communicate sustainability creatively.

For more information please visit visitengland.com/green