Keep It Real

Market and communicate your green credentials
What do you mean, keep it real?

If you’re already working hard to be more sustainable, it’s time to find how to make your customers know about it - and enjoy it.

Keeping it real is all about recognising that authenticity makes your customers’ holidays and days out more fun and their business trips more pleasant.

Businesses like yours across England are changing to be more sustainable but are too shy to tell their customers, for fear it’s not relevant or will be misunderstood. Some of you have public recognition in awards and certification but still struggle to know how this can be used to best effect.

Who is this booklet for?

This booklet is intended for all those businesses that behave sustainably, but struggle to know how to turn their efforts into real commercial advantage.

The information will help you to improve how you communicate your green credentials and explain how to use them as a key marketing tool:

- to attract new customers,
- to tempt them with more interesting products,
- to persuade them to behave more responsibly, and
- to encourage them to spread the word and return.

“Sustainability is not about doing business differently but doing business even better”

VisitEngland
## What’s it about?

|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| 01 | **Who do I tell?**
  WHO WILL APPRECIATE KNOWING YOU ARE WORKING TO BE SUSTAINABLE AND CREATE A SENSE OF PLACE? | **Why do I tell?**
  WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO YOUR BUSINESS TO COMMUNICATE OPENLY ABOUT YOUR GREEN CREDENTIALS? | **What do I tell?**
  WHAT IMPRESSION DO YOU WANT TO CREATE WITH YOUR SUSTAINABILITY TEXT AND IMAGES? | **Where do I tell?**
  WHERE CAN YOU INTEGRATE SUSTAINABILITY TO COMMUNICATE QUALITY? | **When do I tell?**
  WHAT INFORMATION WORKS BEST AT DIFFERENT POINTS IN THE CUSTOMER JOURNEY? | **Time for action!**
  WHAT WILL YOU DO DIFFERENTLY AFTER READING THIS TOOLKIT? |
| 05 | | | | | | |
Who do I tell?

Who will appreciate knowing you are working to be sustainable and create a sense of place?
The world is changing

There are many signs that consumers are changing. An increasing awareness of, and concern for, the planet’s health is everywhere - but the problem is too many contradictory messages.

Since the recession, consumer buying patterns have changed - they expect more for their money. But also there is more solidarity; they give more to charity than ever before and they are more aware that if someone is struggling, it isn’t necessarily their own fault.

Consumers want easy choices, but they feel they have been misled too many times. It’s not surprising they are confused about what is best to do and what will really make a difference.

It is unlikely that your business can survive if you only target the small percentage of conscientious consumers that are influenced by the good you do for the planet and society.

You need to think about how to tempt those consumers who will only buy a sustainable product if they like it better than other products on offer.

There is a market out there that is cynical, and you may fear putting them off. The key is to not make sustainability look threatening.

Your communications need to reflect who you are talking to. For example, if you wanted your customers to travel by public transport, you might tell the first group (10%) that it would reduce their CO2 emissions, the second (60%) that it would be more comfortable and enjoyable, and the third (30%) that it would be cheaper and more efficient.

In this way, try to use a variety of messages to attract people from each of the different consumer types.
“I care for the planet and society”

Tell them the difference you make

These conscientious consumers actively seek green experiences as a continuation of their lifestyle at home. They will research widely before travelling, are knowledgeable about the places they visit and the things they want to do. They claim to be willing to pay more for a product that makes a difference.

Because they are knowledgeable and conscientious, they will tell the world if you are found out greenwashing - claiming to be sustainable on the back of tokenistic actions that make little difference. Substantiate your claims with detailed evidence of what you do.

The trouble is, only about 10% of consumers think this way, which may not be enough for your business to survive if you only target this group.

The trick is to capture this market without alienating the less-conscientious consumers.

All these statistics sound great! But there is a gap between what people say and what people do.

Who do I tell?

58% would want to stay in accommodation with green awards/ environmentally friendly practices

VisitEngland data on English consumers

10% is a more realistic percentage of customers that consider your green credentials, from actual bookings from different distribution channels including tour operators and online travel agencies.
Real case studies

Make green evident but not threatening

We differentiate ourselves without sounding worthy

Olivia O’Sullivan is the General Manager of The Green House Hotel in Bournemouth, Dorset.

What we do: On the face of it our hotel is a beautiful, restored Victorian villa. From the outset it was important for us to convey that luxury and sustainability could go hand in hand. Our website provides information about all the sustainability practices we have put in place.

How we tell: We target discerning customers and those who are looking for responsible hotels – “serious about luxury, serious about sustainability”. The hotel and wedding markets are crowded, so emphasising sustainability makes this our unique selling point.

We use photos to show that the hotel offers luxury, and the text to speak about our sustainability values and reassure that being sustainable means that we care about our customer experience. We tell customers to dig a little deeper to find the sustainability evidence, and emphasise the external credibility of our work with the awards and rave reviews we receive.

We use personal messages to show the human connection of staying in a green hotel: “But the last thing we want to do is lecture you about our environmental credentials. You won’t get any sermons at our luxury and boutique hotel front desk – just a warm, friendly and relaxed welcome”.

Our top tip: Be transparent and allow customers to know about you, so you can explain your values and show them you don’t compromise on quality or the guest experience.
“What’s in it for me?”

Tell them that sustainability=quality and gives them a better experience

51% say that if two hotels were the same, they would choose the one with a green award

Sustainability Consumer Research, VisitEngland

The “what’s in it for me” group makes up the majority of consumers. They are aware of the issues, but don’t go out of their way to act. They won’t look for sustainability information but they respond well to messages that show they can easily “do their bit” - or where they get a better product or service that happens to be sustainable.

Just as people forget to bring their stylish reusable bags to the supermarket, these travellers will book the brands they already know through their usual channels. Habit and convenience play a more important part in how they choose travel, leisure and tourism.

Price, location, convenience and brand still come first. But when all of these are equal, sustainability values and actions can differentiate a product.

Sustainability could be everywhere, from preserving the traditional architecture of your business to having solar panels, from showing proudly the authenticity and uniqueness of your sustainable practices to providing information about local activities and walks. But it is important to show not only your practices, but also how customers can benefit – they can learn history through your walls in a fun way.

A TripBarometer traveller survey by TripAdvisor says:
81% of travellers place importance on properties implementing eco-friendly practices
Real case studies

**Edutainment**
(educational entertainment)

We explain how sustainability improves your life, while having fun at the same time.

*Peter Morris is the Head of PR and Campaigns of the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, a wetland conservation charity.*

**What we do:** Wetlands are important because they are the primary source of drinking water for people and wildlife. Most of our nine wetland centres across the UK have treatment systems to preserve the wetlands and their wildlife. The centres also provide a nice day out for people to enjoy getting close to nature.

**How we tell:** We realise most people aren’t aware of the impacts of their actions, so we use clear, explanatory and engaging messages on site to help people understand through practical experience.

For example, our toilet message tells customers the importance of treating water for humans and wildlife alike with the “What happens to my water?” story. We explain how the on-site system to treat water works and how this same water is enjoyed by the wildlife that they can see and feed. Linking the story with the toilet they have just used increases the sense of ownership and the fact that daily actions have an impact.

It’s not about doom and gloom: visitors feeding rare geese and enjoying a pleasant day out reinforces the positive message of environmental preservation.

**Our top tip:** Put across attractive, visual messages for an active target audience and engage them by offering practical experiences. It’s better to put the messages right where the action is happening, and to explain the outcomes, so the customers can see their role during the process.

Who do I tell?
“Not bothered”

Many travellers just want to switch off. They have earned their right to relax or are too busy to care. They probably already expect you to be acting sustainably because of your size or location, or they simply don’t want to think about it.

This group is quite cynical - any claims of acting sustainably need to be substantiated with external verification. If only some of your actions are sustainable, it is less risky to not mention the “S” word, and to explain the individual things you do instead.

Sustainability actions will need to happen behind the scenes and your communication should focus on how you make things easier for them. Also, try to use different communication methods to attract a variety of people that could help you influence those who don’t care about your sustainable actions.

Source: Sustainability Consumer Research, VisitEngland
Real case studies

Get everybody involved

We get opinion leaders to do the marketing for us

_Brian Pearce is the Chair of Railworld and the Wildlife Haven, an educational and environmental charity in Peterborough, Cambridgeshire._

**What we do:** We are all volunteers and together we have transformed a former coal storage yard into an ‘entertain and educate’ local tourist attraction. Visitors find our rail history intriguing and they can explore and enjoy lovely walks while being able to study over 200 flora and fauna species.

**How we tell:** We have built relations with a number of companies and organisations that share our values. We encourage local and national leaders to organise ‘community team days’, so they can send their employees to help out. For example, we have received visits from the National Trust and Rotary International. When they come, they help us with work to improve our species’ habitats and we give presentations to inspire people to do good.

During these days we showcase our work and hope that it will motivate them to become members or to help promote what we do.

Thanks to these community days, people who weren’t previously interested in sustainability have learnt about us from well-known organisations, which is great marketing.

As Brian says, “I try to ‘influence those that instead of influence others!'”

We have found this reinforces our more traditional communication methods such as the information on our website and in our centre. Opinion leaders tend to be very effective at pre-disposing the general public to consider us, even when they are not committed to sustainability. They introduce us at local events, and we take our brochures and talk to people directly. The relationship works really well.

**Our top tip:** Engage with opinion leaders who share your environmental values, so that they can convince less sustainably-committed people to participate. Others talking well about you is more convincing than your own printed materials.

Who do I tell?
“We must follow green procurement requirements”

Corporate clients that book events, tourism or hospitality services (for example, conference venues, travel, accommodation) are guided by their corporate purchasing policies. These policies increasingly require companies to prove how sustainable they are before they can become a preferred supplier.

A report called “The State of Corporate Social Responsibility” from Meeting Professionals International (MPI) states:

“Adoption of CSR policies and initiatives within top-ranked, multinational companies has generated an expectation of CSR practice in all industries and at all levels.”

A Request for Proposal (RfP) is a document sent by companies to potential suppliers at the beginning of a procurement process for goods or services. RfP are used to gather information from different suppliers to assess competing bids. Increasingly, RfP include sustainability policies, carbon emissions, employee engagement, training, effect on local communities and human rights issues. The RfP relate to what happens inside the tourism business itself, but also to how their policies are cascaded down to their suppliers.

However there is no standardisation in what these RfP ask or how, or whether the questions refer to the overall company or an individual property/business unit. This is in part because there is no standardisation on how to evaluate most impacts. This is causing confusion - the hotel sector in particular is increasingly spending time completing more forms on sustainability practices for different potential clients.

Sustainability criteria are necessary to tender, but currently aren’t a major purchasing decision-maker for corporate clients. Most buyers give it some consideration rather than an actual score - however, its importance is growing year on year.

The outcome is that your business will be increasingly expected to demonstrate how you care for the environment and contribute to society as a pre-requisite to trade.
Why do I tell?

Why is it important to your business to communicate openly about your green credentials?
Make customers feel good

Show you take care of things, leaving them to enjoy the benefits.

The fact that most travellers will not go out of their way to buy from you because you are green does not mean they don’t appreciate it. Worded right, your messages about sustainability can make them feel good about themselves, knowing that they are ‘doing their bit’. This applies to both leisure and business customers.

If you genuinely think your customers don’t want to know, focus on what you do for them. They probably won’t help you reduce your carbon footprint, but might value the fact that you are doing it (particularly in the business market).

Make it easy, by telling them they can relax and enjoy, while you take care of things without compromising quality. Show them you are committed to green practices as well as ensuring a quality stay.

Customers feel good (or less guilty) facing easy choices. Encourage charitable donations, tell them about public transport options or where to recycle - show them it is both better and more sustainable. The easiest solution of all is for the options provided to be ‘good’ choices with positive impacts.
Real case studies

**Improve your product for your customers’ enjoyment**

We reassure customers that sustainability means more quality

Lesley Graves is the co-founder of Burton Road Chippy, a 30-year old fish and chips business in Lincoln, Lincolnshire.

**What we do:** We are proud of our MSC (Marine Stewardship Council) certification and the ‘national fish and chips 2015’ award. We want customers to feel special by eating sustainably, but mainly by enjoying traditional, delicious, crispy fish and chips.

**How we tell:** We show and explain proudly both our certification and our award on our website, social media and in the store. To make our certification interesting, we post messages and pictures on Facebook to show “today’s wild fresh fish”, where it comes from and the brave fishermen on the boat. We also share it on our store’s daily blackboard.

On our website, besides our sustainable practices, we mention that we care about the real “old English chippy”. This includes providing unique food, sourced sustainably, to ensure the best fish and chips will still be available for future generations.

But more importantly, whatever platform, tool or place we use to communicate, we are consistent with our belief: sustainability is quality. When they come, they simply enjoy a winning traditional dish, leaving us the worries of finding sustainable sources and tastier, healthier ingredients.

**Our top tip:** Be proud of your sustainability and share it naturally. Remember, most people are not interested in technical, confusing words, so communicate things that they can relate to and that will make them feel special.
Raise awareness and change behaviour

Make it easy and appealing, and offer a reward

Doing all the work for your customers may leave you unsatisfied. There are easy things your customers can help you do, but you need to make them aware of what these are, and make it easy for them to change their behaviour.

Step 1 Be specific about what you ask them to do. Vague messages lead to frustration. Telling customers to be green has no results; they won't know what this means, especially away from home.

Step 2 What’s the benefit? Show them the actual benefit of their action, even if it means someone else benefitting. Have you noticed how fundraisers tell you what your £10 to charity can buy and what kind of person will benefit, in what way? Well, you need to do the same.

Step 3 Empower them. We like to feel we had a choice, and respond better to being asked than being told. For example, let customers choose which charity they will fund, rather than tell them it all goes to a charity pot, and they will give more.

"RECYCLE ME JUST LIKE AT HOME
670 cans make 1 bicycle"

A sign like this is more likely to change behaviour than if it simply said “RECYCLE HERE”.

These words make recycling on holiday sound normal and show a tangible outcome.

Step 4 Give something in return. We like rewards for our effort, no matter how little we did. Whether you want your customers to purchase local or respect local customs, to drive less or recycle more, you need to provide an incentive.
Real case studies

*Behave responsibly in pubs, clubs and bars*

We send a clear message of the consequences of misbehaviour

Stephen Baker is from National Pubwatch, a voluntary organisation that helps keep our town centres safe by reducing alcohol-related crime and disorder.

**What we do:** Pubwatch schemes run a “banned from one banned from all” system by sharing information, CCTV footage and collectively refusing entry to those that disrupt the safety, security and well-being of their staff and customers.

**How we tell:** We provide a range of free window stickers and downloadable posters to reinforce the very strong message about social responsibility and the consequences of irresponsible behaviour. The variety of posters allows pubs to change these regularly, making them more noticeable and reminding customers to drink and behave responsibly.

The messages are direct and to the point because users, often under the effect of alcohol, need to be clear about what the impact of irresponsible behaviour is. However the message is always the same: irresponsible behaviour leads to being banned from all Pubwatch pubs from the local area, which is more powerful than being excluded from one single pub.

We think it's very important that customers are made aware that they are socialising in a Pubwatch pub or bar and that the management is committed to making their visit a safe and enjoyable experience. Licensees, local authority licensing departments and the police agree that the scheme has had substantial impact on crime.

**Our top tip:** Repeat the main message in as many different forms as you can, but keep the message consistent and make sure customers are clear of what the consequences of not behaving responsibly are.

**DON’T GET BANNED**

Anyone causing trouble, using or dealing in drugs in these premises will be BANNED from all the premises displaying this sign

email: admin@nationalpubwatch.org.uk
web: www.nationalpubwatch.org.uk
Sell more to your current customers

Offer common sense products and services that naturally happen to be more sustainable

Sustainability helps upselling. Design sustainable packages for your low occupancy or usage periods, or think of services that can generate more money in high season. Look at ways customers will stay longer, or will come back when your business is empty.

- Show them things to do throughout the year, tell them what’s special each month. Do this not only with local events, but also with a nature diary, on your website.

- List things to do with a message of “stay for longer”:
  - what to do for free (message= stay longer as the entertainment is cheap)
  - on a rainy day (message= your holiday fun does not stop)
  - with children (message= the whole family will have a great time)
  - from your doorstep (message= more convenience, more options)

- Promote products such as meat, vegetables and jam from your local farm or neighbours - encourage customers to come back to restock.

- Offer ‘Grow-and-cook your own veg’ classes, local history courses, “eco-warrior” after school kids’ clubs, children’s nature-themed birthday parties - create demand for times that are normally quieter.

- Promote March or April cycling weekends where you offer bike maintenance, so your customers get the season started early.

- Offer your most loyal customers to be ‘midwives to a baby lamb’ to get them involved early in the year.

- Typically, a rural pub is fullest at lunchtime on weekends - develop special promotions to encourage mid-morning coffee or mid-afternoon tea and cakes, together with a free map for a circular pub walk.

- Business hotels can include 30 and 60 minute local running maps, and design and promote a runner’s breakfast with the right nutritional contents - if you are a chain, roll it out across your whole portfolio.
Real case studies

Cross-selling works

Tony Spencer is the Accommodation and Events Manager of The Sustainability Centre in Petersfield, Hampshire.

What we do: We are an independent learning and study charity centre with a holistic, practical and creative approach to environmental education. Visitors can pick from a huge variety of services, all carefully planned to offer great experiences throughout the year.

How we tell: We have diversified our products to cross-sell – visitors look for one particular experience and often do two or three things.

This happens in two ways. We appeal to people who wish to make a more conscious change in their living patterns through the principle of permaculture. They get inspired by our diverse range of activities, learning opportunities, vibrant natural spaces and knowledgeable staff. This also happens on site - people get hooked because we successfully demonstrate practical methods and links within sustainable methods to try at home, in a fun and beneficial product package.

In our course ‘spring delights’, people learn what hedgerow and woodland herbs to use to cleanse, detox and re-energise, while relaxing on a day out through the woods. Thanks to this experience many book other courses, stay longer to enjoy fresh vegetarian food from our Beech Café and stay at our lodge or campsite.

The key is to be consistent, local and seasonal with all products – we run courses across different days and offer weekly residential courses and volunteering opportunities.

Our top tip: Offer more product options for them to choose from and explain the benefits of each in ways that relate to their experiences and interests.
To get more customers

Differentiate yourself with unique offers

Your sustainability credentials can give you the edge over other businesses with a similar price and location, in both the business and leisure markets. It’s all about being noticed and giving a bit more.

Remember, customers like to know they are getting a good deal.

There are more examples that show that using sustainability creatively results in increased occupancy and lower seasonality, than show it results in higher prices. This is good news for the accommodation sector, where managing occupancy levels has a more significant impact on the bottom line than charging more at peak periods does.

Businesses that adopt the recommendations provided in this booklet should be able to increase their prices marginally or not reduce them as substantially in the low season.

To get more customers, reward them for behaving sustainably with either a discount or additional benefits. Some cafés give a discount (and others put 10p in a charity pot) for regulars that bring their own commuter mug - saving on disposable cups and gaining customer loyalty.

VisitEngland data shows that 60% of holidaymakers would be more likely to use public transport if the accommodation offered a discount for doing so.
Real case studies

If there’s no market, create one

We have aquarium visitors even at night

**Josh McCarty is the Head of Marketing of the National Marine Aquarium in Plymouth, Devon.**

**What we do:** We have diversified our activities to increase non-traditional aquarium visits to flatten the trends of weather and holiday related visits – one specific area we have addressed is evening visits.

Our business is hugely segmented, so we developed ‘Aquarium Lates’ - a series of science, art, conservation and music evenings for the over 18s. Parallel to this we have ‘Sleeping with Sharks’ family sleepovers for our core audience.

**How we tell:** Our communications about ‘Aquarium Lates’ focus on emphasising the unique experience and build upon our research in aquaria therapy. The evenings offer tranquillity and culture.

Our ‘Sleeping with Sharks’ family sleepovers attract a variety of demographics so we have developed an artwork series to maximize our appeal. Placement of this product is very precise and has seen great brand partnerships.

We present clear call-to-action messages on our website, social media and in print based upon customer profiles. For example, “Sleeping with Sharks, are you brave enough?” and “Forget counting sheep... Sleeping with Sharks family sleepovers”. The messages go together with stunning artwork and images focusing on the visual experience of visiting. As a charity we also echo that all events help support marine conservation.

**Our top tip:** Increase your market by expanding targeted services focused on your business’s unique selling points. It’s important to offer diversity which not only means different activities, but also different experiences for each target profile.
What do I tell?

What impression do you want to create with your sustainability text and images?
Fun and participation – What can I do?

Make sustainability entertaining and participatory to create meaningful memories.

Help your customers to enjoy themselves and to experience ‘hands on’ what makes you unique.

Simple, fun words are more likely to sell.

**Invite your customers to participate in things they can relate to**

Doing is more fun than observing. If you give your customer the chance to pick their own lunch it will taste better to them in their mind and they will appreciate it more.

Develop a family quiz to help your customers to explore the places they visit and learn more about them. Offer a nature, town or city trail that leaves from your front door.

Invite them to participate in things they can relate to - in historic homes, the kitchens attract as much attention as the stately rooms for just this reason. Likewise, allow the children to use the dressing-up box in the servants’ hall and see how much fun they will have!

The same action must be told differently depending on your audience - fresh farm eggs mean traditions and nostalgia to the older market, but they mean a chance for children to learn where food comes from to young families. Call them “sustainable eggs” and they have no meaning for anybody.

Always remember to use the right words and messages for your chosen target audience. This will mean changing the way you describe things, according to who is listening.
**Real case studies**

**Honestly real...**

Through our communication, customers relate to our ethos and trail experiences.

*Alison Howell is the Founder and Managing Director of Foot Trails, tailor-made, independent, hiking tours in South West England.*

**What we do:** We take care of every detail so that our customers can discover the authentic, rural English counties. This includes visits to a selection of historic places and rural businesses to support the local economies. We encourage our customers to take an interest and pride in the ‘real’ England.

**How we tell:** We are honest about our ethos and that’s why everything we do, including our communication, is a reflection of our values and principles. Instead of saying we are ‘green’, we tell customers our story - how and why we started this business. This way, people get to know the ‘real us’.

We use simple messages that people can easily remember and relate their experiences to. Three words describe our trails: ‘real’, ‘journey’ and ‘crafted’. Real refers to a genuine experience avoiding crowded hot spots. Journey is about them actively enjoying every moment. Crafted reflects the fact that we have carefully chosen outstanding country paths, inns and pubs to ensure our customers experience what the authentic village is all about.

After booking, we send ‘walk boxes’ with their perfect itinerary and tailored maps. We thank them for sharing our ethos. Our boxes have messages explaining they are made of recycled materials and filled with wood wool, a natural waste product.

**Our top tip:** Communicate with honesty and consistency about your ethos, who you are and the uniqueness of your products. This makes customers trust you and relate to the experiences you offer.

**What do I tell?**
Better service – Make me feel special

Holidays are times to put yourself first, while business travellers will want you to get things right quickly.

Put the customer at the centre of the experience - what’s in it for them? Word your information thinking about how you want your customers to feel, instead of listing your product’s features or attributes.

Write about sustainability as pampering, as having something unique, about looking after your customer. Find a way of showing that the business is looked after, to provide a “feel good factor.”

It’s both what you say and how you say it that matters.

What will sell more?

- Fresh, unadulterated, honest food that makes holidaying memorable, or
- Food miles and supporting the local economy

Most customers will prefer the first option because they feel personally involved.

Here is another example about communicating the environmental effects of chlorine in pools. Make it fun and show how the customer will benefit.

I LOVE YOUR SWIMSUIT because I am a sea-salt pool

I don’t damage your clothes or irritate your eyes or skin, so you can stay looking pool-side cool
Real case studies

Heart warming

Chris Gregson is Manager at The Fountaine Inn, a pub with five bedrooms in Linton, North Yorkshire.

What we do: We work with our local primary school in Threshfield to promote healthy food and contribute financially to their pupils’ educational trips.

How we tell: We run two campaigns, that we communicate in our menu. Customers respond well to this - most of them are impressed that there is such a remote and tiny school and they see that there's a real connection with the place.

First, ‘CHIP INN’ means that 25p of every portion of chips we sell goes to Threshfield Primary School to contribute to their ‘Chips for Trips’ programme. Last year we raised £1125 - and we tell this to our customers in our menu so that they can see what a difference we make with their help. It makes them feel part of the programme.

More recently we have started to work with the school on our ‘VEG INN’ project. Our pub buys fresh herbs and vegetables for our menu that have been grown by the pupils, under the supervision of Uncle Roy. This also generates funds for the school and helps the pupils to learn to grow vegetables.

Our top tip: There is no substitute for a good product. But you can provide a better service by giving customers something additional to feel good about.
Tradition – share nostalgia

In leisure and tourism, nostalgia sells because it is comforting.

In times of crisis, people get nostalgic and value tradition. This is your opportunity to show you share their worries about the future and explain the uniqueness of your business’s authenticity.

Financial crises have an impact on our views of the world and on our behaviours. This can lead to negative emotions such as feeling depressed, or positive actions such as finding new ways of saving money.

But, for most people, one thing that tends to happen consistently in a crisis is a feeling of nostalgia and valuing tradition. Sustainability plays an important role because of its core principle to preserve resources for future generations.

“Nostalgia tourism – driven by consumers’ uncertainty about the future – will play a role in choosing leisure and tourism activities due to its wider links to authenticity and meaning”, according to VisitEngland.

Nostalgic tourists look for real experiences where nostalgia is not a reason to be sad, but rather, to appreciate local history, tradition, and customs with people that care about preserving them.

This nostalgia can be helpful when promoting ‘staycations’ and domestic holidays, and it can also attract international tourists to mature destinations like England.

Directly or indirectly, use messages that will attract customers by showing that you share the same worries and values as them. Make them feel your business values tradition and has something comforting to offer.
Real case studies

There’s no place like home

We provide new leisure activities for staycations

Judith Paris is the founder of Thrifty Couture, a social enterprise in London that offers workshops on making up-cycled clothing and accessories, and natural beauty products.

What we do: We take unloved goods and natural ingredients and use them to teach people how to create and make their own stylish products, while appreciating the traditional and nostalgic past.

Nostalgic, ‘staycation’ holidays are on the rise and this means trying new leisure activities in your local area. Our enterprise has become THE place for fashion-conscious and green shoppers. Entertainment that costs less and gives you a finished, useful product (as well as a skill) is very popular.

How we tell: We use direct informative messages that people can relate to with nostalgic-style photos on our website and workshops to make them feel good about reusing and saving as the fashion-conscious choice.

Indirectly, we then talk about current problems such as harmful chemicals in clothing and beauty products and fashion waste, not only to raise awareness, but also to give practical solutions they can try at home.

In a world of uncertainty, with so many environmental problems, we show people that we share their worries and give them the opportunity to do something about it and to take control.

Our top tip: In a time of economic austerity, customers respond well to comforting messages that reassure them about spending less. Nostalgia achieves that- so combine direct and indirect messages, use retro photos showing that saving and reusing is now fashionable, and show the added value of your unique staycation workshops.

What do I tell?
Empathy – We think alike

Make a personal connection and show that you care

Globalisation means people are more likely to be treated like numbers, not people. This standardisation isn’t good customer service, and businesses find that a more human touch is welcome.

Find opportunities to show a personal connection between your guest and you, the ‘personal’ host (not a bland corporate entity). Say it in words and with a more informal tone. Use pictures to show the fun element of your place. Write in the first person and include a photo of yourself as host on your website or brochure. Explain about your surroundings and show that you care about it - this tells your customer that it matters - it’s all part of the welcome.

Every time a customer books a holiday or business trip, or chooses a day out, there’s an element of risk – what if I have made a mistake? Showing empathy reduces that perception of risk because you communicate trust.

You can use sustainability messages to assure customers that you are a quality business. Display your many awards and quality grading – but assure your customers that because you care about the environment and society, you also care about your customers and how they will enjoy their time with you.
Real case studies

We belong together

Mark Woodward is the Owner of Green Directions in Sheffield, South Yorkshire.

What we do: We provide the perfect combination of comfort and working facilities in our training, meeting venue and farm. We offer a real quality product for people to experience sustainability and even learn environmental practices. For example, our insulated systems in walls, floors and roofs to reduce heat consumption, rainwater re-cycling system and composted vegetable waste.

How we tell: We target people with similar values and those simply looking for different, creative, visionary environments. We talk about our practices and explain what our venue offers – a stimulating, brighter and fresher place than their office, but with home comforts.

When visitors come, we welcome them with a presentation about our achievements and show them our creative facilities and green inspiring solutions, which are not only good for the planet, but also for providing a warm, comfortable environment for everybody to enjoy at work or home.

Then, it’s all about visitors loving their stay, getting inspired and thinking out of the box, while experiencing sustainability everywhere. From our cosy and warm environment to savouring a meal made with our farm’s ingredients, from our bright and uplifting rooms decorated with local wood to refreshments made from our own drinking water.

Our top tip: For those customer groups with values similar to yours, emphasise that sense of belonging that comes from showing that you understand what’s important to them.
Where do I tell?

Where can you integrate sustainability to communicate quality?
Certification and awards

Certification has helped you to improve your management. Now use it for marketing.

Companies get certified or apply for awards partly to gain a marketing advantage, in the expectation that being certified lifts them above some of their competitors - and yet they report that customer awareness is low.

How you use your logos is key. It’s your role to know how and where to display them, and more importantly what they mean and why you gained them.

Gaining awards gives customers an independent guarantee of your credentials. It helps with quality assurance and credibility. Now you have the independent recognition of your sustainability performance, you should explain what you do with confidence.

VisitEngland validates those schemes which support, assess and market businesses to a high sustainability standard. www.visitengland.com/green.

For business hotels, certification is now a requirement to tender

In the corporate travel market, certification is essential in demonstrating compliance with buyer requirements, as both buyers and suppliers will find it less time consuming. Increasingly Requests for Proposals (RfP) ask for evidence of independent third party certification, as well as asking specific questions on environmental and social performance.

Do you communicate your sustainability logos, and more importantly communicate with pride what you did to achieve them?

Here are some places where customers would expect you to communicate your sustainability credentials:

- In your tendering process
- In the reception/entrance
- In your bedroom pack (if accommodation)
- On your website
- On promotional leaflets and printed literature
- In your public relations work
- In adverts
Real case studies

Certification helps sell

All our hotels are certified to reassure blue chip buyers.

Sean Twohig is Risk Safety & Environment Manager at Jury’s Inns Group Ltd.

What we do: Much of our business comes from companies that require evidence of sustainability certification and individual practices such as our carbon emissions and fair trade purchasing, as part of their RfP. So we have integrated our environmental management system with the requirements from our marketing department to respond to these.

How we tell: Over the years we have developed a set of answers to the typical RfP questions that need to be answered every year, for every company. So these are now integrated into our own management systems. All our 25 hotels in England are Green Tourism Business Scheme certified, and this gives the base to be able to gather the data that these blue chip companies demand. Certification helps us focus on the management of our data, to gather information systematically, but also in our communications to potential clients.

Certification helps because many of the RfP questions focus on our monitoring, transparency and reporting. We believe that certification gives us an edge on these RfP, although we don't get to find out the relative importance it has to the final purchasing decision.

Our top tip: Use certification to reassure your business market buyers that the data you provide in RfP is audited, and to systematically gather internal data.
Online and offline press

You need to do something quirky and unheard of to get in the press.

The travel sections of newspapers and travel bloggers need fresh, quirky stories to inspire their readers. Newspapers will cover a broader range of issues, while bloggers tend to specialise in types of holidays, particularly specific destinations or lifestyle interests for a specific type of customer. They both rely on the credibility of their content - readers do not like to feel that they are being fed an advertorial. But blogging has a more personal voice than print journalism - followers need to relate to the blogger’s experiences and trust their judgement.

Travel editors and bloggers get bombarded with very similar mailings from companies claiming to be sustainable. Their question: “What makes you different, in a way that my customers will want to read about you?”

Press coverage you’ve achieved should not be lost - make links to it from your website, say in your mailings that you have been highlighted, use quotes from the write up to show your positive side. Even if it is old, there’s a value to it.

Add a tab to your website called “our recognition” where you gather certifications, awards and press coverage - put the new one on top, and keep all the previous coverage lower down. All of it reinforces the fact that you are a company that can be trusted.
Real case studies

New, quirky, inspiring

I write human stories my followers can relate to


What we do: I write for the 40+ year old, affluent market. I respond positively to offers to blog about locations and businesses that have an edge. It is difficult to explain what this is, as it varies from place to place.

How I tell: I write stories that are new - I was one of the first bloggers to write about privately-run food tours of the East End, where you learn about the culture and history as well as tasting some fabulous food - but if a lot of other bloggers had already written about it, I would not have been so keen to cover it.

Food stories about local produce and solo travel work particularly well for my audience - other bloggers will find adrenaline stories are their thing - each blogger has their own specialist area.

In general my most successful stories talk about making connections with the people you come across in your travels and getting to see the real, authentic side of the places you visit.

I really like to share the stories of small business start-ups, where I can show the owners for who they are. My blog ‘The Secret Cottage Tour’ of the Cotswolds is a good example of what I think the mainstream market is ready to enjoy as sustainable tourism products.

You guessed it, I’m unlikely to talk about your sustainability policy or water saving devices, unless you’ve found a way of making them fun. A compost toilet while glamping was unusual once.

My top tip: It’s called news for a reason: tourists love to be able to do something unheard of and unusual, but also within their reach.
Your website

Having a sustainability page that only shows a list of sustainable practices is a missed opportunity. What you do is far more interesting than that!

Businesses typically have all their achievements on a single page, with an inspired title like “sustainability” or “environment”. Mostly these are dull lists of water, waste, and energy actions, written in management speak – this is fine for the environmental auditor.

But customers are hardly going to pick up the phone because they’ve read that you “minimise waste by evaluating operations and ensuring they are fit for purpose”.

By all means upload your policy and list your achievements somewhere, but in general you won’t get many customers visiting it. There are of course exceptions, but you need to get more creative.

Apply instead the same principles of how you currently communicate quality in your website, and think which aspects of sustainability your customers will value, and how you can put them across throughout the website to reinforce your quality message.

Your messages should start with the customer benefit, and finish with the reason. You can describe:

- a quieter and warmer bedroom (because it is better insulated and uses biomass fuelled heating)
- a tastier menu (because of carefully selected, locally sourced and organic ingredients)
- a more personally and uniquely designed hotel (decorated with local crafts and giving a sense of place)
Real case studies

Accommodation: forget the bed

Things to do matter the most

David and Felicity Brown are the owners of Hoe Grange Holidays, Staffordshire Peak District.

What we do: While our overall slogan is environmentally sensitive self-catering holidays, we have divided our website according to the needs of different markets.

How we tell: We tell people what to do that is fun, according to their needs. Our website is more effective by quickly directing people to what’s there specifically for them. Families want to know about things to do, so we communicate about footpaths for circular walks, wholesome food, quirky places to visit, contributing to feed the animals, family days out and rainy days out.

The accessible market demands evidence of just how accessible we are. So we put emphasis on comfort for everyone for those with limited mobility, hearing loss or partial sight, such as being able to bring your own guide dogs, the ratings for accessibility and equipment available. We then give peace of mind with our accessibility awards, before moving on to what all this security allows you to do with your time such as using our amazing Boma 7 off-road wheelchair.

We have done the same for bring your own horse and pet friendly holidays. After spending time understanding what those visitors enjoy doing, we have made sure we provide the facilities these animals need, and then found out all the fun things they can do nearby with their favourite four-legged friends.

Our top tip: Instead of showing pictures of empty rooms on your website, tell your customers what they can do while staying with you.
Social media gives you endless possibilities, but you need to know where to spend your time. The choices are eye watering: Facebook, Google+, Twitter, Tumblr, Stumbleupon, Pinterest, Instagram... each has a different purpose, and maintaining them all could be a full time job. So be selective.

The good news is, most social media sites are free, and your local tourism partnership is likely to run, or know about, training available in your area.

If you have something interesting to say and you are internet savvy, you will develop a group of followers.

Social media are channels - sustainability is the content. Conservation and community messages provide you with content to share with customers.

Talk about forthcoming events, not something in the past - otherwise you simply tell customers what they missed. You will need to use last year’s photos to announce what’s coming this time around.

Messages must be short and light-hearted. You need positive messages that customers feel compelled to like or share - moralising messages get ignored. Funny messages work best, as well as those your target market identifies with.

Give customers incentives to become your friend on Facebook or upload their own photos about your property - whether there is free wifi, a free coffee or entering into a prize draw for example.
Kayleigh Baddeley-Read is owner of Deerly Beloved Bakery in Norwich, Norfolk, a vegan bakery specialising in cakes and pastries.

**What we do:** We adore baking and experimenting to make delicious, cruelty-free, vegan treats. We only use real, wholesome fair-trade and 100% vegan ingredients.

**How we tell:** We love to share with people through social media: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and our blog. Besides posting a photo of our wholemeal cake just baked, we also share photos and comments of when we join local events and show proudly our products, talk to people face-to-face about how vegan wholefoods taste good, while supporting healthy life styles. This makes people who just met us, either at events or social media followers, get excited and try new recipes.

We also share photos of our press coverage such as when The Norwich Resident magazine wrote an article about us and we showed it on our blog with a comment inviting locals and tourists to come, see and feel for themselves the benefits of eating healthy.

We also post practical videos to show recipes with seasonal ingredients, so people can eat healthier, get creative and bake from home.

**Our top tip:** Social media can be intimidating at first, but think about it as a dynamic tool that is there for you. Use it to increase your market to attract, share and have fun keeping in touch with followers who might become customers and customers who might become followers!
Direct selling may seem more profitable if you have a high turnover, but paying a commission for someone else to do your selling can have its advantages.

The internet has allowed a new breed of distribution channels. Mainstream online travel agents such as Expedia, Travelocity and Booking.com are showing more interest in differentiating the unique characteristics of accommodation and the carbon impacts of travel. So far there is no evidence on how displaying your sustainability credentials on these channels impacts on your sales. For these large agencies, the number of currently certified products is too small to make any difference, and certification isn’t a differentiating factor.

TripAdvisor has developed GreenLeaders, a programme that aims to help travellers plan greener trips by highlighting accommodation businesses that engage in environmentally-friendly practices. Each award is shown prominently on the property’s listing on TripAdvisor. Travellers are prompted to comment online on the green practices they experience during their stay. The number of properties is growing, but the impact this has on customer ratings or bookings is currently unknown.

Online bookings now account for 45% of total travel sales in Europe, and much of the rest is business travel handled by specialist corporate-travel agents, according to PhoCusWright.

Because the bigger online travel agents can sign-up more hotels and negotiate bigger discounts, the small specialists need to find more customised products. Specialising in more sustainable products is an option: responsibletravel.com and greentraveller.co.uk focus on the unique products and experiences. Alternatively fairbookinguk.com emphasises that everything the client pays goes straight to the businesses that provide your experience, who in turn support other local businesses and the destination.

Be prepared, as the trend for online bookings will continue to grow. First time sales will be online, so you then need to get their data and provide reasons to remain loyal to you, without invading their privacy or spamming.
Real case studies

Facilitate bookings

We make it easier to travel sustainably

Lonneke de Kort is Manager at Bookdifferent, a non-profit organisation running an online booking system for accommodation.

What we do: We are a booking engine that helps all customers choose hotels based on sustainability information, from more than 600,000 hotels available. Our philosophy is that the more often you choose green accommodation, the more incentive other hotels have to go green too. Our site has great customer loyalty and excellent media reviews.

How we tell: When you search for a hotel, you come up with three bits of information that should help you make an informed booking:

1. For every destination, the booking engine first shows you the environmentally-certified hotels. The portal uses data from certification schemes to highlight first in the search engine the more environmentally-friendly accommodation in each destination (over 650 in the UK, nearly 6,000 across the world, from the 600,000 in the database).

2. All hotels have a carbon footprint value, independently assessed based on comparative data.

3. Bookdifferent has the past customer comments and lowest price guarantee that come by being powered by booking.com. In addition, Bookdifferent gives a large proportion of its’ profits to charity - which charity is entirely up to the customer (from the 100 chosen so far). This increases the customer’s feel good factor about travelling, without adding to their price.

Our top tip: Find ways for your customers to have fun while helping out at the same. Don’t overcomplicate the message - less is more.
When do I tell?

What information works best at different points in the customer journey?
Prior to booking/purchase

Tell customers why they should buy from you

Often we think marketing is all about this moment, communicating pre-purchase to first time consumers.

Browsing for options is time consuming and customers take decisions quickly, reading less information. So you have little time to explain why your product is better value, better quality, or simply a more appealing proposition, because of the sustainability work you do.

As a business manager, you can use sustainability for two reasons:

1. To create an impression. Branding uses images, text and other cues to create an impression that yours is the kind of business the client identifies with. This is all about creating feelings amongst your customers. Sustainability in its broader sense can help say that you are one of the good guys, that you can deliver on your promises. But that in itself doesn’t pay the bills, so...

2. To help customers take decisions. Provide an incentive to your customers to buy now. Think specifically about what are the different attributes that make your customers choose between you or someone else. What are the needs they are trying to satisfy at this point, and how does a more sustainable product meet these needs?

For example, hotel chains are going beyond saying they have a corporate social responsibility policy and certified management system. They now calculate the environmental cost of your overnight stay or business meetings, to promote themselves as lower carbon than competitors. But then these hotels also need to tell customers how to get there with low CO2 and importantly what to do there without needing a car.
Real case studies

**A little taste before your most important day**

Our wedding fair is the perfect venue to meet local artists and plan your dream wedding.

*Celia Gaze is the Managing Director of The Wellbeing Farm in Bolton, Lancashire.*

**What we do:** We run a multi award-winning farm-based hospitality venue. We focus on rustic barn weddings, corporate events, a cookery school powered by a wind turbine, llama trekking and we serve vintage-themed afternoon teas at weekends. We are also a working hill farm and we have incorporated recycling, food waste reduction, composting and energy saving into everything we do.

**How we tell:** On site, we communicate our sustainable practices to the public through signage and noticeboards throughout the farm. When people book onto cookery courses, we talk to them about the provenance of food and animal welfare just as much as how to cook delicious, rustic, artisan style food.

But for our weddings, messages and pictures on our website and social media emphasise our unique venue as the ‘perfect country-chic’ – using straw bales as seating – to “let your imagination run wild”.

And for a more personal real taste beforehand, we host free wedding fairs. These offer a networking opportunity where potential customers can support the local economy and find everything they need – from dress makers to musicians, from set designers to hair stylists. We offer them a place where they can see for themselves what authentic Lancashire weddings are all about.

**Our top tip:** Tell customers beforehand why your business is special. Offer them a real taste experience where they can get engaged, see for themselves and choose.
**Between booking and arriving**

Tell your customers how to prepare for their visit

Customers need to know what to bring with them and what to expect. Knowing at this stage what is acceptable behaviour will really help - whether this is information on the dress code, or how to respect other users that will be there.

This is the time to do something to make travel to you, and while staying with you, more environmentally-friendly. For example, provide information on public transport (timetables and destinations), the Traveline website or phone service, a list of car-free things to do nearby and explain how you will help your visitors to find any public transport information they need during their stay.

If you want to encourage your customers to come by public transport, give them an incentive to leave their car at home, for example a discounted stay or entry to an attraction, free coffee and cake on arrival or bike hire. But what’s actually more important is to give them a list of things to do without a car when they are with you!

Encourage customers to book activities now, particularly where there is limited capacity, such as theatres, concerts and certain restaurants.

Tell them what to bring themselves, and what they will find in your business, from walking books and poles to reading material. All of this adds to a sense of customer care.

Equally if you can source local goods and pre-cooked homemade meals for their stay, this is the time to encourage pre-booking - particularly beneficial for self-catering properties in rural locations, but not done often enough.
Real case studies

Know your customers

We impress customers by exceeding their expectations.

Kay and Chris Dartnell are the Owners of Wheely Wonderful Cycling in Ludlow, Shropshire.

What we do: We offer tailored cycling tours to fit customers with different interests. Our themed tours use local or historic places to stay (40% of them are members of green organisations and ALL of them serve local food), local restaurants and craft shops and visit a range of tourist attractions. We emphasise the sense of place, authenticity and quality aspects of our tours.

How we tell: We create a rapport with our customers beyond selling them a service. Our tours are customised by involving the customer in the decisions – where to stay and eat, and what to see by cycling or walking.

Later, customers only need to follow our instructions to find us, in which we include how to arrive to the departure point by public transport. We also keep them posted about weather changes or local events they might want to see.

Thanks to the information we provide while booking and the options customers choose, we already know what they expect on arrival. This is evident when we welcome them with tailored maps, with for example, the places they chose and similar attractions.

And for the more curious, we include paths that only locals know – for example a historic route used to move sheep mapped out by pine trees that can only be noticed by air.

Our top tip: After booking, keep your customers posted and use the information you have of them to exceed their expectations on arrival. You will increase their loyalty and gain repeat bookings and word of mouth recommendations.
On arrival

No second chance to make a first impression

This is the acid test moment—will your customer really think all that talk was just greenwashing? Recovering from a bad first impression will be hard. The look or feel of your business, from accommodation providers and attractions, to conference venues and restaurants, sends a message about whether you really care about sustainability.

Your building communicates much more than any words, so look for cues as to what might send confusing messages:

- Will your entrance send the message of wasteful lighting and heat pumped out of the front door?
- At reception, do you promote hiring 4X4s or bicycles?
- Is there a patio heater, when you make claims to reduce carbon emissions?
- Is the bedroom air conditioning set at 18 degrees or the heating at 24?

In businesses where customers will not talk to the staff that much, it is the building that communicates on your behalf. The amount of text and location of these communications needs to help the customer guide themselves through the building. If they are walking, messages have to be extremely short. If they will encounter the message sitting down, you can tell them more. If you have international clients, consider the complexity of the words you use and try to be more pictorial.

Smaller businesses, like self-catering properties, get to talk to customers one to one, and it’s on arrival they get a chance to share their values while showing guests to their accommodation and explaining how different aspects work such as the utilities and heating.
Mark Agnew is the Manager of Gylly Beach Café in Falmouth, Cornwall.

What we do: We run a family business that offers locally sourced food, promotes green local activities and all staff members follow the 3 Rs (reduce, reuse and recycle). We also use local wood and plants, and warm energy-saving light bulbs to offer a cosy, welcoming environment. We share our sustainability practices and local activities on our website and social media, but we know that when customers arrive, it’s the food and the visit experience that matter.

How we tell: Our communication on site is all about having a quality experience. As soon as customers arrive, they can feel this.

From our warm decoration to our passionate team service, from suggesting local activities that make Cornwall special, to fresh, tasty food. Our blackboard is full of local information and our menu introduces our organic and seasonal ingredients to make it clear we care about our products and suppliers.

We also use humour in “Time & tide waits for no man. Good food takes a little longer”. This is used to reinforce the message of quality through slow food and patience. We make their waiting time a reason to enjoy food even more, while relaxing in our atmosphere with our dedicated service.

Our top tip: Offer a welcoming environment where your sustainability helps to create a unique first impression, for example, your cosy atmosphere with local wood and plants. Also, provide subtle messages where sustainability means quality. For example, locally sourced food tastes better, is healthier and does good.
During the stay/visit

This is your best chance to make loyal customers

Decide how much you want your communication to affect the customer experience, or whether it is just in the background, depending on the kind of business you are.

Some five star hotels are reducing all information displayed to ensure the perception of quality is not affected, while other businesses opt to provide short messages throughout (for example, providing notes in the shower about reduced water consumption or by the bedroom door explaining about not leaving the lights on to reduce electricity consumption.

For accommodation providers, the bedroom browser is the best place for all the background and more technical information - the type that wouldn't bring your customers through the door, but helps reinforce the range of things you do. The committed few that read it are likely to appreciate it.

For your bedroom browser, you could have two lists:

- “These are the things you can see” - stroll through the vegetable garden, taste our filtered water that saves on glass transport and waste, our clever lights come on automatically when needed.
- “These are the things you can’t” - with your help we raised £500 for our local wildlife club, we have saved enough oil/gas/electricity to do x, we have saved enough water to do y, the carbon emissions we reduced would be able to run z...

Upgrade your towel reuse message to show that this is now normal.
Real case studies

Learn by watching the experts

Kids come and learn about conservation while watching animals

Jon Woodward is the Communications Manager of Noah’s Ark Zoo Farm in Wraxall, Bristol.

What we do: We take care of the zoo and working farm in beautiful countryside for people to simply come, enjoy and learn. Visitors can see animals in the zoo and farm, and also join talks and workshops to learn about wild animal-related issues such as adaptation, habitats and lifecycles.

How we tell: Because we know that putting information on our website and social media is not enough for children, we run workshops for them to learn about animals when they visit in school groups.

Our talks and workshops are designed to be fun and interactive environments for learning. Since kids learn in a different way and speed, our classrooms are colourful, full of attractive messages and pictures with enough space for them to feel free to explore and ask questions.

First, we give them time to explore our facilities. Then, we invite kids to participate and share to keep them interested in the talk. Later, we bring animals to the rooms, so they can meet the protagonists and pet them. Depending on the theme, we also direct teachers to lead children to meet the big animals through a walk around the park, seeing habitats we’ve created and meeting keepers.

Our top tip: If you want kids to learn, the best way is by doing, not telling. Provide environments with space, things to see and messages for them to explore. Also, make sure you provide them with something concrete that they can relate to and remember, rather than abstract concepts.
After the stay/visit

Stay in touch with your customers

Seasonal and event-related sustainability messages about your business and surroundings provide a purpose to remind customers about your business, and encourage repeat bookings.

Sustainability-related messages help you make human connections that build on trust and a sense of belonging:

- If you told your customers that the money saved from reusing towels goes to planting trees, tell them how much you have fundraised so far.
- If your customers saw you put up bird boxes or bird feeders, tell them how many are occupied, or which birds you can now see in the garden.
- If you provided scholarships to study for local children, tell them how well they are doing.

A large family hotel chain publishes a yearly newsletter that amongst other things provides an update of births, marriages, retirements and deaths amongst their personnel. It’s one more way to communicate that their staff are employed for the long run and to encourage customer loyalty that for them, really works.

Have a monthly dish where all ingredients come from a different farm, and invite the farmer to eat at your business the first Saturday of the month - make an event of this to create a local connection and a reason to remind customers to keep coming back.
We help customers reminisce about their holidays with meaningful marketing

**Rachel Turner is the owner of Malkin Tower Farm Holiday Cottages, a family owned business in Lancashire.**

**What we do:** We offer a welcoming atmosphere by taking care of the environment and making sure guests have a great time. Families love it when we show them the area and late in summer we identify and pick wild flowers together.

**How we tell:** We love talking to our guests about the landscape and wildlife, in the context of managing a farm sustainably in the countryside. As part of this we identify, collect and press flowers with these families – much as we did with our own children and grandchildren. We keep them pressed in the cottage for them, and once ready, we post them as a memento of their holiday with us.

Sending these flowers in the post has been such a big success! It has contributed to families reminiscing about their time with us and meaningful time away from it all. We usually hear that we made them feel special by taking the trouble to send them. The sense of bonding and belonging with the place, reinforced by these flowers, often leads to a further booking.

**Our top tip:** Think differently about how you can care for customers and try to develop real bonds with your past customers, rather than sending them a boring impersonal newsletter. Take advantage that they already know you and remind them how much fun they had with you and that they are important.
Time for action!

What will you do differently after reading this toolkit?
**What are you already doing?**

- **Who do I tell?** Choose one type of customer at a time

- **Why do I tell?** Choose one main reason that will mean quality to your customers

- **What do I tell?** Make sure the customer will appreciate what you tell them - make it interesting, easy to hear, easy to act on

- **Where do I tell?** Aim to sell directly, if you can, to repeat customers, with stories that engage, backed with facts

- **When do I tell?** Share information that your customers will find useful to take decisions

**What do you want to do?**

**What do you need to do differently?**
Thank you...

Alison Howell’s Foot Trails  http://foottrails.co.uk
Bookdifferent  www.bookdifferent.com/en
Burton Road Chippy  www.burtonroadchippy.co.uk
Deerly Beloved Bakery  http://deerlybelovedbakery.blogspot.co.uk
Green Directions  www.greendirections.co.uk
Gylly Beach  www.gyllybeach.com
Hoe Grange Holidays  www.hoeengrangeholidays.co.uk
Jurys Inns Group Ltd  www.jurysinns.com
Kathryn Burrington  http://travelwithkat.com
Malkin Tower Farm Holiday Cottages  www.malkintowerfarm.co.uk
National Marine Aquarium  www.national-aquarium.co.uk
Noah’s Ark Zoo Farm  www.noahsarkzoofarm.co.uk
Pubwatch scheme  www.nationalpubwatch.org.uk
Railworld/Wildlife  www.railworld.net
The Fountaine Inn  www.fountaineinnatlinton.co.uk
The Green House Hotel  www.thegreenhousehotel.co.uk
The Sustainability Centre  www.sustainability-centre.org
The Wellbeing Farm  www.thewellbeingfarm.co.uk
Thrifty Couture  http://thriftycoutureblog.blogspot.co.uk
Wheely Wonderful Cycling  www.wheelywonderfulcycling.co.uk
WWT Wetlands for life  www.wwt.org.uk
Help!
Before marketing you need to get your house in order. Help is available, at no cost, to all tourism businesses interested in understanding how they can embed sustainability as part of their normal activities. The GreenStart programme provided by VisitEngland has been designed to help businesses review their performance, to show them how sustainable practices can save money through greater efficiency and to help them begin a journey of doing business even better.
For more information, visit: www.better-tourism.org