You'd look good in green

www.wheatlandfarm.co.uk

Maggie Watson

Notes slide 1

A shade of green to suit everyone! You'd look good in green… but this isn't a lecture on responsibilities, making your tourism biz more sustainable is green and pleasant land of opportunity.
I want to draw a comparison with issue of accessibility –20% of the population have some form of disability. It's true – and taking that on board has certainly helped me in my business. But I want to put the proposition to you that sustainability affects 100% of your businesses and 100% of your clients right now. And that brings challenges but also possibilities,, whether reducing waste, finding new markets, or cutting purchasing.

But why should you take my word for it. I could tell you about a childhood immersed in UK conservation, about working as a conservation ecologist, about 10 years winning awards for sustainable tourism. But I want to tell you just one story from 10 years ago when I worked for the Natural Environment Research Council. If you don't know what that is it's the organisation that spends your tax payers' money on Environmental Science in this country – the budget then was about £350m – you'd think that would buy you a lot of good advice. I ran their public facing magazine, and almost the last issue we did had a big plea from a top climatologist basically saying stop arguing about whether climate change is happening, and start to adapt. I don't have that magazine any more, but I've found an image that was remarkably similar to it's front cover…

theguardian

UK's coastal railways vulnerable to climate threat, expert warns

Track vulnerable to waves, landslides and storms includes sections that carry nuclear waste to Sellafield in Cumbria and from Wylfa in north Wales, says author of a new book on UK coastal railways

Notes slide 2

… the Dawlish trainline. Over a decade ago. So my point is that this that sustainability is the region's business – our businesses. But I'm not getting on the soap box to give the moral or scientific case -this is still a practical argument. I don't know about you, but most of my customers don't choose to come to me first, they choose the region – because the SW is a lovely place to holiday. So we're all trading on the wider environment – it's our natural capital, and what sensible business runs down its capital assets?

But what can we do?

Notes slide 3

- Sustainability is complex – there all sorts of apparent contradictions but that also means there are lots of different opportunities. So here are just a few examples.

the green house

HOME

ENVIRONMENT

ROOMS

BOOK NOW

Welcome to The Green House, luxury and boutique hotel in Bournemouth

Serious about luxury, serious about sustainability

On the face of it, The Green House is simply a beautifully restored, 32-room Grade II Victorian villa in the heart of Bournemouth, perfectly nestled between Dorset's finest blue-flag golden beaches and the ancient mysteries of the New Forest.

Dig a little deeper, however, and you'll discover that we eat, sleep, breathe sustainability. So much so that we've been recognised as one of the top "eco-hotels" not just in the UK... but in the world.

After a painstaking 18-month refurbishment

Notes slide 4

- The Green House Hotel in Bournemouth – had cast iron claw footed baths locally re-enamelled rather than buy new ones. To me that's still an expensive bath – but they are a more luxury outfit and it works for them. It's money into the local economy and it's cutting consumption.

HIGHER WISCOMBE

Peaceful . Luxurious . Beautiful

Recycling

At Higher Wiscombe we try to make it as easy as possible for guests to recycle waste.

Each barn is provided with biodegradeable food bags and large blue food caddys to put all food waste in, both cooked and uncooked. This means guests have no requirement to seperate food waste into different types.

Secondly, we have a covered recycling area, which is clearly signed. There are four wheelie bins for glass, which does NOT have to be sorted by colour and large wheelies for clean cardboard, paper, tins, plastic and tetra pack. All this waste is collected on a collection run by Bottleman in Beer, a local company.

Notes slide 5

Higher Wiscombe – also targeting fairly high end clients who might be tempted not to bother with ‘all the green crap’ – to quote a well known politician. But they are reducing waste by setting up the recycling to look normal, expected and well serviced.

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MARINE CONSERVATION

Notes slide 6

Plymouth Marine Aquarium - Reassessing what’s sold in the shop and trying to ditch single use plastic items. Lo and behold, the kids are buying higher margin souvenirs like fossils.

- These are not the only things these businesses are doing, and they’re not the only businesses doing great things.

NEWS
Under the ice and
into the unknown

Notes slide 7

- Is it making any money? Well I don't know the details of these other businesses, but I can tell you about my own business, Wheatland Farm Eco Lodges.
- This is inside our 'deliberately not at all brand new' Balebarn Eco Lodge largely constructed with local, often reclaimed materials and costing £72K - all in right down to the cushions. Even the TV programme about building cheaply is called the 100K house – without the fittings. So you can see what going sustainable has done to the bottom line. I can also tell you we've more than **tripled the turn over and more than halved the power consumption** over the past 10 years. And that's just with prosaic efficiency measures making us more efficient.

But whatever you do, **don't forget to tell your customers**. Because that's where the real profit lies. They won't necessarily choose their holiday to be green. Even so, if you give them the message that you are green – it's normal, it's modern, you care and you'll do some of their caring for them. Make your customers like you and feel good about themselves. **What could be better for business**?

It's a property that has everything: a fisherman's cottage a mere five minutes from the sea, with a private driveway, half an acre of garden and sweeping views across some of the most beautiful coastal landscape England has to offer.

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In How About That?

Notes slide 8

- Finally – is it working? This slide isn't necessarily a tourism situation by the way – it's a cottage up for sale by Dungeness nuclear power station (clipped from The Telegraph). And it illustrates several points, one being the potential for green wash (don't do it – you'll be spotted). Another being **inadvertent greenwash** – do we really achieve anything with organic linen teatowels and LED lightbulbs when what's going on in the back ground is so overpowering – no pun intended. But again, there are ways into this seemingly insurmountable problem. Because we all have consumer power. So **if upcycling is too wacky** for you start asking your suppliers about their environmental credentials and policies – what are your laundry companies, energy companies, pension providersdoing to make you greener by extension? What's the bank doing with you money behind your back? And on that note, I hand over to Mark who I think is going to tell you some other ways making your finances more sustainable can bring business opportunities.