



Part 5: Saving Money & Sustainability



Image courtesy of Gary Pearson & Norfolk County Council

Rural Tourism Business Toolkit

About this toolkit

This .pdf is the fifth part of a fully featured resource packed full with useful information and advice for new and existing rural tourism businesses. It is designed to help with business evaluation, market identification, development of effective communication and marketing strategies, and is intended to encourage initiatives that offer great visitor experiences whilst nurturing the environments that create them.

This toolkit has been created as part of the COOL Tourism Project by the COOL Partnership and tourism development charity Hidden Britain.

The COOL Tourism Project

The COOL Tourism Project is a European partnership of 11 local authorities and organisations, based in the east and south of England and in the north of France, who are working together to help each other compete effectively in the global tourism market.

COOL Tourism aims to address the need for market research, product development and business support in the partners' areas, and to encourage rural tourism businesses to make use of the rural areas' environmental assets and local distinctiveness to attract visitors.

The project is being delivered with the support of the European cross-border co-operation Programme INTERREG IV A, France (Channel) – England, co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund.

The project partners include; Norfolk County Council, Essex County Council (Visit Essex), Kent County Council (Explore Kent), Visit Kent, Somerset County Council, West Somerset Council, Sedgemoor District Council, Exmoor National Park Authority, Pas-de-Calais Tourisme, Somme Tourisme, and Pas-de-Calais Gîtes de France.





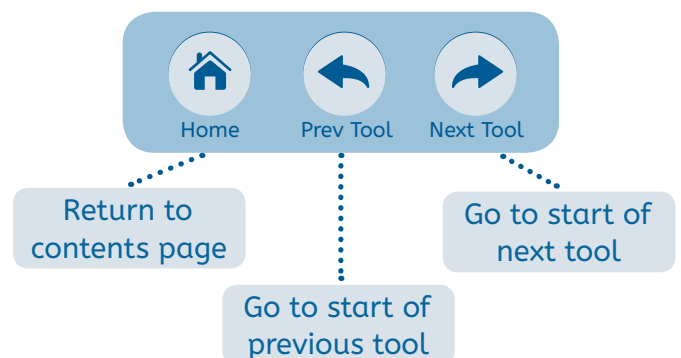
Contents

Introduction	Page 4	Go
Addressing seasonality	Page 5	Go
Making savings on energy	Page 6	Go
Making savings on waste	Page 8	Go
Making savings on water	Page 9	Go
Calculating carbon emissions	Page 10	Go
Green accreditation	Page 11	Go
Adapting to climate change	Page 15	Go
Quality and welcome	Page 16	Go
Sourcing and buying	Page 19	Go
Training	Page 21	Go
FAQs	Page 23	Go

How to use this Toolkit

This toolkit has been designed to allow you to dip in and select the tools you need.

You'll find navigation buttons on every page to help move back and forward between the tools and you can easily return here to the contents page by clicking the **"home"** button at any time.





Home



Prev Tool



Next Tool

Future-proofing your business

We are in an ever changing world, therefore being prepared and having the flexibility to adapt is vital for the long-term sustainability of any business. Maximising your profitability year-round and keeping your costs down are the two best routes to future-proofing your business.

Sustainability

Sustainability isn't just about the environment, it is about doing business better. The benefits are clear: saving money, reducing business risk, increasing profitability and accessing an increasing market of customers who have an interest in authentic experiences. It's also not something you should be shy about communicating. Your achievements add another string to your bow and can set you apart from your competitors.

Thinking about climate change

Our climate has changed and continues to change. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) made the following key findings for the tourism sector:

1. The sector is exposed to numerous direct and indirect impacts from climate change.
2. Adaptation options exist, but many are likely to add costs and offer only short-term relief.
3. The contribution of tourism to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions is rising.
4. There is uncertainty about how tourists will respond to the effects of climate change.

How we address these challenges is a key part of being sustainable, as is taking advantage of the opportunities that arise.

Where you should be before you begin

Before you use any of the information and tools in this section, we would suggest you have an understanding of the following:

- Clear objectives for your business
What you need and are looking to achieve
- A clear understanding of your target audiences
Who they are, where they are and what they want

If you're unsure on any of the above, check out **Part one of the Toolkit - Getting Started**.

Disclaimer

This toolkit is an in-depth resource but it cannot address every specific need. Therefore feel free to tailor the guidance or use it as a starting point to research further for your own business.

Also remember - things change, websites disappear and new trends arrive, use this toolkit alongside your own research to ensure you are right up to date...



Building a year-round offer

Although many tourism businesses can operate all year round, there are always opportunities for extending the seasons, targeting additional market sectors and addressing the quieter periods.

Ideas to consider

- Provide some wet-weather ideas – create a list of things to do on a rainy day. Cornwall has done this: www.bodminlive.com/xsdbimngs/Rainy_day_activities_in_cornwall.pdf
- Create some seasonal specials – e.g. an autumn package that includes suggestions of where to go to see the autumn colours at their best, or an early spring package that includes places to see the snowdrops,
- With the ever-increasing proliferation of artificial lighting it's becoming more difficult to experience 'dark skies' and see the stars. Provide guidance to your visitors on what to look for or set up dedicated star watching evenings
- Weather-watching - wearing the right gear, storm-watching can be thoroughly invigorating!
- Wildlife and birdwatching is a year-round activity and in many cases may even be more interesting in autumn, winter and spring. Try creating a wildlife calendar and spotters' guide for your visitors.
- Look at different market sectors – e.g. business travel. Are there businesses in your area you can promote your accommodation or restaurant to? Local conference venues can be another source of overnight visitors as can educational establishments.
- Getting together with other businesses that attract customers off season in the area can provide lots of opportunities for joint marketing efforts (e.g. join up with sports clubs for supporters)
- Seasonal events can provide the stimulus for a visit. Look for opportunities to do something out of the ordinary. Xmas cooking courses or pumpkin carving workshops can all be attractive.
- Don't neglect outdoor activity. Given advance notice you can even get people cold and muddy (check out [mud running](#)) or soaking wet (doesn't matter in a wetsuit!)
- Use off-season periods to trial new services e.g. brewing classes, and offer them as special packages with a discount.
- Consider offering volunteering opportunities to help maintain or preserve sites in the off season. You'll be surprised by the numbers who will come in all weathers to maintain hedgerows...



The Star Inn

The Star Inn

Case Study

A CAMRA award-winning village pub in Talybont-on-Usk in the Brecon Beacons. The Star works with others locally to put on star-gazing nights with night photography workshops, expert talks and star-gazing from the pub garden.

[Find out more](#)

Making savings on energy



Home



Prev Tool



Next Tool

Sustainable savings on your utilities

Energy use – heating, lighting, running electrical appliances and running your vehicle/s – is probably one of your greatest areas of expenditure and it will continue to account for a growing proportion of your overhead. But with energy prices rising and our increasing impact on the environment, it really is the responsibility of us all to reduce usage.

As well as cutting your running costs there is the additional benefit of conserving resources and reducing carbon emissions.

Ideas to consider

- Don't leave appliances on standby – they'll still be using up to 85% of running energy
- Switch to low-energy light bulbs
- Switch off appliances and lights when not in use
- Use sensors or timers to control lighting
- Limit the use of tumble dryers – one of the biggest users of energy. Line dry instead
- Use A-rated energy-efficient appliances and boilers
- Install individual room heating (and cooling) controls
- Consider positioning and maintenance of fridges and freezers – e.g. ensure seals are tight
- Provide small kettles in bedrooms – where visitors can make drinks for one/two people
- Invest in an energy monitor enabling you to identify sources of highest energy use.
- Compare your bills year on year to see savings achieved throughout the seasons.

Further help & advice

There's obviously much more you can do, from draught proofing to installing cavity-wall and loft insulation. We recommend that you get advice on this – especially if you're in an old building – and fortunately there's plenty of advice available.

- Local authorities:
Many local authorities provide advice on energy saving and also provide information on any grant schemes and possible collective switching schemes.
- Energy Savings Trust: www.energysavingtrust.org.uk
Provides useful guidance on how you can change your energy using habits room by room & also busts a number of energy-saving myths
- Green Tourism Business Scheme: www.green-tourism.com
An extensive source of energy saving ideas is part of the criteria for the scheme and provides a really useful framework within which you can put in motion your energy-saving plan.





Making savings on energy



Home



Prev Tool



Next Tool

Renewable energy

Simply put, renewable energy comes from sources that are not going to run out, such as the sun and wind. It is clean energy which does not produce harmful greenhouse gases which contribute to adverse climate change. Generating your own renewable energy is a great way to reduce your emissions and energy costs. It also makes your energy supply more secure and gives you some protection from price changes.

Renewable energy technologies can be split into two categories, although some technologies can provide both:

Type	Electrical Energy Generation	Heat Generation
Examples	Solar photovoltaic Wind turbines Hydro power	Solar thermal Air-and-ground source heat pumps Biomass
	Combined Heat & Power (CHP) systems Anaerobic digestion	

Renewable energy systems can be installed to serve individual homes and businesses as well as community sites and districts (or 'clusters'). The Renewable Heat Incentive is a government financial incentive that has two streams of funding – one for households and one for commercial premises, including small and large businesses and organisations with district heating schemes.

You really should give a lot of thought as to which renewable energy system is most relevant to your site; think about:

- Your budget and resources (although grants may be available)
- Your aspect and positioning
- Your landscape and surroundings

Bear in mind that if you are located within a National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, this may influence your choice of technology. For example, some protected landscapes have policies on wind turbines.

Further help & advice

- Your local authority
Many councils provide extensive advice and grants to support installation.
- The Energy Savings Trust – www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/Generating-energy offers a 'Renewable Selector' to find out which technologies best suit your circumstances. They also explain the Feed-In Tariffs, which help you make money from generating your own electricity.

Making savings on waste



Home



Prev Tool



Next Tool

Prevent, Reduce, Re-use and Recycle

Waste is a major concern both in terms of cost and environmental impact. We need to take the life-cycle approach to managing waste which starts with how we source and buy a product (how is it made and how is it distributed?), how we use it, through to how we dispose of it.

Preventing waste will ultimately reduce the need for materials and limit the amount of greenhouse gases released throughout its life cycle. Minimising the amount of waste that ends up in landfill sites will help reduce negative environmental impacts.

Sources of waste

Within the tourism industry the biggest areas of waste to consider are:

- Food waste – from preparation and spoilage through to plate waste
- Packaging – from food and drink, cleaning materials and other products
- Water – from cleaning and grey-water waste
- Expended resources – batteries, textiles and electrical/IT equipment

Managing Waste

We can only manage waste effectively if we know what we are producing and why, so putting an effective waste management system in place should involve:

- 1** Measuring and monitoring the waste produced as a result of your business operations
- 2** Understanding and evaluating the costs involved with your current regime
- 3** Developing and implementing an action plan to deal with your waste and sharing it with your employees and suppliers
- 4** Undertaking ongoing measurement and monitoring (e.g. each quarter or year on year)

Further help & advice

- Local Authorities will give you details of collections, recycling centres and schemes, and how to deal with garden and business waste.
- WRAP www.wrap.org.uk has produced a series of useful information sheets for the hospitality industry which give a step-by-step guide on taking action on waste.
- Recylenow www.recylenow.com/ Provides information on every type of waste you might produce and ideas on what to do with it.
- Environment Agency www.gov.uk/environmental-management/waste Provides details of the regulations concerning waste



Making savings on water



Home



Prev Tool



Next Tool

Conserving the stuff of life

There is a tremendous amount of pressure on our water supplies and even after a wet winter, we can still be in 'water deficit' – i.e. where the available water is less than the region's demand.

Implementing water conservation measures can encourage you to better manage how and when water is being used, ultimately leading to cost savings.

Ideas to consider

- Remind employees and visitors to save water (posters/pictures/signs above taps etc).
- Regularly check for leaks and dripping taps – and fix immediately!
- Fit water-saving devices. These devices can include flow restrictors, aerators, percussion (push) taps or limiters on water pipes.
- Install energy-saving taps (e.g. mixer taps) which deliver water at the temperature required.
- Use water-efficient washing machines and dish washers – e.g. A-rated or better.
- Install water-saving devices in your toilets or install low-flush versions or waterless urinals.
- Consider a rainwater harvesting system which collects rainwater for use in washing machines, to flush toilets etc.
- For the garden, install water butts to collect rainwater from the roofs and guttering. You can also install an irrigation system which could have any of the following features:
 - Use treated waste water
 - Timing devices fitted to minimise operating times
 - Moisture sensors fitted to ensure they water on demand
 - A system that delivers water to plants below soil level
- Consider grey-water recycling, a system which treats bath, shower or laundry water which can then be used to flush toilets, water the garden etc. (www.energysavingcommunity.co.uk/grey-water-recycling-systems.html)
- If you dispose of waste water into septic tanks use eco-friendly household cleaning materials and detergents to improve their efficiency.
- Use untreated bath and shower water for the garden, but consider the type of detergents used by you and your guests, and never use it on edible plants.

Further help & advice

- Your water supplier – will provide specific guidance for your area www.water-guide.org.uk
- The Energy Savings Trust – provides some great advice on how to make savings: www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/Heating-and-hot-water/Saving-money-on-water/
- Waterwise – focuses on water efficiency and also provides a water calculator. www.waterwise.org.uk/pages/water-saving-advice-and-tips.html

Calculating carbon emissions



Home



Prev Tool



Next Tool

Understanding your impact

Calculating carbon emissions is only mandatory for companies listed on the London Stock Exchange, although this will be extended to another 20,000 large companies in 2016. For the rest of us – small, medium and micro businesses – calculating our carbon emissions is voluntary. There are many reasons why you may want to do this:

- Being able to measure what you're producing
- Reducing costs associated with energy and resource use
- Differentiating your service from competitors,
- Engaging your staff
- Winning customers by meeting the demand for low-carbon products and services.

There are many tools available which can help you calculate your emissions; however we recommend selecting a tool that uses industry-accepted calculations such as; DEFRA emissions calculations and methodologies verified by international standards, such as the PAS 2050.

Carbon calculators

A carbon calculator works out your carbon footprint (emissions), typically based on emissions from energy used in heating and lighting buildings and transport. Some will also include water usage and waste. You can find many carbon calculators available to use online that can help you with your reporting, analysing your data and identifying areas where you can make reductions.

- DEFRA (Department for the Environment, Food & Rural Affairs) offers a web-based tool containing emission conversion factors for greenhouse gas reporting. www.ukconversionfactorscarbonsmart.co.uk
- National Energy Foundation Provide a free online Simple Carbon Calculator for energy and transport emissions, www.carbon-calculator.org.uk

Carbon calculators with offsets

Once you have an idea of your carbon emissions, you can choose to 'offset' your unavoidable emissions. This is done by giving the emissions a financial value and making a donation of that value to a project or charity that invests in a carbon reduction programme such as woodland planting or clean energy schemes.

- Carbon Neutral Company - www.carbonneutral.com
Their free online calculator can work out your footprint and for a fee offer in-depth support.
- Clear - www.clear-offset.com
Provides free carbon audit tools, including one specifically for businesses
- Pure Leapfrog - www.pureleapfrog.org
Provides free carbon audit tools, and was ranked the UK's top 'offsetter' in a survey by Which?



Accolades for your actions

It's increasingly reported that consumers are placing more and more emphasis on how environmentally conscious and socially minded a company is when making their decision to buy. One way of demonstrating your commitment to the market place is to apply for and implement sustainable or 'green' tourism accreditation or certification which independently verifies your sustainability credentials.

For businesses starting out on the road to making their business more sustainable, certification schemes can help:

- Identify actions to undertake
- With specific advice on implementing actions
- Give you a market advantage which can set you apart from your competitors



Having your sustainability activities and achievements certified is entirely voluntary. There are often costs involved, such as a joining fee, an annual membership and/or audit fee.

Which scheme is right for me?

There are now many such schemes operating within the global travel industry and you need to choose which one will work best for you. Some schemes are environmentally focused and do not cover wider social and economic issues, whilst others apply to specific industry sectors.

Another important consideration is whether the schemes are internally or externally certified or audited. It's safe to say that external or independent certification carries more weight.

Below we have summarised the main schemes you should know about:

Scheme	Who is it for?	Details
Green Tourism Business Scheme (GTBS)	Any tourism business including; accommodation, attractions, activity providers, food & beverage, retail etc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → 2000 members in UK, Ireland and Canada → One-off joining fee and an annual fee → Independently assessed by GTBS auditors → Assessment covers a wide range of criteria such as; management, marketing, environmental practices, purchasing and conservation → Gold, Silver and Bronze awards available depending on criteria reached

Website: www.green-tourism.com



Home



Prev Tool



Next Tool

Which scheme is right for me? (cont.)

Scheme	Who is it for?	Details
David Bellamy Conservation Award	Camping, caravanning and holiday park industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Awarded in recognition of work to protect and enhance Britain's natural environment. → Over 600 sites and parks have the award → One-off joining fee and an annual fee → Gold, Silver and Bronze awards available. → Members are assessed by a team of local wildlife experts → Assessment covers managing land as a haven for wildlife, reducing use of energy, water and resources, reducing waste and supporting local communities.
Website: www.bellamyparks.co.uk		

Scheme	Who is it for?	Details
Trip Advisor GreenLeaders programme	Accommodation providers - hotels and B&B's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Operates in 20 countries worldwide → Assessment of a business's 'green practices' → GreenLeaders badge awarded and prominently displayed on TA website → Online application with a survey → Bronze, Silver, Gold, and Platinum awarded. → Annual audits applied and can also be triggered by traveller feedback → Membership is free → Need to re-apply every two years
Website: www.tripadvisor.co.uk/GreenLeaders		

Scheme	Who is it for?	Details
EU Ecolabel	Devised for many different products and services, including holiday accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → The EU Ecolabel logo on a product or service is designed to show that it is less damaging to the environment . → Assessed on environmental criteria agreed by every EU Member State. → Assessed and managed in the UK by DEFRA → Initial set-up costs vary depending on the size of the company. → Annual fee to continue using the label.
Website: www.ec.europa.eu/environment/ecolabel		



Home



Prev Tool



Next Tool

Which scheme is right for me? (cont.)

Scheme	Who is it for?	Details
ISOs	Any business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Internationally recognised management system standards → Some specifically applicable to the tourism industry: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ISO 14000 - Environmental Management - ISO 20121 - Sustainable Events - ISO 26000 - Social Responsibility → Standard can be purchased online but requires a robust internal audit and supporting evidence → External assessment can be bought → Need to be annually assessed for compliance → Costs vary

Website: www.iso.org

Further help & advice

- VisitEngland provides information on sustainability certification and accreditation schemes www.visitengland.org/busdev/accreditation



Walleys Court

Walleys Court Hotel & Spa

Case Study

The team at Walleys spend every Saturday morning litter-picking the beach at St.Margaret's Bay of washed-up and dropped rubbish. They also offer guests the chance to join in and make a positive impact on the environment during their stay.

[Find out more](#)

Using Accreditation

Earning a quality assessment or accreditation mark that's relevant to your business is a reward for your efforts to do things right and to do them well and it's a valuable tool to leverage across your communications activity.

Consider the following:

- 1** Bring it to the forefront of your website and marketing (e.g. in your email footers and flyers)



Using accreditation (cont.)

- 2 Mention the accreditation directly as part of the description of your service IF it matters to your customers (not just as another logo added to your marketing)
- 3 On receipt and at renewal, create a press release that shows why the award is important for the experience you offer to visitors
- 4 Research specific audiences that care most about your award and target them (e.g. Green Tourism Business Scheme followers on Twitter)
- 5 Leverage your membership in these schemes, you may get discounts on business services like insurance so check your eligibility
- 6 Get support from the awarding organisation on how best to make the most of your status; they have as big an interest as you in promoting the award.
- 7 Include the award in social media and in particular review site profiles (e.g. accreditation logos on your TripAdvisor account can support better reviews)
- 8 Include the award information within your standard boilerplate information across all media releases

Communicating Accreditation

Whenever you use your accreditation in communications ensure you follow the basic steps in the checklist below:

Use official logos and imagery provided by the awarding organisation wherever relevant in your own material	<input type="checkbox"/>
Make sure your staff and volunteers know why the award is important and what value it adds to the service you provide	<input type="checkbox"/>

For more information on creating powerful marketing and communications, see **Part 2 of the toolkit - Communicating.**



Exmoor House

Exmoor House

Case Study

In 2008 Exmoor House was the first accommodation provider to gain GTBS Gold on Exmoor. Through their grading they have minimised waste, saved costs, and use the award to boost their sustainable reputation in their communications.

[Find out more](#)



Home



Prev Tool



Next Tool

Dealing with extreme events

Much of the guidance in part 5 is focused on planning to mitigate future trends. However increasingly we are seeing events, most particularly casued by extreme weather, happening with growing frequency. But what can and should you do in the face of such an event?

- 1 Assess the situation**
Ascertain how much the event has affected your business, whether you can stay open, but also whether your customers can reach you and also if the wider area is visitable and open.
- 2 Deal with current or imminent customers**
See to the needs of any current customers, offering them refunds or alternatives if necessary. You also need to contact any imminent customers, alerting them to the situation.
- 3 Deal with future impact on your business**
Take a clear look at your outgoings and income over any period you are likely to be affected and assess the best way forward (e.g. slowing payments or stopping booked advertising).

Getting the right message out

Place a clear and honest appraisal of the situation facing your business on your website so customers know exactly what is going on. Update this regularly as things change.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Work with others locally to put out a joint statement about the impacts and effects of the event. Use this as a core for your own communications keeping the message clear.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Share customer experiences of those who do come; this can be very powerful to counteract overblown media or wider perceptions of the actual impact	<input type="checkbox"/>
Focus on what's coming soon, use upcoming events, seasonal highlights and other hooks that will happen after the immediate crisis to provide positive points to talk about	<input type="checkbox"/>

Prepare to return to normal

Once you can see a definitive date for things returning to normal. Consider the following:

- Contact your customers directly (e-newsletters are good), thank them for their patience and invite them back
- Invite journalists down for a familiarisation trip to see the destination back on its feet
- Consider developing a Friends and Relatives campaign, harnessing support from local residents
- Plan something special to get attention and showcase what's great about where you are: a taster event, expert talks or hands-on experience days or even a special offer

Further help & advice

- www.visitengland.org/flood-response/guide/index.aspx
- www.climatesouthwest.org/tools/tourism

Quality and welcome



Home



Prev Tool



Next Tool

Being the best you can be

If you're providing an exceptional standard of service and high-quality facilities, you want to be recognised for that and to use that recognition to market yourself more effectively!

Independent verification can provide:

- Useful information to consumers about what you are providing
- Potential market advantage
- Ability to measure progress year-on-year
- Solid basis to plan the improvements
- Opportunities for learning and training and ways of further engaging your staff

Quality schemes and awards

Visit England provides an overview of the various schemes in operation within the UK

www.visitengland.org/busdev/accreditation/index.aspx

Quality in Tourism (QiT)	Entry Level Schemes	AA Rosettes
QiT acts as a regulatory body for the tourism industry and run the schemes for accommodations and visitor attractions as well as the National Accessibility Scheme.	VisitEngland oversees the implementation of the 'entry-level' scheme for destinations to operate their own local assessment scheme. This is not a star-rated scheme but rather ensures businesses remain legal, safe and clean.	In the restaurant sector, the AA runs the long-established Rosette scheme. Rosettes recognise successful cooking at different levels across the UK.
Find out more	Find out more	Find out more

Do bear in mind that fees apply to most of these schemes.



SDAF

Case Study

Sevenoaks District Accommodation Forum is a non-profit membership organisation. They represent and promote local accommodation and ensure all members sign up to an entry-level scheme as part of their member charter.

[Find out more](#)



Accessibility

Almost one in five people have some form of disability. It is a market worth over £40 billion a year offering huge opportunity for tourism businesses which take accessibility seriously. Bear in mind that disabled people are usually accompanied by friends and relatives so the business opportunity is immense.

There has been a legal requirement in place since 1995 to make reasonable provision to welcome disabled guests. This requirement applies to all tourism businesses regardless of size or whether the guest is charged. So first it is worth familiarising yourself with the Equalities Act 2010 (which supersedes the Disability Discrimination Act):

- Equalities Act 2010 – www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents
- An overview with guidance at www.gov.uk/equality-act-2010-guidance



Image courtesy of Visit Kent

Guidance & Advice

There is a wealth of guidance and tools available to help you make your business and destination more accessible:

- Tourism for All UK – a national charity dedicated to making tourism welcoming to all. www.tourismforall.org.uk
- Open Britain by Tourism for All, is where visitors can find comprehensive information about places to stay, visit, eat and drink, activities and events, throughout the UK www.openbritain.net
- VisitEngland – provide guidance specifically on accessibility for tourism businesses: www.visitengland.org/busdev/bussupport/access/index.aspx
- The European Commission offer s further guidance on accessibility, including tips on your website: http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/tourism/tourism-business-portal/business/eaccessibility/index_en.htm
- Quality in Tourism - where you can download the National Accessible Scheme (NAS) criteria www.qualityintourism.com/quality-schemes/access/
- As part of their Welcome to Excellence training programme, Tourism SE runs a Welcome All course in customer service and disability awareness training. www.welcometoexcellence.co.uk/trainingprogrammes/welcomeall.asp
- Europeforall is a wider Europe compatriot of Open Britain. You can register your business as disabled friendly. <http://europeforall.com/>
- ENAT - The European Network for Accessible Tourism includes plenty of resources including a code of good conduct. www.accessibletourism.org



Home



Prev Tool



Next Tool

Welcome Schemes

The Welcome Schemes, which are operated by Quality in Tourism, recognise tourism businesses that provide certain facilities or services to welcome specific groups. Please note Welcome Scheme assessments must be booked in conjunction with an annual Quality in Tourism assessment visit and an additional annual fee applies.

Full details of the Welcome Schemes, with downloads listing the criteria, are available on the Quality in Tourism site: www.qualityintourism.com/quality-schemes/welcome-schemes/

Welcoming Pets

Many tourism businesses welcome dogs and other pets and, if you feel your premises are suitable, you'll find it makes good business sense. Do remember that welcoming an assistance dog onto your premises is in line with your legal obligations.

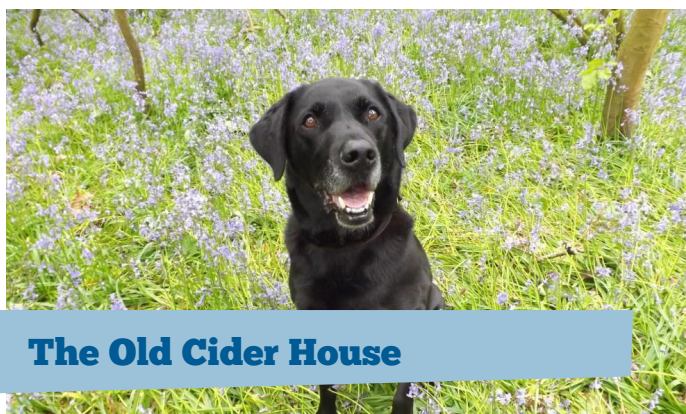
In making dogs (or indeed pets) welcome, there are a number of things you can consider providing:

Food & water bowls in public areas	<input type="checkbox"/>
Blankets & bedding suitable for a variety of sizes of dog	<input type="checkbox"/>
A dog-sitting or walking service.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Information on local dog walks or dog-friendly beaches	<input type="checkbox"/>
Details of local veterinary services (including out-of-hours emergencies)	<input type="checkbox"/>

There are now lots of sites providing details of dog-friendly holidays and places to visit which may give you further ideas on what you can provide. Take a look at:

→ www.dogsinvited.co.uk

→ www.dogfriendlybritain.co.uk



The Old Cider House

The Old Cider House

Case Study

Dog-friendly accommodation at its finest, from designated facilities to a welcome pack for each and every canine guest. They work hard to spread the word including a dedicated blog from in-house expert Ozy the Labrador!

[Find out more](#)



Being a responsible purchaser

Responsible or ethical purchasing is more than buying locally. It involves considering the environmental, social and economic impacts of how you buy and means considering the whole supply chain in the process of acquiring goods and services.

Getting Started

This is a potentially huge subject so this tool confines itself to encouraging you to think through the purchasing cycle and offers links and guidance to find out more.



Image courtesy of Ian Brodie & Somerset County Council

Ultimately you need to put a purchasing policy in place for your business. This does not need to be complicated: rather it should be based on a few key principles:

1 How do you select your products and choose who you buy from?

Is it price? Quality? Or the best value to meet your customers needs?

2 What are the key issues for your business when choosing your suppliers?

You should assess each supply of goods or services separately but you might want to use the following criteria to help you:

Assess where the financial gain of the sale of the goods is going to	<input type="checkbox"/>
Assess the inherent sustainability in the production of goods	<input type="checkbox"/>
Assess the ethical issues involved in the production or supply of goods	<input type="checkbox"/>
Assess the mode of transportation required to bring goods to you	<input type="checkbox"/>
Assess the distances involved in the supply of goods	<input type="checkbox"/>
Assess the amount of packaging required (and how to dispose of it)	<input type="checkbox"/>

3 How do you communicate these issues to suppliers?

It pays dividends to make it clear to your suppliers what you value and why you have chosen to purchase through them. It is also very useful to inform your customers what suppliers you are using, particularly if you have chosen them for ethical or sustainable reasons.



Home



Prev Tool



Next Tool

Supporting Local

By championing our local producers, services, arts, crafts and trades, we are supporting businesses that are at the very heart of our communities and who in turn provide valuable employment opportunities and contribute to the local distinctiveness of your business.

There are many different organisations supporting the drive to 'buy local' such as the regional producer associations:

- Exmoor Producers Association – www.exmoor-producers.co.uk
- Produced in Kent – www.producedinkent.co.uk
- Produced in Norfolk – www.producedinnorfolk.com
- SomersetFood.org – www.somersetfood.org

Other sources of information are local food directories and farmers market listings, such as:

- Local Farmers Markets – national website – www.local-farmers-markets.co.uk
- Localfoods.org.uk – national website – www.localfoods.org.uk

Thinking beyond food

Supporting the local economy does not only mean buying local food and drink. There is a wide range of goods and services to consider, as well as supporting the arts and local culture. Think also how you can celebrate your local culture; by displaying local art and having local musicians playing at events. Another important aspect to consider is the conservation of our built heritage through sourcing tradesmen using traditional skills and materials.

The above principles can also be applied to how you recruit your staff and look after them whilst in your employ. Consider:

- How do you set about finding new employees?
- How do you support them (e.g. help with transport to and from work, free meals, etc)?
- Do you provide training opportunities?



Birling House

Birling House

Case Study

Birling House serve the Kent Breakfast, with bacon and sausages from a family farm, eggs from their neighbours, apple juice and honey from the local orchards, preserves from the W.I, and lots more as the seasons allow.

[Find out more](#)



Increasing skills & knowledge

Providing training for yourself and any employees can potentially benefit your business in many ways, by:

- Improving skills, expertise and knowledge
- Increasing productivity
- Keeping up to date with new technology
- Complying with legislation & regulation
- Increasing job satisfaction and morale
- Enhancing your business image
- Helping maintain the certifications and awards you've achieved

Skills Audit

You can help identify your business's training needs by using a skills audit to develop a training needs analysis. This is a simple process to:

- Determine the skill requirements you need within the business
- Audit the actual skills you have
- Draw up a list of training needs to fill the skills gap in your team

1 List the roles within your organisation

Importantly these are role types e.g. marketing manager, receptionist, maintenance technician, not every position on your organisational chart.

2 List the skills needed for each role

In an ideal world what skills would a holder of that role need? Be honest and fair and focus on the core skills required to fill the role, not 'desirable' ones.

3 Create a skills audit survey

Based on the skills you have identified, amalgamate them and send the survey out to all your staff members. The following format is a useful way of structuring a skills audit:

Skill Name	Personal Rating (tick)				Supporting Evidence
	None	Basic	Competent	Proficient	



Home



Prev Tool



Next Tool

Skills Audit (cont.)

Key points in creating and administering a skills audit at your business:

- It's vital to communicate beforehand to your team why you are undertaking this audit and making it clear what the information will be used for
- It's important for your team to justify their self-evaluation by providing supporting evidence (although this could be qualification-based or experience-based)
- Allow team members to assess themselves in all skills needed within the organisation. You never know what expertise you might uncover
- Leave blank areas at the bottom and encourage users to add other skills they possess

4 Compile the results in two ways:

- For each person, you need to know what skills they have
- For each skill, you need to know which people have it

5 Based on this you should be able to identify:

- The skill gaps in specific roles
- The people who have critical skills for the business
- Potential successors for certain roles
- An outline of training you may need to provide

Sources of training

Training courses can be provided by numerous organisations both within your local area or nationally for more specialised courses.

- People 1st is the sector skills council for the leisure and hospitality industry
www.people1st.co.uk/
- VisitEngland signposts specific training for the tourism sector.
www.visitengland.org/busdev/bussupport/training/
- DMOs: Many of the Destination organisations across the country run or facilitate access to courses (many of which are subsidised).
- National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty can provide you with a wide range of guidance on landscape-related issues and may provide free advisory visits. Many also run training courses and familiarisation days.
- Don't forget to check out your local colleges and universities who may provide hospitality and tourism related courses (sometimes subsidised) throughout the year, including out of term time.
- RDPE Skills & Training, administered by DEFRA and dedicated to adults working in farming, forestry, horticulture and small rural businesses.
www.gov.uk/government/publications/skills-and-training-guide-for-applicants



1. What is sustainability and why should I bother with it?

Sustainability isn't just about the environment; it is about doing business better and is an ethos that should underpin all business activities. It focuses on mitigating impacts, maximizing benefits and running a more efficient business in harmony with the world around us. By doing so it can save you money, provide an appealing hook to your customers, ensure the business is more resilient for the future and ultimately reducing risk in the enterprise.

2. Am I in a protected landscape?

18% of the UK Countryside is designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and a further 6% is designated as a National Park. You can find comprehensive maps at:

www.landscapesforlife.org.uk/

www.nationalparks.gov.uk/

3. What is an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)?

An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is a landscape which is considered so precious that it is protected for the nation. Designation seeks to protect and enhance natural beauty whilst recognising the needs of the local community and economy. This includes the protection of flora, fauna and geological as well as landscape features. The conservation of archaeological, architectural and vernacular features in the landscape is also important. They have the same legal protection for their landscapes as National Parks, but don't have their own authorities for planning control and other services.

4. What is a National Park?

National Parks are protected areas of countryside that include villages and towns. They are protected because of their beautiful countryside, wildlife and cultural heritage. People live and work in the National Parks and the farms, villages and towns are protected along with the landscape and wildlife. National Parks welcome visitors and provide opportunities for everyone to experience enjoy and learn about their special qualities. They have an authority to help look after them, including planning controls.

5. Is renewable energy a long-term investment?

Up-front costs of installing renewable energy like solar panels have dropped in recent years however although you'll see savings in the short-term don't expect that panel to pay for itself for at least 8 years. Other forms of renewable energy may take less time but given the initial outlay cost it will still take a number of years to recoup the cost. Bear in mind that you can sell surplus electricity (through [Feed-in-Tariffs](#)) and heat (through the [Renewable Heat Incentive](#)).



Home



Prev Tool



Next Tool

6. Are there grants available for green energy initiatives?

Yes there is government or local authority support available for installing green energy, however given the recent economic austerity they are fewer than they once were. Contact your local authority for more information on grants and assistance available in your local area. However be aware, receiving funding towards installation may exclude you from Feed-in-Tariffs and the Renewable Heat Incentive.

7. Does my accommodation need to be quality assessed?

There is no legal requirement for your business to be quality assessed, it is simply another tool you can use to help promote and assess the performance of your business. A star rating of quality can give confidence to customers and provide a recognised benchmark to manage their expectations, however if this is not valuable to your customers you may choose not to sign-up.

8. Is green accreditation worth it?

If sustainability as an ethos is part of your brand then accreditation is a visible commitment to your customers that you live up to the ideals. Even if you don't trade on being sustainable it's very useful to help you identify actions to undertake to save money and reduce impacts. However again there is no legal requirement to hold it and you can undertake sustainable and green actions without entering a formal scheme.

9. Where do I find a simple explanation of all the different types of light bulbs we can use?

Old-fashioned light bulbs were withdrawn from sale in September 2012, meaning if you are replacing bulbs you are looking at different options for energy saving light bulbs. RICA have produced a comprehensive guide on types, fittings and buying the right light bulbs:

www.rica.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/pdfs/home-tech/energy-saving-lightbulbs.pdf

10. My local authority doesn't collect plastic for recycling. How can I do this?

Recycle Now has a [postcode locator](#) so you can see which plastics your council collects and check nearby recycling centres. [Waste Online](#) has a detailed list of the common types of plastic and the identifying symbols you will find on the packaging. If you can't recycle plastic through any means, consider re-using items like plastic bottles, tubs and pots to avoid even needing to recycle.



Rural Tourism Business Toolkit

About this toolkit

This .pdf is the fifth part of a fully featured resource packed full with useful information and advice for new and existing rural tourism businesses.

This toolkit has been created as part of the COOL Tourism Project by the COOL Partnership and tourism development charity Hidden Britain.

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