

How to green your business: Hotels

According to the Small Luxury Hotels of the World Survey 2002, 80% of UK travellers are prepared to pay £30-£70 extra per fortnight to stay somewhere with a responsible environmental attitude. Want to Go Green but not sure where to start? Here are some tips to reduce the environmental impacts of your hotel business.

Energy

In hotels 30% of energy is typically used in kitchens, 30% for heating & hot water, and 15% for refrigeration.

- Insulate all hot water tanks, pipework, roofs, walls, ceilings and floors against heat loss
- Insulate cellars and cool areas against heat gain.
- Cover swimming pools at night to retain heat.
- Upgrade central heating controls.
- Reduce lighting levels and the number of lights.
- Replace tungsten bulbs with energy efficient, compact fluorescent lamps.
- Train staff to check room temperatures and switch off equipment in unoccupied areas.

- Install a combined heat and power (CHP) unit or renewable power sources such as solar water heating or PV cells.

Equipment

- Use a timer switch to reduce out-of-hours energy consumption, e.g. controlling a vending machine with a timer could reduce its energy use by 70% - equivalent to around £80 per year.
- Ask your suppliers or manufacturers of new equipment to supply data on the average power consumed under typical operating conditions and the stand-by and low energy consumption.

Waste

Reduce material use

- Choose minimally packaged products or ask your suppliers to supply products in less packaging. Ask your suppliers to take excess packaging away with them when they deliver.
- Renovate furniture rather than buying new replacements, this can save up to 50% of the costs of new products.
- Avoid overproduction of marketing and publicity material by reviewing distribution lists and regularly updating databases.
- Use electronic communication where possible to reduce printing and faxing. Ensure that your staff are comfortable with new technology and provide training where necessary. Encourage them not to print out emails unless absolutely necessary.

- Make use of local resource centres and charities that reuse computers, furniture and other materials from businesses.

Recycling

- Develop an effective segregation and recycling system to remove recyclable materials and waste electrical equipment from the general waste stream (including paper, cardboard, plastics, cans, plastic cups, printer cartridges, fluorescent tubes, computers and fridges).
- Train staff and increase awareness via e-mails, notices, meetings and one-to-one training
- Remove waste cooking oil by a specialist contractor for recycling off-site.

Water

- Install water displacement devices in cisterns of all mono-flush toilets.
- Install urinal controls (timer/sensor) to ensure that the cistern flushes only during after use rather than continuously. These devices can reduce water use and costs by 50%.
- Fit aerated self-closing taps in all rooms.
- Use water-efficient washing machines and other equipment.
- Set up an opt-in towel washing procedure, by requiring guests to place towels in the bath if they want a new one.
- Reuse grey or brown water for the grounds.
- Change the size of the inflow mains water pipe, thus reducing the unit charge.
- Check your pipes for leaks, which can be expensive and can cause damage to the building. Check your meter readings regularly and carefully - if you are paying for water that you cannot account for you may have a leak.

Travel

- Publicise up-to-date public transport system links to guests and staff.
- Improve facilities for cyclists and walkers. Essentials are secure bike racks, showers and lockers.
- Offer interest-free loans to staff for public transport season tickets.
- Promote staff car sharing. Establish a database or an informal meeting for prospective car sharers and guarantee a free taxi ride in an emergency.
- Re-assess your car parking arrangements to include priority parking for car sharers, or charges for non-essential user parking. Use the money raised to fund transport projects.

Purchasing

- Purchase equipment with an EU Energy Rating of A or B.
- Use 100% recycled paper (with maximum post-consumer waste content) and maximum percentage recycled materials wherever possible.
- Avoid purchasing disposable catering products such as milk jiggers, sugar sachets and paper plates.
- Buy remanufactured toner cartridges - high quality cartridges are available with the same performance as new cartridges at a lower price.