

A penny saved is a penny earned

Climate change and carbon footprints are important issues. The public are becoming increasingly aware of terms like *sustainability*, *green* and *corporate responsibility*. However few people can accurately define what they mean. So what do green issues mean for your business? What should you be doing about them?

Becoming a sustainable tourism or green tourism business is really about using common sense. All businesses can save money through better management of raw materials, waste production and energy and water consumption. The increasing costs of waste disposal, water and energy are forcing many businesses to improve the efficiency of how they use these resources. Environmental issues are a key priority of 70% of hotel and catering businesses (www.envirowise.gov.uk). Research by VisitBritain shows that a growing number of visitors think that the environmental impact of their holiday

choices is important. Parliament is threatening legislation for all of us - businesses and consumers - to achieve government targets.

To turn yourself into a sustainable tourism business you don't have to be a green expert. Organisations like Hospitable Climates provide free advice sheets and an online benchmarking service for accommodation businesses. The Carbon Trust provides free energy audits for qualifying large businesses with annual energy bills of over £50K. The audits offer suggestions and their relative costs. They also advise on how long it will take to recoup your initial outlay. Tax relief is available for capital investment in energy-saving technology.



“ We recycle everything we can and we plant over 100 new trees each year. We also replaced our boilers in 2007 saving 214.2 tonnes of CO2, 54.8 tonnes of carbon every year, as well as £22,480 in annual energy bills. In addition we have secured a four-year interest free loan of £83,000 from the Carbon Trust, representing 50% of the cost of the new boilers. ”

Andrew Beale,
West Lodge Park, Enfield.

Adjustments don't need to be complicated or costly. Hotels that have made simple changes have saved over £230 per room. Just two drops a second from a dripping tap wastes nearly 10,000 litres of water in a year. Fitting volume adjusters to a toilet cistern could save up to £35 per year.

There are many places in London offering environmental advice. For details of recycling schemes in your Borough, see www.londonremade.com. SmartWorks can give you an energy audit. London Environmental Support Services act as a broker to help businesses find the right source of advice. See www.less-online.com

The golden rules are:

- Teamwork – you need commitment and acceptance from every member of staff
- Assessment – you can't monitor what you don't measure
- Set targets – around three to five, with realistic goals
- Focus on reducing usage – it's even better to save than to recycle
- Stay positive – you can't implement changes all at once and you can't

do it alone

- Find support – look for up-to-date information on innovations, savings and available grants

As well as being more efficient with your energy resources, you can also offer an improved visitor experience that reinforces your quality message and keeps your business at the forefront of the sustainability movement. Some ideas:

- Provide accurate information about public transport and the Oyster card
- Recommend some smaller, lesser-known quality attractions and experiences local to you
- Give details of walks available in your area
- Promote local events and festivals
- Try to serve as much local and seasonal food as you can
- Offer your guests a means of carbon-offsetting their travel – see www.climatecare.org

Prove your commitment through a Green Tourism for London accreditation. This accreditation is only available to star

rated accommodation businesses. Further information can be found at www.lda.gov.uk/greentourism

Useful websites

www.green-business.co.uk
www.consideratehoteliers.com
www.tourismpartnership.org
www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk
www.hospitableclimates.org.uk



Continue your journey →