

## **Eco-hotels opening doors to more business**

Hotels of all sizes all across Scotland have been checking in with the Green Business Partnership (formerly the Business Environment Partnership) for the past 10 years. Their menu of aims: to save money, become more efficient and cater for the fast growing eco-consumer market.

“The Green Tourism market has been expanding rapidly and is set to grow much further,” explained Anna Graham of the Green Business Partnership (GBP). “It is no longer a niche market but relevant to today’s tourism industry as a whole.

“Expanding recognition of the importance of sustainability, coupled with the economic challenges which affect the everyday cost of running a hotel or guest house, means there is no better time for them to become a shade greener,” she added.

The benefits of such a strategy are numerous, including extensive financial and environmental savings and a strong competitive advantage, and marketing opportunities such as the Green Tourism Business Scheme (GTBS)

“We’re looking forward to supporting even more hotels and guest houses in what promises to be a bright future for Scotland’s tourist industry,” Anna Graham commented.

Below are examples of some of the hotels the GBP/BEP have helped. Built as the grand baroque home of Edinburgh's Lord Provost, Prestonfield is now a luxurious five-star hotel with 23 opulent rooms and suites.

A report commissioned from the Business Environment Partnership helped create a Green Action Plan and further environmental studies. A BEP advisor carried out an on-site review looking at ways to cut water, waste and energy consumption.

Risk Manager Paul Selwood, who also has responsibility for environmental issues at the hotel, commented: “Not only was the advice free but it has also reduced our carbon footprint and saved the hotel money.”

He went on: “A report from the Carbon Trust and BEP gap analysis identified areas where lower energy lighting could be installed.

A range of low energy lighting is in use throughout the hotel and has been progressively rolled out in various areas as technical developments have overcome aesthetic and atmosphere concerns.”

Prestonfield Hotel has cut its energy bills by 30% and waste bills by 50%. Savings were achieved through installing a highly efficient condensing boiler and energy-efficient lighting, implementing staff awareness training and improving recycling.

The Hotel has been presented with the Green Business Tourism Scheme Gold Award.

Staff and guests are encouraged to use public transport, bicycles are available for hotel residents and the hotel's Green Policy is referred to in a daily guest newsletter. Some 80% of staff use public transport, cycle or walk to work. Guests are encouraged to use coaches rather than private cars to come to weddings and other events.

Polystyrene packing cases are returned to its largest butchery and seafood supplier daily for re-use or recycling. Previously these went to landfill.

Prestonfield was among the first hotels in Scotland to send all its organic and food waste - cooked and raw - to be processed into compost under a scheme administered by local charity, the Cyrenians.

BEP calculated that banning polystyrene cups saved 1,000 of them being sent to landfill every week.

An earlier Biodiversity Action Plan from BEP led to a number of recommendations being implemented including creation of a woodland walk, additional native tree planting, bat boxes and hedges.

"The Plan identified a number of species and habitats," Selwood said. "With peacock, pheasant, partridge, fox, roe deer, rabbit and bat in the area, together with lots of woodland and garden birds, we introduced a wildlife log for guests to note what they see and have bird identification books available for them."

The hotel grows tomatoes, herbs and other vegetables in a polytunnel. A herb garden is being developed and more cultivation is planned.

As part of BEP's Environmental Placement Programme under which university students are seconded to organisations to work on environmental projects, Dariush Bazazi was placed at The George Hotel in Edinburgh.

Then studying environmental geoscience at Edinburgh University, he worked one day a week for six months at the hotel as Green Tourism Co-ordinator with an objective of gaining Green Tourism Business Scheme (GTBS) accreditation. It subsequently achieved the Silver Award.

"Many hotels are trying to stand out from their rivals and GTBS recognition is one way in which they can do this," Dariush said. "I researched and prepared a document setting out how the George could meet the criteria. We agreed

around 150 measures covering a variety of sectors including energy, water, waste, and internal and external communications.”

Recycling systems were improved, portable coolers replaced with systems plugged into the mains, a sustainable travel policy developed and staff trained on energy awareness. Staff also carried out community work to help increase the number of puffins on Craighleith island in the Forth estuary.

Suppliers were screened for their ‘green’ credentials, the hotel joined the John Muir Trust and Fairtrade products were added to the wine list.

Dariusz now works for the Perth-based GTBS as a grading assessor.

Radisson Blu in Edinburgh, which has worked closely with BEP for many years, sought a graduate to address its environmental and social responsibility. Energy and water audits had taken place but the hotel recognised that implementation of recommendations required a full-time position so it turned to Miriam Smith at BEP sister company the Bright Business Partnership (Formerly Essential HR) to find a suitable graduate. Alexandra Hammond was placed there in a 12 months full-time role.

The hotel gained the GTBS Gold Award. Electricity use per occupied room went down by 10%, linen use was on track to be reduced by 8% or 50,000 pieces, and waste volume cut in half through installation of a can crusher and cardboard baler.

A food waste recycling programme was introduced so 100% is removed and turned into compost instead of going to landfill.

The hotel has since won numerous awards due to its green policy, including the Vision in Business for the Environment of Scotland (VIBES) Awards which are supported by the Green Business Partnership, the Thistle Awards and the Considerate Hotelier Award.

Alexandra went on to become a driving force behind a number of Radisson Hotels and was promoted to Regional Responsible Business Manager, UK.

She commented: “The Business Environment Partnership/Green Business Partnership has brought tremendous value to the Radisson Blu hotels in Scotland and offers services that support our staff to continually improve our environmental and social responsibility programme.

“Sponsorship of events has introduced high profile new clients and generated excellent public relations coverage. Our partnership has helped us earn the highest levels of environmental accreditation with the Green Tourism Business Scheme and provides an excellent forum for new ideas and best practice sharing.”

At Edinburgh serviced apartments The Knight Residence BEP conducted an environmental review of the business operation, focussing on water consumptions and utilities usage.

“BEP had the tools and expertise to analyse our usage and could offer us comparison figures for our industry as a benchmarking tool,” said General Manager Colin Stone.

As a result, cost savings of over £5,000 per annum were identified, coupled with environmental benefits including reducing water usage by over 1,750m<sup>3</sup>, over 4,500 kWh of electricity, and 2 tonnes of Co<sub>2</sub> emissions. Much of this could be achieved by simple low or no cost actions.

“The review also included practical help on getting all team members engaged with the process which was crucial for success,” Stone added. “Most recommendations have been put in place and measurable cost reductions have followed. “

In a few months in early 2010 the Green Business Partnership and the Carbon Trust helped identify savings of over £60,000 for eight Perthshire hotels as well as the potential to reduce Co<sub>2</sub> emissions by 317 tonnes.

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