Sustainable management is about ensuring sustainability is considered in the management and everyday running of your business; that you review progress made and continuously improve your business and the products and services you deliver.
What is sustainable management?

A business standing still, is a business going backwards, especially when it comes to developments in sustainability and customer comfort. Visitor expectations, as well as sustainable technologies and industry best practice constantly change, which is why it is more important than ever to continue to review how sustainable your business is and ask yourself what more can be done to improve your performance.

Some of the key elements of starting to incorporate sustainable management practices include:

- Setting up an environmental policy or sustainability statement for your business, regardless of size
- Tell your customers about your commitment and actions you are undertaking. They will appreciate knowing about the work you are doing and may be happy to help
- If your business employs people, involving and training staff on sustainability issues is key to ensuring that actions get successfully implemented
- Reviewing your business practices and monitoring your use of resources (e.g. energy, water, waste) to identify opportunities to improve and make savings.

Legal compliance

You should make sure you are aware of the current environmental legislation that could impact upon your business and which you need to comply with.

This covers aspects such as waste storage and treatment, prevention of pollution from oil tanks or waste water treatment, energy efficiency measures in building regulations, and protection of natural habitats.

For more details on environmental guidance for Hospitality, Leisure and Tourism businesses go to: www.netregs.org.uk
Environmental policy

An environmental policy is a written statement that outlines your business’s commitment to manage the environmental effects of its operations and helps to put this commitment into practice. Developing an environmental policy can help you to better understand your business’s environmental and social impact and clearly states what you are doing to reduce these.

Increasingly, customers are looking for businesses who are taking responsibility for their operations and looking to reduce these where possible.

Sharing your policy with your customers is a great opportunity to demonstrate your awareness and show your commitment to minimising any negative impact.

For examples and top tips see Resource Efficient Scotland’s information on developing and sharing your environmental policy.

VisitScotland surveys have shown that visitors now expect tourism businesses to have sustainable practices as the norm, with 84% of visitors stating that sustainability is very or quite important when making a holiday choice.
Monitoring

Another key practice of sustainable management is measuring and monitoring, which involves the collection of information to get a good understanding of your resource use and waste outputs. The collection of information can help you identify, prioritise and manage savings opportunities and improve efficiency.

If you aren’t measuring and monitoring, you are missing the opportunity to manage your costs effectively.

When aiming to save resources like energy or water it is useful to have a better understanding of how much you are using. By monitoring and measuring, you can determine your exact usage, calculate potential savings, track progress as you implement actions, spot inconsistencies and benchmark against a standard variable (e.g. bed nights or visitor numbers). Measuring and monitoring can seem a bit daunting initially, but there are simple methods and easy to use tools available. Once the routine is established it will be easier.

What you can easily monitor may depend on your business and what information you can collect.

- **Monitoring energy consumption**: especially gas and electricity in terms of cost and meter readings. If you use oil consider having a flow meter fitted to the tank, if you don’t have one already. For larger businesses ‘smart’ meters or ‘half-hourly’ meters are available, which automatically collect meter readings, check with your supplier if this is an option for your business.

- **Monitoring water consumption**: If your business is on a water meter you should monitor consumption in terms of cost and meter readings.

- **Monitoring waste outputs**: You can monitor your waste output, especially if you have a commercial pick up. Measure types (e.g. plastic, cardboard, food waste, landfill) and amount of materials collected, containers/bin size, frequency of collection, and cost of collection. Ask your waste contractor what information they can provide.

Energy survey

To get a better understanding of the nature and scale of energy used in your business it is recommended to do a walk round energy survey. There are three key aims of the survey:

- Identify what equipment uses energy (e.g. lighting, heating, appliances, electronics)
- Understand how the equipment is controlled (e.g. switch, thermostat, timer, sensor)
- Identify opportunities for savings.

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Some top tips for monitoring

• Decide what you want to or can monitor (e.g. energy, water, waste) and how you will gather the information (e.g. meter readings). Start out by keeping it simple.

• Frequency of monitoring. It is important that data is collected on a regular and consistent basis. It is recommended to read your meters at least monthly, if not more frequently.

• Collate the data (i.e. meter readings) in a central place. Storing information in a spreadsheet will allow you to easily manipulate and plot it on graphs to make it easier to understand. Identify any trends, anomalies and opportunities for improvement. Template spreadsheets are available for you to use, for example from Resource Efficient Scotland.

• Keep information on factors influencing consumption or waste production, such as bed nights/ visitor numbers, average outside temperature. This will allow you to account for variations.

• Taking meter readings during periods of shutdown, building closure or overnight can help to detect unwanted usage. Read the meter once in the evening, after everyone has left or the main operations have finished, and then first thing in the morning before they arrive at work or main operation resumes.

• Any abnormalities or unusual spikes can highlight particular issues like faulty equipment or water leaks, which once identified can be addressed quickly.

• Where relevant, share the results from monitoring with staff to let them know how well efficiency actions are working. Also consider sharing key information with guests to show the progress you have made.

Cost versus usage

Don’t focus solely on cost! Although it is important to consider the cost of energy or water to your business, monitoring your final utility charges will not always give you an accurate picture, as prices can fluctuate. If you reduce your actual usage, e.g. the kilowatt-hours (kWh) of energy you use, you are being more sustainable and will be saving money, even if it may not look like it on your bill.
Some of the most effective methods to bring about cost savings in your business will result from getting your staff onboard. By encouraging resource efficient actions during day-to-day activities, for example switching off lights when not needed, reducing water consumption when cleaning and flattening cardboard boxes, every member of your team can make a contribution.

If you have employees, whether two or 200, it is important to get them involved in any actions you undertake to become more sustainable. Get their ‘buy-in’. Employees often provide the greatest ideas for resource efficiency and cost savings, so involving them is not only essential to implementing actions consistently, but will also help you to identify what needs to be done.

Reluctance and resistance to change is normal. However, by consulting staff and clearly communicating the need for change, you can gain their support.

Try these tips on how to motivate and include staff members:

- Listen to your staff and encourage them to contribute thoughts and ideas; offer an incentive for the best ideas.
- Include them in the action plan and environmental policy writing process.
- Appoint staff members as sustainable champions or set up a green team, consisting of staff across different areas (e.g. front of house, kitchen, office), seniority levels and skill sets.
- Build their knowledge through training on sustainability, from both a general perspective and specific to their role.
- Share the good news! Have a green notice board to share actions and updates on progress. People are more likely to change their habits if they understand how their actions affect energy consumption and costs.
- Involve your customers too, by providing a suggestion box or a customer feedback form that can supply you with useful advice and tips.

Zero Waste Scotland has produced a useful guide to introduce you to managing behaviour change within your business and train staff. OR get some tips on how to set up a green team.

The benefits of successfully involving staff in implementing sustainability actions are:

- reduced costs (e.g. lower waste and energy costs)
- increased profitability
- higher staff morale, motivation and retention rates (i.e. ‘I’m proud of where I work’)
- compliance with legislation.
Sustainable Management

Providing skills and training

Sustainability covers a wide range of subject areas, some of which can be a bit more technical, like energy and water efficiency and waste management. There are a number of opportunities to build your knowledge through a range of events, skills development opportunities and training as well.

If you employ staff, incorporating sustainability aspects into in-house and on-the-job training is strongly recommended. For some key staff it may be useful to attend some external training sessions.

There are on-line tools available or events that you can attend.

For example Zero Waste Scotland’s ‘On-course for Zero Waste’, a free online training course for Scottish businesses.

To find out what events are on offer, when and where, check out VisitScotland’s industry events calendar or check with relevant organisations directly (for example Resource Efficient Scotland Events).

Our Skillsforce Tourism Hub

Skills Development Scotland has collaborated with employers and partners across the tourism industry to create an action plan – The Skills Investment Plan. From this a number of key actions were produced, which are now presented in the form of a Tourism Hub on Our Skillsforce, Skills Development Scotland’s web service for employers.

The Tourism Hub provides a range of practical advice and information for employers.

For much more information, visit www.ourskillsforce.co.uk/spotlight-on-industry/tourism/

Further information

A number of organisations across Scotland offer workforce development courses from basic skills to managerial and entrepreneurship schemes.

Check out the following initiatives for guidance, support, and courses available:

Skills Development Scotland
Bright Green Placements
Hospitality Industry Trust Scotland
Springboard Scotland
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You can download, or view online, the whole Better Business Series by visiting: www.visitscotland.org/sustainable-business-series.aspx

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