

CASESTUDY

Primrose Valley Hotel, St Ives, Cornwall, UK

As a partner in a small 10-bedroom hotel situated less than a minute from a European Blue Flag beach, Andrew Biss, owner of the **Primrose Valley Hotel** in St Ives, Cornwall, is in no doubt that they have a responsibility to the locality. However, despite his best intentions, the greatest obstacle to becoming an icon of environmentally friendly tourism is often time, or the lack of it. "There never seem to be sufficient hours in the day between the physical side of cooking, cleaning, maintenance and meeting, greeting, serving, informing, marketing, PR, website development, paying bills, staff wages, VAT, cashflows, development plans and finding a plumber or plasterer. It's easy to see why the quick option is so often taken", he says.

Nevertheless, the hotel has committed to several environmental measures over the past three years. "We do use local suppliers and manufacturers wherever possible" Andrew explains. "Although this sounds simple in theory, sometimes there are difficulties. The vast majority of our suppliers are in Cornwall and the next county, Devon. However, the produce they supply is not necessarily within these borders. Whilst cost is a factor, we never advocate the cheapest option and it is often worth spending a little more to deliver better quality. I remember trying to change our breakfast jams to a Cornish producer, but my phone calls were never returned. A Cornish hand-made soap company made no reference on their labelling to the ingredients, which is important to us in terms of guest perception. We also had a fruit and vegetable supplier whose quality varied so greatly that we couldn't continue using them. However there are some local heroes such as the company who made all our new oak and walnut dining tables to our specification at a cost that was comparable with larger national companies. We are finally at a stage where we are very happy with our suppliers and their produce and I would say that we now source 90% from within Cornwall."

"Because we used to pay for every trade bag of waste we produced it seemed logical to pay a contractor to recycle it instead. Now we



Andrew Biss and his colleagues at the **Primrose Valley Hotel** are pragmatic about the conflicts thrown up by trying to be both environmentally proactive and to become one of the best small hotels in St Ives, so they aim to be environmentally responsible wherever this is possible

recycle 60–70% of our waste. We probably pay slightly more and have to store the bags because the collection is only once a week but we believe it is worth it. Our room information also invites guests to recycle their rubbish such as newspapers and magazines in order to keep it out of landfills".

"We introduced a towel and linen programme which dramatically reduced the amount of laundry each day. However, there is a paradox in that having saved huge amounts on bathroom laundry, our new power-showers pushed our water bills up by over 100%. Nevertheless, there is a net benefit in terms of cost, time saved and guest satisfaction. Let's face it, the vast majority of guests are happy that you are have some environmentally-friendly policies, but when they have travelled up to eight hours to reach us and the excuse we use for a pathetic shower is our championing of water conservation, I can't see them coming back or recommending us to friends!" he says.

All toilet cisterns are the smaller European size with dual flush that save up to six litres (per flush) and information is offered on alternatives to car use. The hotel is also a major sponsor of 'International Reef Clean Up Day' on Porthminster Reef under the auspices of the **Marine Conservation Society** each September when teams of local divers clean up accumulated rubbish from the seabed. Now that it is threatened from over fishing, cod has been taken off the menu and local non-trawled alternatives are offered whenever possible.

Andrew and his colleagues are pragmatic about the conflicts thrown up by trying to be both environmentally proactive and to become one of the best small hotels in St Ives, so they aim to be environmentally responsible wherever this is possible.

CASESTUDY

Spier, Stellenbosch-Winlands, South Africa

The 17th Century **Spier Estate** was purchased in 1993 by the Enthoven family who have restored and extended it. Two businesses have been created – a 155-room hotel and property development with six restaurants, conference facilities, golf course and retail outlets, and a winery with vineyards and a bottling plant. Other business activities include a nursery and the treatment and production of organic waste.

Over the past 12 years Spier's owners have introduced solid waste and waste water recycling, given 65 hectares of land and water to 16 small farmers from historically disadvantaged backgrounds (as part of a broader land reform programme), built a new government primary school for local children and supported a range of community based NGOs.

Their vision was for Spier to become a model of transparency, accountability, corporate governance, citizenship and sustainable development within the private sector, and in 2003, the process of integrating sustainable principles and practices into daily business operations began. This brief is the responsibility of Tanner Methvin, Director of Sustainable Development. A set of sustainability measure indicators was created in order to measure Spier's economic, social and environmental impact systematically so that the results could be benchmarked against South African and other businesses throughout the world. Over 150 sustainability indicators measure everything from compliance with basic employment regulations and energy and water use to measuring the impact of Spier's HIV/AIDs prevention and treatment initiatives.

Stakeholders across the community were consulted in order to determine the most appropriate indicators against which goals

more information

Andrew Biss tel: + 44 (0) 1736 794939 web: www.primroseonline.co.uk