

How Real Businesses Do Great Business Sustainably

2011

A collection of the real actions of successful businesses that have achieved an Environmental Quality Mark. A successful EQM business can influence the behaviour of its customers.



This is not an exhaustive collection, this is a developing process. Every year a new collection of the latest best practice will be produced.

This collection is organised around the customer journey, from start to finish. This is about both what the business is doing and how their customers know they are doing it.

1. Basics including energy, water, waste, and carbon audits
2. Marketing and promotion
3. Enquiry/booking/point of sale and administration
4. Transport, arrival, distribution
5. Place, view, access, your immediate surroundings, facilities
6. Services and Process including purchasing, laundry, food, manufacturing, farming
7. Your destination's environment
8. Your destination's Culture and Heritage
9. People including employees, local and global communities
10. Other activities including innovation

1. Carbon

Carbon is the building block of life, we must value and steward it with care.

You can help safeguard stored carbon by farming your land with regard to carbon management , not ploughing (this releases carbon stored in soil), by planting trees, by helping to restore peat moorlands Click here to learn more:www.moorsforthefuture.org.uk

Carbon reducing examples:

- We have doubled the loft insulation, using sheep wool
- We have swapped from oil to wood pellet for heating
- A ground source heat pump has been installed
- Solar water heaters are heating some water
- Use non-peat compost

Carbon storing examples:

- We have planted 120 indigenous trees and have plans for more next year
- We have restored 5ha of peat moorland to prevent carbon losses
- We are donating to Moors for the Future Peat Moorland restoration project

2. Marketing and Promotion

Examples:

- We have a Green Policy on our web site and it mentions local food purchasing and our support of local county groups

- Our leaflet is printed on recycled paper and has the SEQM logo on
- We have a Travellers' Code on our website advising visitors how to enjoy Staffordshire in a good way
- We advertise on websites specialising in responsible travel.

3. Enquiry/booking/point of sale and administration

Examples:

- Over 98% of bookings now confirmed by email with no posted information
- All confirmations contain local food menus and there are links to EQM businesses on our website
- All office paper is recycled and printed material states this
- We use recycled ink cartridges and reuse all single side printed paper for notes
- There are stickers explaining our commitment to our county on the back of our packaging
- All emails and electronic information carries links to the local tourist board
- Our shelf leaflets have the EQM logo and we display photos of the farms where the products come from

4. Transport

Examples:

- We ask our visitors to consider the environment, both before they arrive (e.g. by sharing cars or using public transport) and when on site.
- We work out sensible, efficient delivery round
- Information about cycle hire is provided on the web site and in the accommodation
- We offer to pick up from the nearest bus stop
- We provide lots of green travel information in booking information prior to arrival
- We have an arrangement with the local coach company to bring guests to the event
- Business vehicles are regularly serviced, driven in an eco friendly manner and tyre pressures monitored
- *"Just 1 hour, 35 minutes from London to our city" is key marketing phrase*

5. Place, view, access, your immediate surroundings, facilities

Examples:

- We do not tolerate litter! Cigarette butts are collected in garden pots rather than plastic bins.
- We keep areas of landscape (especially on approach lanes and in the fields) as wildlife corridors and do not mow these.
- The traditional buildings and drystone walls at the properties have been restored and are well maintained, conserving these features in the landscape
- Our dry stone walls have been repaired and we have tidied up the entrance
- The waste from the building project is separated into wood, metal, plastic and rubble
- We have the SEQM sticker on the entrance door
- The lambing caravan is screened by trees, washed regularly, and the grass strimmed so the view from the public footpath and road is not messy
- We campaigned for our village to be a Conservation area because it is so attractive.

5 b. Access

Examples:

- We are keen supporters of The Local Centre (we're on the advisory panel for these). This is a community project for young people with learning difficulties. We buy their labelled products
- Wheelchair walks are detailed. Deaf guards, ramps, shower stools, etc provided free of charge for guests with limited mobility or hearing.
- Where architecture allows we have provided ground floor bedrooms and accessible wet rooms.
- Our cottage is accessible for less able people and we have got M2, V1 and H1 categories of NAS
- We hire out bikes for less able people
- We have a delivery service so goods don't need to be carried, there is almost level access to the shop, and a parking place close to the door
- The stiles on the farm are small gates rather than steep steps so less able people can manage
- We have minimised the use of gravel in the grounds as this causes problems for wheel chairs
- There is clear lighting which comes on at dusk, lighting the paths around the place

5 c. How do you manage your surroundings to enhance the destination and its biodiversity for the visitor or customer? Consider garden, grounds, biodiversity, Soil, water, air, tranquillity, dark skies.

Examples:

- All outside lights are down-lighters with movement sensors so not causing light pollution
- Garden furniture in all properties is locally made and labelled
- Because the house is listed, the gardens were designed by an historic garden designer to ensure they are in keeping with the building
- The wildlife pond we built has newts, frogs, etc
- Our land is managed under a conservation agreement
- We work with the Wildlife Trust on placing bat boxes and Barn Owl boxes
- The bird tables attract lots of birds and visitors alike!
- We run our service in the Village Hall, so we have written to the village hall committee asking them to install rain butts so it's easier to water the tubs.

5d. At the customer interface what facilities are there to allow them to make green decisions and look after your destination?

Examples:

- Recycling bins allow customers to immediately separate and dispose of waste by the stall
- Bedrooms have notices about re-using towels when possible and individual heating controls
- Hospitality trays have local biscuits, Fairtrade tea and coffee (in small refillable jars, not little packets) and mini kettles
- Cottage guests have easy to use waste recycling and composting facilities
- The advertising posters give public transport options for reaching all the events
- The menus have identified dishes whose ingredients are locally sourced so customers can choose local
- Rooms all have folders with local leaflets and local pub menus
- Our reusable carrier bags advertise other local businesses
- The website has links to the local tourist board website

6. Services and Process including purchasing, laundry, food, manufacturing, farming how does the customer know what you are doing?

6a. cleaning and laundry

Examples:

- Many old remedies e.g. vinegar and lemon juice also used for cleaning
- Housekeeping contractors use steam cleaners and natural products where possible (although occasional stubborn stains are treated if needed)
- Farm overalls and general washing is done with Ecover non-bio washing powder
- We wash the tractor using water from the rain butts
- We explain how we chose which laundry to use (because of their green credentials) on our 'please reuse your towels' card in our bathrooms
- Cleaning materials supplied in the cottages are only environmentally friendly products so visitors can try them.

6 b. Purchasing

Examples:

- We grow all our own animal feed/ we make sure we source UK-grown feed to make sure its not from a source that depletes rainforest
- Our fencing materials are local wood, British wood or FSC-certified wood (Forestry Stewardship Council)
- Sweets are bought in bulk, stored in jars then sold in paper bags.
- Washing-up liquid, floor cleaner & disinfectant are bought in 5 litre containers.
- Shopping journeys are linked where possible with trips to bank and recycling
- The tiles on the floor of the extension have been reclaimed locally
- We use a biodegradable chain saw oil, which is vegetable oil based rather than mineral oil. Its a new formula oil which is thinner than normal chain oil, allowing operators to turn down the pump on the chainsaw and so use less
- We have 'green questionnaires' completed by all our suppliers, they are in the green folders in the cottages
- Most of the arts and crafts on display are from our county makers and are labelled.

6 b. Making/creating, manufacturing. How do your creative processes celebrate the environment and your destination? How do your customers know?

Examples:

- For wool products we use the otherwise discarded fleece of local rare-breed pet sheep and small amounts of wool are collected from local hedgerows, we tell people on our labels
- Our leaflets describe local woods where our forestry products come from and explains how proper woodland management enhances them
- All our artists use recycled materials, from silver from film and computer stock to beer bottles and driftwood
- One of our artists uses fleeces sourced from local farmers and dyed using vegetable dyes. This is then spun in here and made into wool items.
- We display EQM leaflets at point of sale

6 c. How do you manage your farm to conserve the special qualities of Staffordshire? What animal welfare measures do you have in place? How do people know?

For businesses that manage or farm land

Examples:

- We have restored two hay meadows and we show the public on Open Farm Sunday
- We are in Environmental Stewardship Higher Level Scheme and our chosen options are:
1) extending and recreating medieval parkland for wildlife, landscape and historic interests;
2) arable crop rotation for wildlife benefits, especially farmland birds such as skylark, yellowhammers and lapwing;
3) wild flower rich water meadows and fens along the river banks are being managed to enhance wildlife
- We use no nitrogen fertilizer across the whole holding and make sure we don't cut our meadows until after 15 July
- We have restored three dew ponds and they now have great crested newts
- We try and keep all our drystone walls up and have an ongoing restoration programme
- Our land has been surveyed for archaeological features and we make sure our farming practices do not disturb them. We have a guided walk around the farm which shows what the features are and explains their history
- We are registered organic with the Soil Association

7. Your destination's environment, how do you and your customers contribute?

Examples:

- Local caterers only use locally reared meats at our events, with many home grown veg
- All our teas and coffees are Fairtrade and with a fun survey guests helped us decide on which blend of coffee to serve
- We have table mats made out of recycled tetra paks
- Local micro-brewery -organic lager deliveries
- Our meat comes from an EQM farm with hay meadows
- Our Marmalade is made by a local lady in the village
- Our herbs are from the local herb farm
- We get as many local ingredients as possible including Eggs and milk from neighbouring farm, cheese from next village and oatcakes from nearest town.
- We offer ready meals made locally using meat from EQM farms to our self-catering guests, they are microwavable so use less energy to re-heat.

7 b. What do you do to support your destination's valued characteristics? How are you safeguarding and sharing these? How does the customer or visitor enjoy, learn about and contribute to this environment?

Examples:

- We volunteering regularly on conservation projects and tell our customers about our adventures!
- We collect donations from visitors for the local Wildlife Trust
- Our Business is a member of the local Wildlife Trust and we belong to the National Trust
- Member of our tourist board and support the Green Agenda
- We are members of our local Tourism Association who are working towards a greener area
- We run local cookery courses using local ingredients from EQM farms
- Copies of the Countryside code are provided in all properties
- Our tourist information corner is full of local leaflets
- The cottage has a 'Did You Know?' information sheet containing interesting facts on environmental issues.

8. What do you do to support your destination’s heritage and culture? How does the customer enjoy, learn about and contribute to its local heritage and culture?

Examples:

- ‘Honest repairs’ are carried out to original features such as beams, rather than replacing with replicas so the story of our historic building is there for all to see
- We have a self guided farm walk leaflet so people can learn about the landscape, the way of life and how farming has changed over the years
- I help with the local historic festival, and invite our visitors to come and see
- We only engage local musicians and bands for our events
- We advertise and promote the great guided walks by National Trust, local rangers and town guides
- We have a collection of books about the local History of our area

9 a. How do you and your staff keep up-to-date with your destination’s initiatives, EQM and new environmental ideas? How do you keep your work related skills up-to-date? Training attended?

Examples:

- I and one of my staff attended a ‘Green Advantage’ course in 2009
- We belong to local Tourism Assoc and have joint training courses and speakers at meetings
- We went to a bio energy workshop and site visits
- I subscribe to e-newsletters about renewable energy

9 b. Do you employ local people? How do you look after your employees? How can they make suggestions? How do your customers or visitors know?

Example:

- We employ local women and have decided working hours to fit their families
- We pay more than minimum wage
- We encourage staff to talk to visitors, they all wear name badges and we celebrate any outstanding service
- We have a mini bus to pick up local staff members
- There is a safe store for staff bicycles
- Staff always get to pick first from any replaced items during refurbishments
- Two self employed contractors employed by the business were mentored and encouraged to start their own businesses

9 c. How do you support your local community? How do people know? How can the customer or visitor contribute too?

Examples:

- ‘No fireworks’, and ‘no night sky lanterns’ policies to look after neighbours
- Grazing is provided free of charge to nearby farmers in return for meadow maintenance
- I am a school governor
- We sponsored and designed the village website
- Contact details for local churches are in the accommodation information directories
- We belong to a local fund raising group that supports different charities each year
- We invite guests’ donations to the local First responders group

9 d. How does your business work with other EQM and environmentally sensitive/local businesses? How do your customers and visitors know?

Examples:

- We keep supplies of the EQM flyers for our customers
- We mention where our bacon, sausage, milk and eggs come from on our menus, all EQM members
- We pass on enquiries to other EQM award holders and local businesses
- We communicate on Twitter and promote each other and the area

9 e. How does your business support the community beyond your local community? How will your customer or visitor be aware of your involvement/ support of the global community? How can they contribute too?

Examples:

- We offer a number of prizes of free breaks for charities to use for their own fundraising. Charities that have benefitted from free prizes include Macmillan Cancer, Children’s Adventure Farm Trust, in aid of both local charities and children’s charities.
- We support ‘ Practical Action’ (practical solutions to poverty in the developing world), Anthony Nolan Bone Marrow Register and the local Wildlife Trust; guests are invited to donate to which ever they want to support
- Our local Church raises money for overseas charities and we help
- A little boy in Malawi has been sponsored by our family

9 f. How can your customers and visitors give you their feedback and share their ideas with you about environmental issues and keeping your destination special?

Examples:

- We have a customer comments book
- We ask guests for their 'green ideas' on a form in their room
- Our website has a link for customers to make eco suggestions
- We take part in a regional survey where visitors opinions are gathered