

Brilliant Businesses

Cottage in the Dales, West Burton



Why gold needn't cost you a fortune

With an established business offering luxury four and five star self catering cottages in West Burton, Wensleydale, Diane Howarth knew – because of her marketing background – that green credentials would help with promotion.

What she didn't appreciate though, was that in aiming for a Bronze Award through the Green Tourism Business Scheme she would achieve Gold in July 2009 – then again in 2012 – and that it would cost very little.

“Business people tend to think that a Green Tourism Award would be a nice thing to have but that it would cost a lot of money. Our experience shows that is not true,” she says.

“It certainly takes time to fill in the forms and to comply with the scheme's standard, but not much money. The most expensive thing we had to do was buy energy saving light bulbs for our cottages, which are both in West Burton. It's more a case of doing a lot of little things, many of which you could well be doing already.”

Halving the cost of waste disposal

The other thing that Diane didn't quite realise was how much the costs to her business would be reduced by going green.

“For example, we introduced recycling bins for plastics, glass, cardboard etc. (inside the pictured shed) and we take the contents to the recycling centre ourselves. This prevented 6,500 litres of waste going to landfill last year, which is about 27 standard wheelie bins! This also cuts the cost of removing the rest of the waste by £150 a year, half what it was before,” she says.





Cutting the cost of the oil central heating has been another business benefit. “Despite the price of oil having increased, we pay less now than we did two years ago,” she says. How? Through resetting the boiler to its optimum temperature, improving levels of insulation in the loft and simple things like putting up heavy curtains that help to keep the heat in.

Cutting down electricity consumption has been another area of focus. The open fire has a back boiler that heats the water, ‘green’ hairdryers use only 10 per cent of the electricity of conventional models, and guests are invited to set the washing machine at 30 degrees – not 40 degrees.

Hot tips at cool cottages

In fact, guests are invited to do all sorts of green things while staying at the cottages, which have been recommended by the Sunday Times in 2011 as being one of the UK’s “Top 50 Cool Cottages”.

Diane has produced a leaflet “Thirty ways to reduce energy wastage and preserve the Yorkshire Dales, whilst enjoying your holiday.” It underlines a key element of her philosophy that going green is enjoyable for visitors, especially with children and that it makes business sense, something she describes as a “win-win” outcome.

A good example of this philosophy is the incentive she offers to potential repeat visitors in late autumn. If they book early, in what is normally a quiet time for reservations, they have a tree planted with a personal dedication by the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust.

“It only costs me £15 and it’s putting something back into the area they love to return to. Again, it’s win-win,” she says.

Diane intends to continue her winning ways in future by learning lessons from experience. She has now gained listed building consent for a third cottage but this time there will be a log burner rather than an open fire. “It’s 80 per cent efficient compared with 20 per cent for an open fire.”

You can’t argue with Diane’s figures - or her philosophy.



The Green Tourism Business Scheme is validated by Visit Britain through the International Centre for Responsible Tourism. Find out more at www.green-business.co.uk

Contact Diane Howarth on 01969 662766 or visit www.cottageinthedales.co.uk



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