

Case study

Connaught Hotel

Not only is the Best Western Connaught Hotel in Bournemouth offering the best possible service to its customers, but it is also at the cutting edge of sustainability and is winning awards for its green credentials.

David Miller, managing director of the independent 83-bedroom hotel, part of the Best Western Group, believes many more hotels will have to follow suit.

Crucially, its green policies are having a positive impact on its bottom line – by managing utility costs and introducing energy-saving measures, the Connaught has reduced its operating costs.

David has formed a Green Team made up of himself, purchasing manager Maria Ruiz and deputy general manager Paul Plumley to investigate ways of making the hotel as sustainable as possible.

But that does not mean skimping on comfort – it has an on-going refurbishment plan and in 2008 upgraded 20 bedrooms and opened a new restaurant, Blakes. It has also added a sauna and a fully-tiled steam room to its existing two gyms, spa pool and 18-metre indoor pool with therapy unit.



One of the first 'green' initiatives was to create an eco-friendly garden and terrace to replace the outdoor swimming pool and the hotel has also joined the Green Tourism Business Scheme (GTBS).

David, who took over running the hotel three years ago, said: "This is really important to us. It's the future and I think before long every hotel will need to look at its environmental impact."

"Some people just won't stay in a hotel unless it is making efforts to be more sustainable."

"We also know this is important in the corporate market as more companies are only using venues that mirror their own environmental stance."

BUSINESS ISSUES

Becoming more environmentally-friendly is a key part of raising its standards and having made this commitment, the Connaught is determined to follow it through, with help from Business Link.

BUSINESS LINK SUPPORT

The Green Team met Business Link at an environmental business event and has since worked closely with adviser Mark Painter.

Mark said: "It's great to work with a company that has such a 'can do' attitude, which comes from David, Paul and Maria. They continue to invest in the hotel and only recently we have been talking about further staff training."

"While they have been busy pushing the sustainability issue, they have certainly not taken their eye off the ball in terms of providing the best possible service to customers."

Maria said: "Mark's been fantastic. He's given us loads of help, did research for us and looked at what other hotels have done to become sustainable."

The Connaught has hosted a number of events with support from Business Link, including several Business Link seminars and a Green Breakfast.

The hotel has also established a policy of recycling waste in conjunction with Bournemouth Borough Council.

TAKING THE MESSAGE FURTHER

The hotel brands itself as eco-friendly and urges guests to use public transport, promotes local attractions to minimise travel outside the area and arranges bicycles for hire to encourage guests to be more aware of their impact on the environment.

There is also a commitment to use local tradespeople, stock Fair Trade items and use products wherever possible from sustainable sources. Other measures have recently taken place such as replacing paper towels in the toilets with hand dryers.

The Connaught has been granted a Silver Award by GTBS – the highest accolade of this nature held by a Bournemouth hotel to date.

FUTURE PLANS

The hotel will be re-assessed in two years and its Green Team is determined to go for gold next time.

David said: "It's not usually the first thing that guests think about, but having an environmental policy and receiving a Silver Award for it is important. I'm sure it will become more so as time goes on and concern for the environment becomes more mainstream."

0845 600 9966
www.businesslink.gov.uk/southwest

