

MARKET AND COMMUNICATE
YOUR CREDENTIALS



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

VisitEngland



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 more fun and their business trips more pleasant.

Companies across England are changing to be more sustainable - but are shy to tell their customers, for fear it's not relevant, or will be misunderstood. Some have even got awards and certification but still struggle to know how this can be used to best effect.

Five chapters help you take practical decisions:

● **Who do I tell?**

Are customers really bothered? Isn't it only a minority?

● **Why am I telling?**

Can I get more customers? How can I get them to join in, rather than undermine my efforts?

● **What do I say?**

Should I say I am sustainable, just like that? Isn't that preaching?

● **Where do I tell?**

Should I get certified or apply for awards? Talk about sustainability on my website, or through social media?

● **When do I tell?**

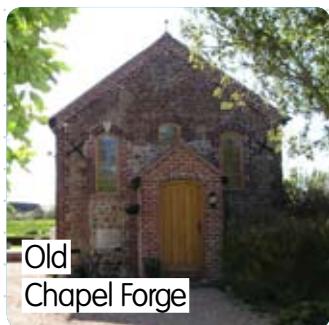
Can I tell customers before they arrive, or only when they are here?

Get tips and confidence to market your green credentials, by understanding who you tell, for what purpose and through which channels, and more importantly that you know what you're saying is really worth shouting about.

Use the template at the end of this booklet to prepare your own green communications and marketing action plan, one step at a time. For each market, choose one reason, one message, one channel and one time to tell them.



Who is this booklet for?



It's for all the companies that behave sustainably because it's the right thing to do, but have struggled to see how to turn it into a commercial advantage. For those that ask themselves - how did Sandra do that?"

Introducing: Sandra Barnes-Keywood Old Chapel Forge is a nine year old, four bedroom B&B in Sussex. For the first four years I was acting sustainably but scared to speak about it, until I got the courage to change my business model.

I believe many businesses are in that position today, and need the encouragement and help to talk about what they do.

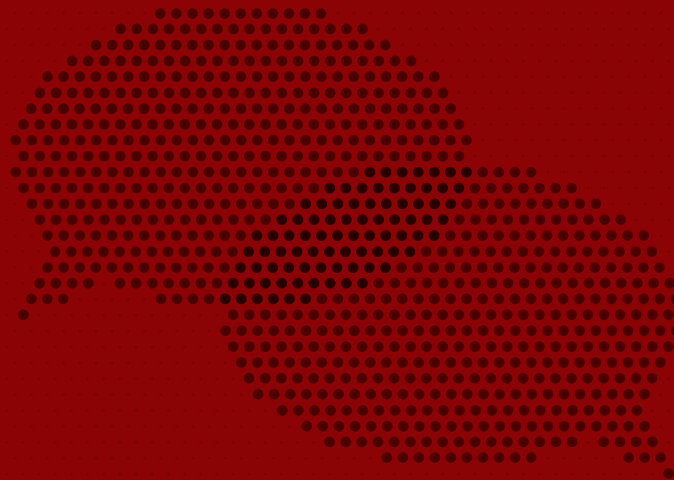
What we do: I target business customers during the week and have personally presented our green credentials to all the local corporations with green

purchasing policies by physically going to see them. I also run some themed weekends (star gazing, bird watching, hawk walking) and market my green qualities.

Thanks to this change in focus I now have 90% occupancy all year (30% better than our competitors) and charge 20% above average. It took courage and accepting I can do things different.

Our top tip: If you are worried that there's no point in speaking about your green credentials, or you think what you do is not relevant, then this booklet is for you. I now feel confident that my higher price is well justified because my clients like what I do. I am also much happier with the customers I get now.





Who do I tell?

Who will appreciate knowing you are working
to be sustainable and ethical?



Tell everybody that sustainability is quality

and how they can have a better experience for it.

There are many signs that consumers are changing. The increasing awareness and concern for the planet's health is everywhere - but the problems are too big and complex, there are too many issues, we have all heard too many contradictory messages. It's not surprising customers struggle to know what to do.

Most customers care, or at least want to know that they are not doing harm. But this does not mean they will act differently. Just as we all forget to bring our stylish recycled bags to the supermarket, customers will book the brands they already know through their usual channels. Habit and convenience play a more important part in how we choose travel, leisure and tourism.

Price, location, convenience and brand still come first for most people. But when all of these are equal, sustainability values and actions can **and do** differentiate a product. Consumers prefer brands and companies that are environmentally and socially responsible - but that doesn't mean they are searching exclusively for sustainability at the time of choosing.

2010 VisitEngland data on English consumers says:

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

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

46% don't want to think about being green - they want to relax

33% believe sustainability claims are often ways to save money and/or reduce service

Only **15%** think a hotel run sustainably will be less comfortable than one without green credentials.



Sustainability and marketing make a better business



Andrea Bramhall



Conservation weekend

Introducing: Andrea Bramhall
 Deepdale (Norfolk) is an eco friendly backpackers hostel, campsite, group hostel, tipis and yurts, visitor information centre, retail site and farm.

What we do: We run conservation weekends in March where past customers and some new ones come to get their hands dirty and help with the farm, woodland and property conservation work. We also run a Scrap Heap Art Challenge to build art from our scrap and recycled waste. In our Earth Day event we invite companies to exhibit environmentally friendly technologies... and more!

We believe in being ecofriendly - it's not a marketing gimmick. But as we are in business, we use this passion to raise the profile of our accommodation, through awards and events which give us media coverage, something to Twitter about, explain in newsletters and get customers on board on Facebook.

The events fit well with both our business ethos and our business needs - customers fill up our beds in March-April, generate amazing word of mouth early spring to get summer bookings.

Our top tip: Make your sustainability actions interesting to customers. Use all the typical marketing tools you'd apply in your business and think how your sustainability work can be part of what you say.



Be creative



Introducing: April McCaig

The Palace Hotel in Manchester, part of the Principal Hayley brand, interacts with its guests in many fun ways. Encouraged by the leadership of its wildlife enthusiast General Manager, Richard Morrell, it creates a good working relationship and better customer experience.



What we do: Our "Save a Lobster champion" campaign encourages guests to sponsor a lobster, give it a name and prolong its life, all of which can be traced via the hatchery website.

Our campaign is credible because we have a tradition of engaging our customers with food and sustainability, through our Chef interacting with guests. He teaches them how to cook from seasonal

& locally produced food and runs a seafood festival educating the general public on the importance of sustainable fish.

We also do "banqueting with a difference" - menus for large groups with all locally sourced, fairtrade/seasonal/organic food and themed from the Roaring '20s to Wartime Manchester.

Food sustainability is a big issue, which is made accessible when presented as solutions, not as problems.

Our top tip: Communicate by making your customers participate. Even the most reluctant customer will engage if you make it fun.



Who do I tell?



Different customers, different approaches

'Ethical seekers' actively seek green holidays as a continuation of their lifestyle. There are few of them, but they are vocal and loyal. They want to know all about what you do.

They are aware of the issues, but don't go out of their way to act

At the other extreme, the "just want to switch off" group travel wanting to forget about their daily lives and responsibilities. They are unlikely to value your efforts. Sustainability actions will need to happen behind the scenes and your communication should focus on how it does improve their experience.

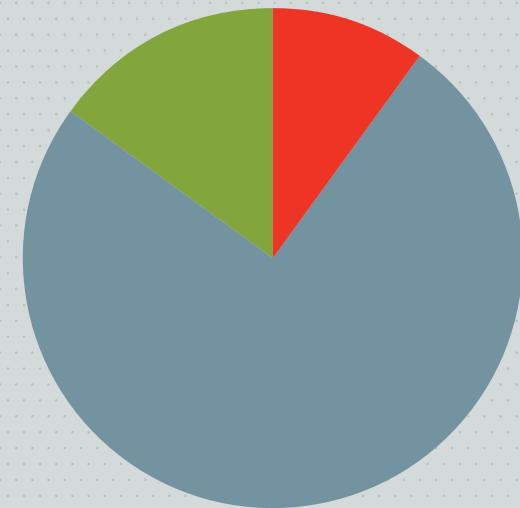
The "feel good factor" group is the majority - they are aware of the issues, but don't go out of their way to act. They won't seek information, but will respond well to messages that show they can easily "do their bit" - or where they get a better product or service that happens to be sustainable.

This group will avidly read about you in the press travel pages because you are interesting and different, not because you are sustainable. Awards and certification reinforce that you can be trusted, one more element to influence the booking decision.

● **Ethical Seekers:** Rational, International, Interrogative, Willing to Pay

● **Feel Good Factors:** Emotional, Local, Simplified, Unlikely to pay

● **Switch off:** Irrelevant, Local, Cynical, Won't Pay





Why am I telling?

There are too many vague messages out there. You can't do everything, so be clear about what response or change you are hoping for from your customers.



To make customers feel good

Ok, you want more customers - but before you get there, remember there are many other more realistic ways of using sustainability in your communications.

Help your customers feel better about their purchase by showing how you have taken care of the need to be more sustainable - leaving them to enjoy the benefits.

The fact they will not go out of their way to buy from you because you are green does not mean they don't appreciate it. It won't put customers off and can make them feel good knowing that they are "doing their bit."

If you genuinely think your customers don't want to know, focus on what you do for them. Make it easy, by telling them they can relax and enjoy, while you take care of things without compromising quality.

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.

Why am I telling?



The Highwayman Inn (Lancashire) promote their Regional Food Heroes - professional photos and audio files tell you about the pride and passion of producing and serving excellent food - on their website and the walls of the pub. The sustainability message is not upfront, the emphasis is on fine food from artisan suppliers.



It just tastes better



Introducing: Derek Bright

At Walk Awhile (Kent) I redesigned my walking holidays to source local food and make sure we visit interesting locally run attractions that tell the visitor something about Kent.



What we do: Our customers tell us that serving walkers packed lunches with locally produced, in-season food, helps them enjoy a better holiday. Food is one element of the experience of walking in rural Kent. We interpret the region through our visits to many suppliers, from cider and wine to cheese, including social enterprises and firms producing food and drink traditionally.

Our top tip: Explain to your customers what they get and why it is better for them and for the places they visit. Walk Awhile is aware of its carbon footprint and discusses this with its customers. We feel that the time dedicated to fetching local produce is more than justified by the contribution to the local economy and the increased quality.

TELL US ABOUT YOUR SUPPLIERS!

- A map of where your different suppliers are can demonstrate how many are local - good.
- Photos will show a human side to who they are - better.
- Explaining how they take good care of the produce they sell to you will show that you also care about what you share with your customers - best.

Why am I telling?



To raise awareness and change behaviour

Are you fed up of having all your good sustainability work undermined by customers that just don't get it?

If you want change, give something in return. Whether you want them to purchase local or respect local customs, to drive less or recycle more, be clear how to motivate and be positive.

- Be specific about what you ask them to do: vague messages lead to frustration – tell them what to do, not “be green.”

- Show how the action you are asking your customers to take has a direct positive impact, of what kind, and how it can be seen - instead of saying “save water,” tell them what can be done with the water they have saved.

- Explain who benefits from the change of behaviour - if it isn't the customer, think again how you tell why they should care.

- Only mention the more sustainable options - focus on daytrips that are nearby rather than hours away, or cut out endangered or unsustainable food from the menu. No need to label as “green” either, just present as fun or a great idea.

[Read more >](#)



...continued

Or do you want your current customers to do things differently and therefore multiply the positive difference you are making through your existing actions?

Lockton YHA (Yorkshire)

communicates its green practices throughout the building, for demonstration purposes and to educate its customers and promote environmental

behavioural change. 'Awareness points' tell you about an eco-feature of the property, or aspects of sustainability you can apply yourself at home.



WATER

Rainwater is better for plants than the water you get from your tap - plus it's free! Collect it from your roof by using a rainwater diverter and a water butt like this one.

For more information see the Water section at the Resource Centre

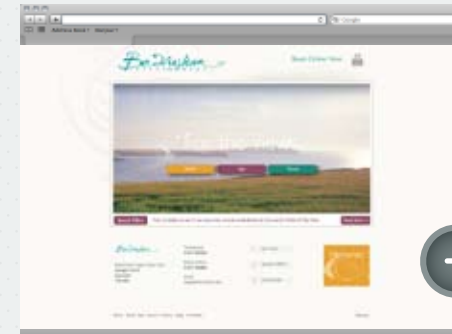


REDUCE-REUSE-RECYCLE

When creating compost try adding equal amounts of cardboard to vegetable waste. The fibres within the cardboard help create a drier, crumblier texture to your compost.

For more information see the Recycle section at the Resource Centre

Why am I telling?



Bedruthan Steps Hotel

(Cornwall) presents three charitable £5 donation options to customers on the booking terms and conditions form:

Option 1: co2balance

Option 2: Surfers Against Sewage

Option 3: St Mawgan in Pydar Community Fund



To offer something extra

We've only looked at your current customers and your main business.
Now, how do we get your customers to buy more from you?

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.

- Develop a nature diary on your website for your property - emphasise what's there in low season.
- Promote meat/vegetables/jam from your local farm or neighbours - encourage customers to come back to restock.

● "Grow-and-cook your own veg," local history or bicycle maintenance courses, "eco-warrior" after school clubs, children's nature themed birthday parties... create demand for quieter time.s

● Typically, a rural pub is full lunchtime weekends - develop a special promotion for mid morning or mid afternoon coffee and cake/tea and scone, together with a free map for a circular pub walk.

● Business hotels can include 30 and 60 minute running maps from the hotel, and design and promote a runner's breakfast with the right nutritional contents - if you're a chain, roll it out across the whole portfolio.

Why am I telling?



Battlesteads Country Inn (Northumberland)

encourages customers to report interesting sightings in our guest log. Getting customers to engage makes nature more fun and reinforces our many sustainability actions. Providing ecotours for guests around the site, showing hedgehog houses, badger boxes and much more, means customers relate to us better.



To get more customers

Faced with similar price and location, your sustainability credentials can give you the edge for both business and leisure markets. It's all about being noticed and giving a bit more.

Do remember, customers like to know they are getting a bargain

There are more examples of increased occupancy and lower seasonality through using sustainability creatively, than there are about higher prices. This is probably good news for the service sector, where managing occupancy has a more significant impact on your bottom line than charging more at peak periods.

Businesses that put most points raised in this toolkit into practice should be in a position to increase their prices marginally, or to not reduce them as substantially in low season.

Do remember, customers like to know they are getting a bargain - so showing that behaving sustainably gives them either a discount or additional benefits is likely to be attractive. We have seen cafés giving a discount (and others putting 10p in a charity pot) for regulars that bring their own commuter mug - saving on disposable cups while gaining a loyal customer. While 2010 data from VisitEngland shows that 60% of holidaymakers would be more likely to use public transport if the accommodation offered a discount for doing so.

Why am I telling?



Self-catering cottage
The Hytte (Northumbria) self catering cottage has over 90% occupancy rate through word of mouth, by positioning itself as a quality sustainable accessible cottage. They cater for visually and hearing impaired and wheelchair users, for whom it is difficult enough to find a quality site, let alone somewhere environmentally friendly. Equally, they show to other holidaymakers that people with disabilities have the same rights to an enjoyable place to stay and that being inclusive to all is part of sustainability.



Using incentives to increase occupancy



Introducing: James Hiley-Jones
At Carey's Manor and Senspa in Hampshire we reward all guests who visit car-free with 10% off our standard tariff rate plus 2 for 1 tickets at Beaulieu, a free steam train ride at Exbury Gardens and 10% off cycle hire at Cycle Experience in Brockenhurst.



What we do: Our sustainability work is presented online under the banner of Green Incentives to encourage customers to visit it and it has really worked - 10-15% of our leisure weekend customers and 30 to 40% of our mid week conference market now arrive car free. We've realised how corporate social responsibility has become a much bigger issue and we now provide a green travel plan for conference organisers.

Clearly having a mainline station direct from London Waterloo makes it much easier, whereas our sister hotel that is less well connected gets a lower percentage of car-free travellers.

Our top tip: Showing our green credentials has had a much better impact that we ever anticipated. We were initially very careful about what we did, trying not to impact on guest enjoyment, as we didn't want to give the impression we were mean or stripping out due to trying to be sustainable. Now we realise many more people want to know about it!





What do I say?

Be clear about the impression you want to create - with your sustainability policy, photos, text... From the following pages, choose one or two messages only that you think represent best how you want your customers to see you.



Fun/participation - What can I do?

What do I say?

Sustainability should not be boring! Help your customers to enjoy themselves and to experience 'hands on' what makes you unique.

Have you realised how much mainstream advertising makes fun of being sustainable? Sainsbury's Take an Old Bag Shopping, Seeds of Change "I am not a goody-goody pasta sauce, I am a yummy-yummy," and so on. Bottom line, sounding worthy is less likely to sell - you want to tell customers, not put them off.

Get your customers to participate in things they can relate to

Get customers to participate – doing is more fun than observing. The chance for a customer to pick their own lunch means that in their mind, it just tastes better. Develop a family quiz to explore and learn more about the places they visit, or a nature, town or city trail from your front door. Get them to participate in things they can relate to - you have seen how kitchens attract as much attention as stately rooms in historic homes - or even better, allowing children to use the dress up box in the servants' hall.



Better service - Make me feel special

What do I say?

Holidays are times to put yourself first, while business travellers will want you to get things right quickly. Some aspects of sustainability can help.

Sustainability text can sound like apologies or jargon. Instead, 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 features or attributes. Write about sustainability as pampering, as having something unique, about looking after your customer.

"You can see things nobody else does" is likely to sell, but find a way of showing that the place is still looked after, the "feel good factor." The message "fresh, unadulterated, honest food that makes holidaying memorable" is more likely to sell than "food miles and supporting the local economy." It's both what you say and how you say it that matters.

Put the customer at the centre of the experience - what's in it for them?



The Twiggles say: be green



Simon
Egan



Signs around
BeWILDerwood

Introducing: Simon Egan

BeWILDerwood is a family adventure park in Norfolk. We have created up to 70 local jobs, we recycle 87% of both our own and the waste of our 160,000 annual visitors. We've brought environmental management to a previously unmanaged woodland, planting over 14,000 trees to provide materials and encourage biodiversity.

What we do: Bright colours and child friendly signage make recycling, non smoking and caring for your environment fun. There's none of the earnest, goodie-goodie speak here, it's about enjoying a day out in one of the top UK adventure parks - that just happens to be as sustainable as you can get. Everything we do is instinctive and by communicating fun, we get customers to engage

in our environmentally sensitive messages which otherwise may well get missed.

Our top tip: Make it fun and get customers to participate. Worthy messages are unlikely to get you very far and are likely to get you attention for all the things you still don't do. Keeping it humorous and entertaining must be the best way to encourage customers to change their behaviour.

What do I say?



Empathy - We think alike

The message here is to emphasise the personal connection between host and guest - "We are people like you, we have the same values, that's why you'll enjoy being here."

You are showing a personal connection, not a bland corporate directive. Say it in words - and with the more informal tone, pictures that show the fun element of your place and contents of your website. Write in the first person, include a photo of yourself as host, explain more about the surroundings - 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?

You can use sustainability messages to assure customers that you are a quality business. Displaying your many awards and quality gradings - 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.

What do I say?



Primrose Valley Hotel's website (Cornwall)

communicates environmental values differently, starting with the message "We tried to pretend, but it just didn't work. We pretended that all the water, energy and fuel we use replenishes itself by magic. We also tried pretending that all the carbon we kick out rises skywards then miraculously turns into refreshing, life-giving showers. Obviously we were wrong, so now we don't pretend any more..." They then go on to show all the work they do for sustainability.



Common mistakes

What do I say?

Customers often think green businesses just want to save money and provide less comfort. The way you write could contribute to that impression.

The corporate market is likely to welcome evidence of lower CO2 emissions for both their conferences and business travel, as many companies have commitments to purchasing services from greener suppliers in their corporate social responsibility statements.

But for the leisure market you don't need to use the words "sustainability" or "green" in your marketing, just as you don't always say quality or luxury in those words – find more subtle ways of putting the message across that are meaningful to them.

Too many messages aim at making customers feel vaguely warm inside, or less guilty about their travel or day out. Others come across as an apology (we had to do it - but it won't affect you) or a sacrifice (you need to be tough to be green). These won't create trust.

But most typically businesses either don't say what they are doing or present it with a complete lack of imagination in a place that is separate from other communications – as if sustainability was an afterthought.

Am I greenwashing?

- Before you shout about your great actions, make sure there are no obvious mistakes.

- You'll find that your credentials will be taken as greenwashing if you also use non-recyclable plastic cups and throwaway crockery, or have an outdoor patio heater turned on when it is really not needed, for example. Don't try to promote your sustainable policy printed on chlorinated bleached paper.

- Futerra's The Greenwash Guide will help www.futerra.co.uk/downloads/Greenwash_Guide.pdf





Where do I tell?

Integrate sustainability as part of quality through the channels you already use. Use certification and awards to get recognition, and the internet to spread the word.





Where do I tell?

Certification

Certification is a great place to start - you get help to put your house in order and its endorsement should give you confidence to tell others about what you do - now use it as a marketing tool

Companies get certified partly to gain a marketing advantage, expecting that being certified lifts them above some of their competitors - and yet they report that customer awareness is low.

At the end of the day certification won't market you, it's still your role to know how and where to display certificates and logos, and more importantly what they mean and why you gained them.

Gaining a sustainable tourism certification gives customers an independent guarantee of your credentials. It helps with confidence and credibility. Now you have the independent

recognition of your sustainability performance, you should explain what you do with confidence.

Do you communicate your certification logo and what you did to achieve it?

- 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

The accommodation and attractions search engines at the suite of Enjoy England and VisitBritain websites, and also some regional tourism sites, highlight companies certified by approved sustainability schemes on the search results page. Validated schemes aim to provide clarity to industry and confidence to customers.

www.enjoyengland.com/stay/



Awards

Only a few companies win awards. You could spend much time on it without any results and you will need to show something unique and extraordinary.

But if you do win an award, use it to create a sense of confidence and trust in your quality. The good news is that submitting your company for awards doesn't cost you and the recognition lasts much longer. For starters try the regional tourist boards' annual awards, which include one for sustainable tourism, with the gold winners going forward to the national Enjoy England Awards for Excellence www.enjoyengland.com/excellence

Langdale Hotel and Spa

At the annual Cumbria Tourism awards ceremony held in May 2009, the **Langdale Hotel and Spa** was named Sustainable Hotel of the Year. The hotel made the most of this with an immediate press release and the logo for this award is now used as the entry link to the Sustainable Langdale info on their website's homepage.



Pines Calyx

"The first sustainable conference centre in the UK" is the bold statement put forward by the **Pines Calyx** in Kent. They use their numerous awards to support these claims and also to raise their profile and continuously give reasons to engage the media. These awards are also used to attract further clients, particularly as a conference and meetings venue.

Where do I tell?



Press

We see interesting stories in the travel pages every week - how can you get your business featured there? By having something different to tell.

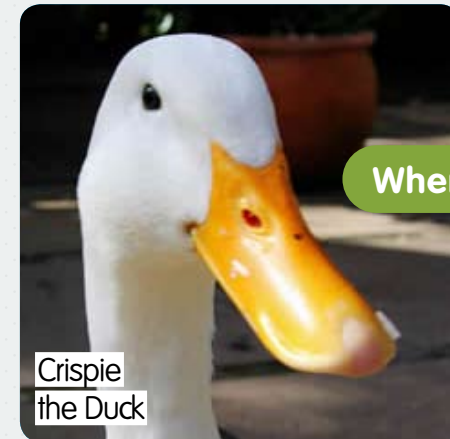
Travel editors get bombarded with very similar mailings, claiming to be sustainable. Their question? "What makes you different, in a way that my customers will want to read about you?"

Press coverage you've achieved should not be lost - make links to it

VisitEngland research says 21% of customers have taken a holiday or break recommended in a newspaper or magazine.

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.

A quote from a national publication could have more impact than a certification scheme that has a lower awareness level.



Where do I tell?

The Mill at Gordleton

(Hampshire) Quirky and unusual? Being an individual has paid off for the hotel **The Mill at Gordleton**. They have taken many actions to be sustainable, but what the press liked was their pet Crispie the Duck, an orphan they adopted and is now the hotel's mascot.

The owner Liz Cottingham has now created a photo calendar, children's book and doorstops inspired by Crispie - with profits from the book, for example, going to a local children's cancer ward.



Your website

All too often a missed opportunity. Let me feel you mean it, show me what's good about what you do, keep it up to date.

You typically have all your sustainability information on a single page, probably called sustainability policy. Mostly we see dull lists of water, waste and energy actions, written in management speak – I'm hardly going to pick up the phone because I'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.

The aspects of sustainability that directly relate to quality, as customers would perceive it, need to be incorporated throughout the website. Describe a quieter and warmer (better insulated, biomass fuelled heating) bedroom, a tastier (locally sourced) menu, a more personally and uniquely designed (with local crafts) hotel...

Where do I tell?

Sustainability: think big

The Crown Spa Hotel (North Yorkshire) go well beyond an ordinary environmental policy.

Their corporate social responsibility web page is now their 9th most popular and includes policies and practices for Access for All, Lone Female Guest Awareness, Environmental Sustainability, Cultural Sustainability, Community Support, Social Sustainability, Hotel Sustainable Improvement & Development, Our Vision, Aims and Professional Conduct, and Privacy.



Each market needs different communication methods

Where do I tell?

Compare these two websites speaking about sustainability very differently. Each has understood their market and has presented their sustainability in context.



Alison Howell's Foot Trails walking holidays (Wiltshire)

Relaxing, indulgent and authentic - and a touch of class if we may say so, the glossy magazine quality photos, the soft colours, the uncluttered style of site, more complex vocabulary and longer sentences, all tell us about a more sophisticated customer.

www.foottrails.co.uk



Beechenhill Farm B&B (Staffordshire)

Informal yet informative, it speaks to families with its photos, drawings and casual writing. It gives the sense that being sustainable is fun and hands on, and that it is accessible to you.

www.beechenhill.co.uk/



Social media

Like it or not, this is a digital world. So get used to blogging, Twitter, Facebook and other social networks to tell others what you are up to - eventually you will find these quite addictive!

If you have something interesting to say you will develop followers

If you have something interesting to say and you are internet savvy, you will develop a group of followers. Many social media sites are free and your local tourism partnership is likely to run or know about training available in your area.

Skelwith Fold Caravan site

Skelwith Fold Caravan site in Cumbria has taken customer engagement a step further with Skelwith Fold TV and their Flickr sites, where they have been collecting photos and videos taken by customers over the years.

These don't explicitly say that the company behind the site is sustainable, but they do tell customers that they must take care of the property and surroundings, for there are so many beautifully kept places there. It also shows a high level of customer loyalty for their online participation - see it at: www.skelwith.com/ and www.flickr.com/groups/1064684@N25/



Where do I tell?



Marketing through other channels

Where do I tell?

You will find there are an increasing number of channels to promote through. Your sustainability credentials are of value to both the channels that specialise in sustainability travel and those that don't.

For now, It's time to make yourself stand out a little

While the number of websites promoting sustainable properties is growing, the market is still small. For now, it's the channels you already use where your sustainability information will be more useful - you already know how these channels work and now it's time to make yourself stand out a little.

If you are in Alastair Sawday's Special Places to Stay, or the Good Hotel Guide, you should say that on your website – it's unlikely you'll lose customers to these other websites; statistics show that most customers prefer to book direct anyway. But showing you are listed gives yet another reassurance that you are credible.

Greentraveller.co.uk

is a website that features green accommodation and holidays that can be reached by train. The selection criteria are Energy; Waste; Water; Food; and Public Transport.

Greentraveller distinguishes between companies merely meeting a standard degree of action (such as recycling,

installing low energy light bulbs and fair trade tea and coffee), from those companies that have introduced significant change - e.g. alternative energy supplies, discounts for guests arriving by public transport, or deciding to move away from carbon-intensive activities e.g. "we used to offer 4x4 tours, but now we organise walking tours."

In addition, it considers an award from a recognised certification scheme, such as the Green Tourism Business Scheme, to be a valuable indication of a business' commitment to environmental responsibilities.



Check what others write about you

Where do I tell?

It's not only what you say, but how you say it... so do your entries on tourist board websites or destination guides actually do you proud? Research shows that the photo, name and first sentence of your text are the most typical reasons to click through. But then you need to make sure that your text is attractive too!

Compare these two extremes for a hotel, one written on their website, the other on a third party site. When third parties write about your hotel, try to give them something a bit more exciting to say!

WHAT TO DO!

- "All of us are very proud of the fact that we make everything here ourselves, from jams and honey to bread and soups..." is telling us something about your values and it's speaking to the customer - without having to say "hey, I am sustainable" in that many words. Talking in terms of "you" and "we" rather than the third person also helps.

WHAT NOT TO DO!

- "Hotel X will take environmental considerations into account in all its activities. Although ultimate responsibility rests with management, all staff have a part to play in minimising adverse effects on the environment. To that end Hotel X will promote the best use of environmental practices. Hotel X will develop and resource programmes for the implementation of its Environmental Policy and will monitor and audit them through an environmental management system."





When do I tell?

You actually market your company all the time. So think about the many different stages you can communicate and how what you say helps customers take decisions at that point.



Prior to booking/purchase

Tell customers why they should buy from you. Explain why your product is better value, better quality, or simply a more appealing proposition, because of the sustainability work you do.



		small	medium	large
2	Americano	£1.80	£2.00	£2.20
130	Cappuccino	£2.00	£2.20	£2.50
162	Caffè latte	£2.10	£2.40	£2.60
265	Caffè mocha	£2.30	£2.60	£2.80
29	Tea	£1.40	£1.70	£1.90
25	Latte	£1.90	£2.20	£2.40
	single		double	
	resale	£1.80	£1.80	

Customers need information to help them make decisions. This may be the number of calories in a cup of tea compared to a skinny latte, but it could also be public transport deals or the CO2 emissions of their journey.

For example, hotel chains are starting to calculate the environmental cost of business meetings, to promote themselves as lower carbon than competitors. Hotels also need to tell customers how to get there with low CO2 and importantly what to do there without a car.

Camden food co.

(large train stations nationwide) not only tell you about their organic and fair trade coffees and teas, but list the drinks' calories next to the price, in equally large letters. This is consistent with the brand's ethos of "eating right on the move."

Travel to Harewood House

(Yorkshire) by bus and get in for half price, says their website on the Location page, together with providing bus routes. Information is provided where it can help visitors to take decisions - much better than providing this on a Sustainability/Environment page.

When do I tell?



Drink for England!

Over 1000 pubs are involved in CAMRA's LocAle scheme and sell locally-brewed real ale, reducing 'beer miles.' Pump clips, stickers and posters used by the pubs raise awareness so it's obvious to the customer on entering the pub and placing an order. LocAle accredited pubs stock at least one local real ale, brewed normally less than thirty miles away. LocAle has succeeded in Making consumers more aware of local industries such as brewing.



Between booking and arriving

When do I tell?

Tell your customer how to prepare for their visit - what to bring, what is acceptable behaviour, dress code (if relevant), how to respect other users that will be there.

This is the time to do something to make travel to you more environmentally friendly - provide information on public transport timetables and destinations, the Traveline website or phone service, how as a business you will find public transport times for your visitors, having a list of car-free things to do in the property itself or nearby...

Equally if you can source local goods 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.

On arrival

There are no second chances to make a first impression. Will your reception area send the message of wasteful lighting and heat pumped out of the front door?

There are no second chances to make a first impression

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.

If you have large numbers of customers, you may only be able to display your sustainability policy and a page saying "What we have just done to be more sustainable" to show this is an

ongoing, day to day policy.

Smaller businesses, like self-catering

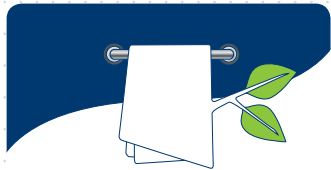
properties, get to talk to customers one to one and it's on arrival they get a chance to share their values while showing guests to their accommodation and explaining how different aspects work e.g. utilities, heating and so on. You need to think what works for your business.



Be more honest if you want to be trusted



Patricia
Cortijo



Here,
YOUR towels
plant trees

Introducing: Patricia Cortijo

Accor implements customer facing communications on sustainability based on the actions taken - not generic statements.

What we do: 3,500 hotels across the chain implement the actions of the Accor Hotels Environment Charter, but they only communicate their commitments to their clients when they have reached a minimum number of actions. At this point, they can either use a generic poster displayed in the lobby area, or print one highlighting the specific things they do.

Accor has also changed traditional communications like towel agreements, to now explain that 50% of the savings will be invested in carefully chosen reforestation programmes.

Our top tip: Be transparent and factual, customers appreciate it. And don't start communicating until you have reached a certain point in implementing.



When do I tell?



During the stay/visit

When do I tell?

This is your chance to communicate by showing what you do. Decide how much you want the communication to affect the customer experience, or whether it is just in the background.

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, in the

We promote cycle hire and have a Lancaster London Jogging map

shower, notes about reduced water consumption, by the bedroom entrance, a note about what could be done with the electricity from leaving the lights on).

Most sustainability actions at the 4 star **Lancaster London hotel** are behind the scenes, so they make sure the concierge has information that will be of use to the customer. They work with limo & taxi companies using hybrid vehicles, promote cycle hire and have a Lancaster London Jogging map, amongst others.

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 print two lists:

- "these are the things you can see" - our honey tastes better because it's local, we serve water filtered for free to save on glass transport and waste, our clever lights come on automatically when needed, with your help we raised £500 for our local wildlife club...

- "and these are the things you can't" - we have saved enough oil/gas/electricity to do x, we have saved enough water to do x, we reduced our carbon emissions by x...



From packaging to people

The sustainability message and medium used depends on how sensitive the issues are and how receptive your market is.



The Venus Company (Devon and Cornwall) thinks about their impact on the environment, but also the impact on customers' taste buds and eyes. They use food to tell a story - of where the food comes from and how it's good for you. They use over 40 organic products, source locally and tell customers about it. Not in a tacky in your face way, but as part of reinforcing the message that you can enjoy being on holiday.



Packaging

They communicate "sustainability" everywhere - all their packaging talks about toxic free chemicals and hydrogenated fat amongst others. They pay a price premium but also make sure they have better packaging and their volumes means they can have it printed at a price they can absorb - you can't communicate you are green when the medium you use isn't.



They use over 40 organic products, source locally and tell customers



When do I tell?

Staff at
Dr B's

Dr B's (Harrogate) is a busy restaurant and outside catering business run by Barnardo's. It trains people aged 14 to 25 to equip them with the skills, knowledge and experience necessary for them to enter the world of work. It is run as a commercial restaurant, with the clue to its real identity in the black and white professional photo canvases of the trainees on the walls. The restaurant felt uncomfortable with explaining their ethos in words because it deals with delicate issues, while images communicate in a way that is subtle and tasteful.



After the stay/visit

When do I tell?

Stay in touch with your customers. Speaking about sustainability will be more welcomed than a direct promotional message saying “book with us again.”

If your customers saw you plant trees, tell them how they are growing. If you had pictures from a local school, tell customers how you are now speaking with other schools and how these children are learning from what they saw with you.

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.

If you had pictures from a local school, tell customers how you are now speaking to other schools



Say it with flowers



Rachel
Turner



Malkin's
pressing flowers

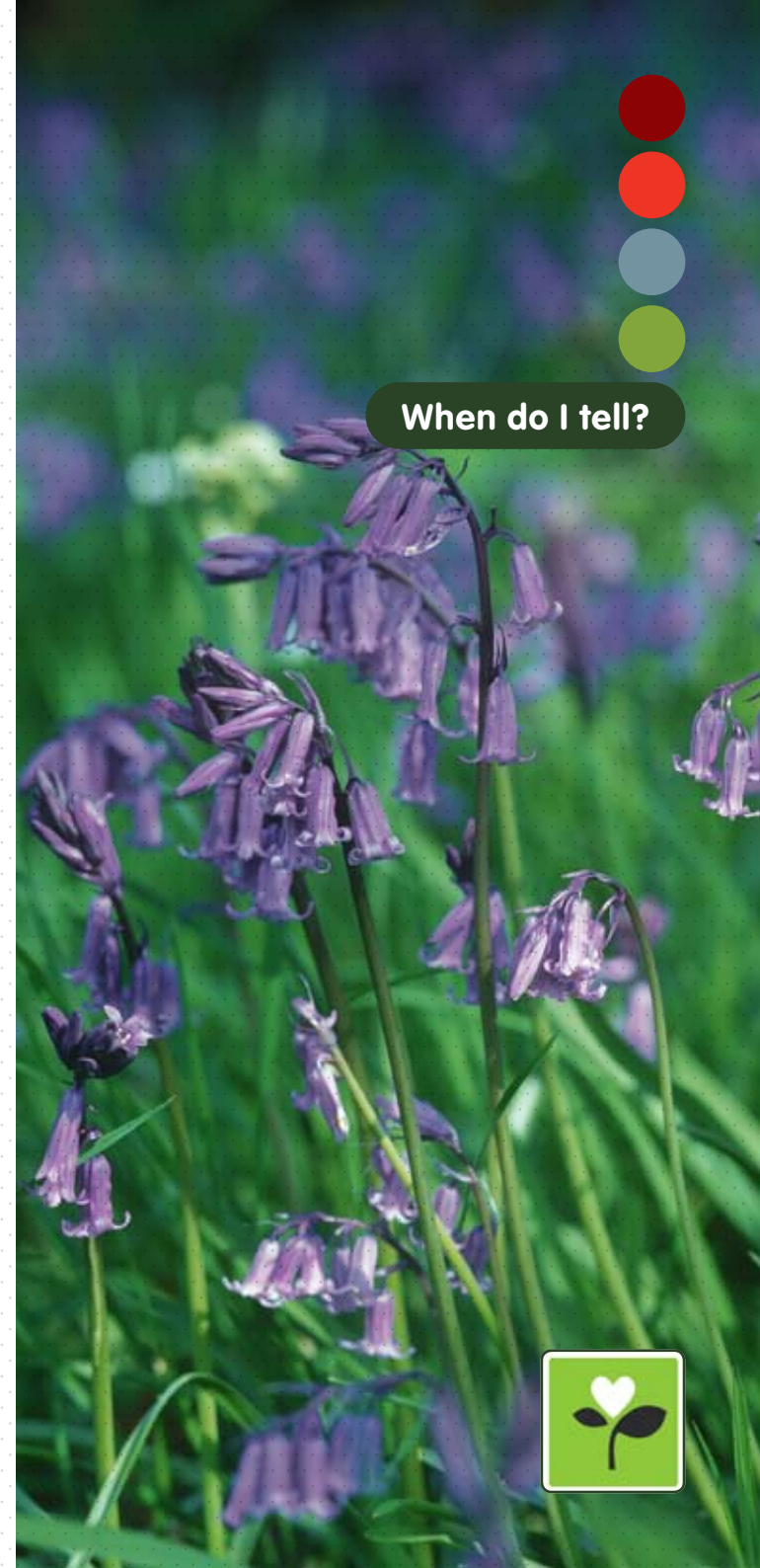
Introducing: Rachel Turner

Families love pressing flowers with us at the end of the summer season at Malkin Tower Farm Holiday Cottages (Lancashire).

What we do: We identify, collect and press flowers with families - much as we did with our own children. We keep them pressed in the cottage and once ready we post them as a memento of their holiday. Usually this contributes to that family reminiscing about their time with us and often leads to a further booking.

Our top tip: Think differently about how you can care for the customers that are most important to you - this is more time intensive, but will be more meaningful and effective than a mailshot or newsletter.

When do I tell?



Time for action!

What will you do differently after reading this toolkit? Download this table.

	What are you already doing?	What do you want to do?	What do you need to achieve it?
Who do I tell? Choose one type of customer at a time - they are all interested in different things.			
Why am I telling? Choose one main reason			
What do I say? Make sure the customer will appreciate what you tell them - make it interesting, easy to hear, easy to act on			
Where do I tell? Aiming to sell directly, if you can to repeat customers, with stories that engage, backed with facts.			
When do I tell? Probably on several occasions, making sure the message is consistent			



Supported by

This toolkit has been produced in association with the following organisations.



[Read more >](#)





East of England Tourism

Our vision is for the East of England to be the 'region of choice for the discerning visitor.' We aim to lead the growth of a sustainable visitor economy in the six counties of Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk.

Visit: www.eet.org.uk and www.visiteastofengland.com

east midlands **tourism**



East Midland Tourism

East Midlands Tourism (EMT) is the tourism arm of East Midlands Development Agency (emda). Its role is to oversee delivery of emda's tourism strategy - Destination East Midlands, allocate funding and measure the successful delivery of key targets, as well as contribute to national priorities.

Visit: www.eastmidlandstourism.co.uk and www.enjoyenglandseastmidlands.com/





Heart of England

The Heart of England – The West Midlands Region covers Birmingham, The Black Country, Staffordshire, Shropshire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Warwickshire. With iconic English connections such as Shakespeare, Wedgwood, Ironbridge Gorge, Darwin, JRR Tolkien, Bass and Cadbury to name but a few, it's the real heart of the country – an unmissable and accessible region.

Visit: www.visittheheart.co.uk



London Development Agency

The London Development Agency works to improve the quality of life for all Londoners and encourage economic growth in the capital. We pioneer initiatives to tackle London's challenges, unlock the potential of all Londoners and ensure London remains a global success story. The Mayor of London has made the London Development Agency responsible for tourism development in London. This includes delivering quality visitor information services, improving the visitor welcome for all, and marketing and promoting London as a world class city (via our delivery partner Visit London).

Visit: www.lda.gov.uk and www.visitlondon.com





North West Development Agency

The Northwest Regional Development Agency is the strategic lead for tourism in the Northwest of England and is responsible for setting direction, allocating resources, managing relationships with, and supporting the five sub-regional Tourist Boards - Cumbria Tourism, Lancashire and Blackpool Tourist Board, The Mersey Partnership, Visit Chester and Cheshire and Visit Manchester.

Visit: www.nwtourism.net/ and www.visitenglandsnorthwest.com/

Supported by



One North East

One North East is the Regional Development Agency for North East England. Our primary aim is to grow the economy of the region in a way that makes it sustainable and competitive for the future.

Visit: www.tourismnortheast.co.uk/ and www.visitnortheastengland.com/





South West Tourism

South West Tourism is the strategic organisation for tourism in South West England. It works with partners in Bath, Bournemouth & Poole, Bristol, Cornwall, Cotswolds & Forest of Dean, Devon, Dorset, Somerset, and Wiltshire, to stimulate and manage the sustainable success of tourism, in line with the Regional Tourism Strategy.

Visit: www.swtourism.org.uk and www.visitsouthwestengland.com/

TOURISM SOUTH EAST

Tourism South East

Tourism South East is a not-for-profit company and the official tourist board for the South East region covering Surrey, Kent, East and West Sussex, Hampshire, the Isle of Wight, Buckinghamshire, Berkshire and Oxfordshire. Tourism is worth in excess of £12bn p.a. to the regional economy (7% of regional GVA), and supports over 300,000 jobs.

Visit: www.tourismsoutheast.com and www.visitsoutheastengland.com/





VisitEngland

VisitEngland is the official tourism body for England. Its role is to work in partnership with government and industry, creating a national tourism strategy, optimising marketing investment and developing the visitor experience across England. Enjoy England is the consumer-facing brand used in the domestic market.

Visit: www.visitengland.org and www.enjoyengland.com

Welcome to **Yorkshire** yorkshire.com

Welcome to Yorkshire

Welcome to Yorkshire is the official tourism body for Yorkshire, working to grow the region's visitor economy sustainably, through major marketing initiatives, high profile PR campaigns and business support.

Visit: www.welcometoyorkshire.net and www.yorkshire.com



Thank you...

to the businesses and organisations that provided information for this document.

Accor Hotels
www.accorhotels.com

Alison Howell's Foot Trails
www.foottrails.co.uk

Battlesteads Country Inn & Restaurant
www.battlesteads.com

Bedruthan Steps Hotel
www.bedruthan.com

Beechenhill Farm B&B and Cottages
www.beechenhill.co.uk

BeWILDerwood Adventure Park
www.bewilderwood.co.uk

Campaign for Real Ale
www.camra.org.uk/

Camden Food co
www.camdenfoodco.com

Careys Manor Hotel & SenSpa
www.careysmanor.com

Crown Spa Hotel
www.crownspahotel.com/

Deepdale Farm
www.deepdalefarm.co.uk

Dr B's
www.barnardos.org.uk/drbsbarrogate.htm

Futerra
www.futerra.co.uk/downloads/Greenwash_Guide.pdf

Greentraveller
www.greentraveller.co.uk

Harewood House
www.harewood.org

Lancaster London
www.lancasterlondon.com

Langdale Hotel and Spa
www.langdale.co.uk

Malkin Tower Farm Holiday Cottages
www.malkintowerfarm.co.uk

Old Chapel Forge B&B
www.oldchapelforge.co.uk

Palace Hotel Manchester
www.palace-hotel-manchester.co.uk

Pines Calyx
www.pinescalyx.co.uk

Primrose Valley Hotel
www.primroseonline.co.uk

Skelwith Fold Caravan site
www.skelwith.com

The Highwayman Inn
www.highwaymaninn.co.uk

The Hytte Self Catering Cottage
www.thehytte.com

The Mill at Gordleton Hotel
www.themillatgordleton.co.uk

The Venus Company
www.venuscompany.co.uk

Walk Awhile
www.walkawhile.co.uk

Credits

Commissioned and produced by VisitEngland and its regional tourism partners

Written by Dr Xavier Font, International Centre for Responsible Tourism

Reference:

VisitEngland (2010) Keep it real – market and communicate your credentials, London: VisitEngland and England's Regional Sustainable Tourism Leads Group

Help!

Before marketing you need to get your house in order. Green Start is available, at no cost, to all tourism businesses interested in understanding how they can embed sustainability as part of the normal activities. It has been designed to help businesses review their performance and illustrate how sustainable practice can save money, encourage greater efficiency and begin a journey of doing business even better

www.better-tourism.org

