In the last two decades sustainability has become a growing influence in Scottish tourism, offering a wide range of new and exciting opportunities for businesses to connect with customers and add value to the visitor experience.
Today’s visitors are increasingly looking for sustainable products and services that maximise community benefits and reduce their environmental impact. If you have been implementing a number of sustainable actions in your businesses you should be sharing your stories with your customers to help turn that good work into commercial advantage.

Here are a few tips on how to start promoting your sustainable business:

• Highlight the sustainable aspects of your business on promotional material and provide a link to your environmental policy on your website
• Consider advertising in specialist or niche market publications dedicated to sustainable or green lifestyles
• Work with and promote other green and sustainable products in your local area
• Avoid ‘Greenwash’ in your marketing promotions – any unsubstantiated environmental claims or irrelevant content. Be honest and make sure there are no obvious mistakes or overstate what you do. To find out more see Futerra’s Guide to Greenwash
• Gain certification from a sustainable grading scheme and display the logo on all your promotional material. (See below for more information).

Make sure your promotional materials are sustainable too. Use recycled paper, recycle ink cartridges, source low polluting vegetable based inks and environmentally responsible designers and printers.
Promoting your sustainable credentials

A sustainable or green certification scheme independently verifies your business’ green credentials. This can provide your business not only with a credible way to illustrate your sustainable practices and the confidence to access a growing market, but also offers guidance and support on what sustainability activities you could undertake.

Sustainability certification schemes, or Eco Labels as they are also known, vary significantly, from simple self-assessment approaches to third party certification, where an assessor will conduct an on-site audit of your premises.

Each can help a business understand what is involved in ‘going green’ but the assessed varieties are the best in terms of giving additional advice and providing credibility and confidence to market a business as being sustainable to consumers.

Certification programmes

The Green Tourism Business Scheme (GTBS) has been in operation since 1997 and is the largest and most established scheme of its kind in the world, with more than 2,000 members from a wide range of tourism business throughout the UK, Ireland, and Canada. Currently there are around 800 members in Scotland. To find out more visit the Green Tourism website.

Holiday Parks can also apply for a David Bellamy Conservation Award for the work they do to protect and enhance Scotland’s natural environment. To find out more visit the David Bellamy Conservation Award website.

Green Awards

Winning an award for your actions can be an excellent marketing tool and you can display them on your premises and promotional material. Here’s a selection of sustainability related awards.

- Vision in Business for the Environment of Scotland (Vibes)
- Scottish Thistle Awards
- Excellence Scottish Food and Drink Awards
- Responsible Business Awards
Scotland is committed to becoming a year-round destination and promoting the wide range of activities and attractions available outside the summer season. Remaining open for a longer season benefits your business financially, provides year-round employment and helps to make the local community and economy more sustainable.

Here are a few tips to help you extend your business throughout the year:

• If you normally close part of the year, why not extend your open season by a week or two at either end

• Target specialist markets and take advantage of local natural assets

• Investigate which attractions and services remain open all year round and look for opportunities to collaborate with them. Maybe promote a joint weekend offer to cross sell in the quieter season

• Promote local events and remain open for them

• Collaborate with any winter festivals or events such as Hogmanay, Burns Night or Snowdrop Festivals

• Promote any features in your business or locality that are only possible in the winter months – perhaps you offer the best hot toddy in Scotland or are just a short walk from a local inn offering good food and a real fire!
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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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