



Sustainability

VisitEngland 

Hotels

## **Sustainable Tourism Management Good Practice Guide**

The Abode Hotel, Kent



## 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.



The Brew House, Tunbridge Wells

\*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 (SWEngland Visitor Survey 2009).



Offering locally sourced produce in your restaurants and displaying work from local artists can help improve the sense of place for visitors.

## 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/covers sold over the same period to compare performance over time.
- Larger hotels may benefit from sub-metering, using monitoring software or even building management systems (BMS) technology.
- Make Heads of Departments accountable for the energy consumption.

#### • Review your business

- VisitEngland's Green Start website at [better-tourism.org](http://better-tourism.org) provides a check list, 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 or corporate.
- 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 public areas and 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 products

- Guests will enjoy trying, and taking home, examples of local food, drink and gift products. Provide examples of local specialities and information on where these can be bought.

#### • Local culture & heritage

- Whether it's sampling the culture of a particular area of a city or discovering a village's history, providing examples of specific areas/attractions will give guests a richer experience.
- Highlight current events and any interesting history of your own property.

#### • More than 'A to B'

- 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/horseriding or guided tours.
- Promoting on-site facilities/activities could improve revenue generation while reducing travel.

#### • 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 take time to explain how they can control the heating for their comfort (if not, ensure it is within the bedroom folder).
- Consider installation of key card systems or ensure that if lighting and heating is put on for arrival that this is left until nearer the expected arrival time.

#### • 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 and use dosage controls.

#### • Recycling

- Many guests will be willing to recycle during their stay if opportunities are simple and not too intrusive.
- Provide clear labelling and introduce the system when showing guests to their room. Some recycling may be best positioned in public areas rather than bedrooms.
- Alternatively segregation could be back of house as part of housekeeping or use a waste company that segregates as part of the service.

#### • 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.

## Continued Putting it Into Practice

### Exterior

#### • Grounds, gardens and frontages

- Consider using materials that are in keeping with the local environment and encourage wildlife through bird boxes etc.
- Provide information on any wildlife to look out for or create a trail if you have particularly good opportunities in your grounds.
- Use water butts and other water saving garden 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).

### Heating & cooling

Being a key element of guest comfort, business costs and impacts makes this a priority:



- **Keep it in** – Insulating roofs and unfilled cavity walls is very cost effective. Insulating solid walls is more expensive and complex but good maintenance that keeps them dry and will improve performance by 40%. Use double/secondary glazing whenever possible. Prioritise areas kept at a high temperature (e.g. pool, spa areas). Ensure pool covers are used.
- **Draughts** – Draught-proofing has excellent returns. Keep seals/brushes in good condition.
- **Boilers** – Ask for an efficiency test to be included in boiler services – if below 80% efficiency consider a replacement. Consider renewable heat (air/ground source heat pumps, solar thermal, biomass or, if you have a pool, CHP). Don't forget to insulate pipes.
- **Controls** – Ensure air conditioning and heating are not running simultaneously and that recommended temperatures are not exceeded. Install controls that allow a greater range of set timings and the start time to be adjusted to outside temperatures. Ensure radiators have thermostatic controls (TRVs) and ensure they are turned down between stays (empty rooms can be kept at 14 degrees without dampness). The optimum temperature for stored hot water is 60°C.

### Bathrooms

#### • 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.

## Continued Putting it Into Practice

### 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).

FACT

### Dining room/restaurant

- **Menus**
  - Go beyond the standard 'local products are used whenever possible'. Be more specific about the products/producers and why you have chosen them.
  - Highlight any other ethical/welfare standards (e.g. fair trade products, sustainably sourced fish). Ensure all staff serving food are properly briefed.
  - Consider including local speciality recipes on your menu.
- **Food preparation**
  - Choose energy efficient kitchen equipment, researching running, as well as purchase, costs. Look for the EU energy label (A+++ is now the highest) on domestic scale equipment 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** 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.

FACT



## 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.

**consideratehoteliers.com** – An association for hoteliers looking to improving their impact.

**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 hotels 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. Considerate Hoteliers also have annual awards.

**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](https://www.visitengland.com/green)



Grand Hotel Eastbourne