

The Dairy

Cottage in the Dales is a family run business consisting of 3 five-star holiday cottages in Wensleydale and Bishopdale within the Yorkshire Dales National Park in North Yorkshire, UK. Owned and run by Diane and Andrew Howarth, the couple's latest investment and long-standing ambition was to open up the Yorkshire Dales to accessible tourism through a fully accessible luxury self-catering cottage.

The Dairy opened in the summer of 2017 providing outstanding accessible self-catering facilities which meet VisitEngland's National Accessible Scheme standards. The cottage is the first of its kind within the Yorkshire Dales to offer this level of support to guests requiring mobility, hearing and visual support.

Business Background

Having successfully run a number of award-winning holiday cottages, the Howarths knew that there was little or no accessible holiday accommodation within the Yorkshire Dales. The Howarths wanted to appeal to a broader market including anyone with a disability or requiring an additional level of reassurance and support.



Before



After

The Business Challenge

The couple undertook years of research to fully understand everything relating to accessible tourism, from the market opportunity through to the accessible products available. It was during this time that they uncovered the huge scope and business opportunity available to proprietors.

Key research findings

- A £12 billion-a-year market – Only around 8% of disabled people use a wheelchair, with many more having other mobility, hearing or visual impairments.
- Together with their travelling companions, this audience amounts to a multi-billion pound market opportunity.
- Visitors who make up the accessible tourism market are also likely to take longer trips and become very loyal.
- (Source: VisitEngland)

- There is a consistent perception that accessible accommodation is clinical and unattractive.

The Overall Objective

Having identified and understood the opportunity, Diane and Andrew agreed that their main objective was to provide luxury, five-star accommodation which challenged the perceptions that designing for disabilities would result in clinical and unattractive design.



A Universal Design approach

The Dairy is presented as spacious luxury accommodation with removable accessible features which are there if you need them, but become invisible if you don't.

Motionspot was approached to give accessible design advice in the bathroom and supply the discreet and removable bathroom support bars and grab rails.

Accessible Wetroom Design Principles

- Level access shower for easy entry to the shower enclosure.
- Removable shower seat and support bars and rails to provide a flexible and luxurious walk-in shower area.
- Doors widened to accommodate wheelchair access.

Living Area Design Principles

- Flexible base kitchen cupboards that pull out to allow for wheelchair access to worktop space (and can be replaced when additional space isn't required).
- Fire and CO2 Alarms with visual and audio signals.
- Vibrating alarm clocks that can be placed under pillows.
- Non-disabled & disabled guests invited to 'test-drive' all aspects of the cottage for feedback.



Results & Business Impact

The investment required to design flexible solutions within The Dairy in order to broaden its market appeal has already started to pay dividends:

- Approximately 10% of overall spend was directed towards the design and inclusion of specialised equipment.

'It wasn't necessarily about cost – it was mostly a matter of designing to meet requirements of the National Accessible Scheme standards and being able to create a welcoming environment.'

- Cottage in the Dales is seeing a 92-96% occupancy rate.
- The Dairy was fully booked for the first three months before launch – based only on guests to the other cottages viewing the work in progress and viewing a floor plan of what they were trying to achieve.
- The Dairy also has an impressive amount of forward bookings for 2018.

Customer feedback

'For a small accommodation provider being flexible is ideal – to be able to get new and repeat business from loyal and happy customers is simply perfection! Everyone can easily reach accessibility accreditation with little investment. We are seeing enquiries increase and expect to get our investment back within five years.'

Diane Howarth

