

## A Greener Staying Cool

### 1.0 A bit of background

The business concept for Staying Cool was based on the two directors' experiences of working away from home and their very personal likes (organic peppermint tea, espressos and Apple Macs...) and dislikes (paying for wifi, instant coffee and individual milk portions) to name but a few.

We have obviously refined our product and service offering over the past six years in response to guest and staff feedback but essentially our brand is still very much based on our own beliefs and ethics. There are now 12 of us at Staying Cool and we all like to think we are pretty much *green* and *thoughtful people*.

It's not always been easy – as a design-led company we aim to provide the most stylish products and services. At times, going for the greenest option can mean compromising on quality and potentially our 4-5\* quality status. As a new, small and independent company, cost can also play a part. Green is rarely the cheapest option – even today!

Our main aim for 2008 was to become a Green Tourism Business which we did in July with the award of a bronze rating in Manchester.

This document (obviously printed on recycled paper if you're reading it in a hard copy format) explains our environmental and ethical thinking and the steps we have taken and are still taking to becoming a more sustainable company. Hopefully it shows our *think global, act local* philosophy.

### 2.0 Procurement

We want our guests to enjoy the finest quality supplies, which are in keeping with their beautifully designed apartment. We have provided the following as standard since we opened our first apartment back in August 2005:

- locally sourced organic (or free range) fresh and store cupboard ingredients
- GM free foods
- recycled and recyclable paper goods eg toilet rolls, kitchen rolls (when we provided them), writing paper
- Fairtrade goods eg teas, coffee, hot chocolate and sugar
- Environmentally-friendly cleaning products eg Ecover washing up liquid and dishwasher tablets

We always try to buy from local suppliers so in Birmingham, for example, all our apartment stock from the china and glasses to the bathroom bins came from Red Rob Catering Supplies in Edgbaston. Our lightbulbs from Birmingham's Lamp and Gear. Our wine comes from the lovely Paul in Harborne and we are currently seeking a city centre deli (there's a gap that needs filling) to provide all our food and drink. In the meantime, everything is coming from different independent suppliers, the local Sainsbury's or Waitrose.

Our toiletries range is certainly one area where we have made a difference. We have sourced a supplier of hand-blended aromatherapy based products which are also free of SLS's and parabens. The bottles are biodegradable and recyclable. These have been in use since Dec 07 and we updated the packaging in 2008 and 2010 to bring it more in line with our new brand identity.

In October 2008 we introduced a new Staying Cool blend of coffee from a great little coffee company called Hasbean. They build long-term relationships with the best growers and pay a premium for the best beans. Each apartment gets its own freshly roasted pack ensuring it is fresh and waste is kept to a minimum.

We brought our cleaning team in house in August 2009, in part so that we could have better control over our green credentials. We now employ six members of staff.

In terms of furniture procurement we use a mix of original furniture from the 1950's, 1960's and 1970's as well as specially commissioned pieces and we salvage items and restore them to their former glory. At the Rotunda the dining chairs are all refurbished 60s originals. The sofas are all made from wood from a sustainable source by Naughtone, a very environmentally-friendly company.

## 2.1 Key Objectives

- To achieve 80% locally procured apartment goods by the end of 2012 (currently 70%)

## 3.0 Waste Reduction

We try to stick to the 3Rs of reduce, re-use, and recycle. We conducted a waste analysis in 2008 of how we might reduce what we already use. There is still some way to go, but since then we have:

- Switched from cap tops to pump tops on all bathroom products to reduce the amounts used
- Cut the number of oranges we put out in each apartment by 20% each week and keep them in the fridge to reduce wastage
- Switched from pre-packed to loose produce whenever possible
- Bought large bags for items to be carried to and from market in to cut out plastic bag use
- Removed flannels from our linen supply as they were rarely being used
- Introduced cards (printed on recycled card) that are put out with the towels, robes and bedding encouraging guests to set aside all unwanted items.
- Switched to large bottles (refillable and recyclable when available) eg olive oil, washing up liquid, and bathroom products
- In 2011, when we ran out of our Rotunda leaflet, we switched to a four sided business card that both in-house guests could use as well as the sales team for prospective guests. Genius!

## 3.1 Key Objectives

- To review twice yearly (May and November) the amount of wastage we generate and take action accordingly.
- To always inform suppliers upon delivery/purchase if we think their products are too heavily packaged.

## 4.0 Re-Using Goods

Following our waste analyses we have:

- Tried to replace once-only products with re-usables wherever practical eg rechargeable batteries for handsets at Rotunda, strong bags to replace carrier bags
- Given last sell by date foodstuffs to a local charity in Birmingham

- Made a conscious effort not to print documents unless really necessary and to ensure that we use both sides of the paper when they are for internal consumption only (then recycled)
- We use left over guest milk from regular guests in the staff room (a staff suggestion)

#### 4.1 **Key Objectives**

- To ensure that all unused and/or unopened foodstuffs are given away when appropriate to a local charity
  - Purchase of automatic double-sided printer once this one becomes unrepairable

#### 5.0 **Recycling**

We are all already very good at recycling at work. Our original waste analysis showed that the same principles did not extend to the refuse generated by guests in our apartments.

We recycle glass, paper and cans and we have re-written our apartment guides to further encourage guests to recycle their waste – rather than the servicing team having to do it themselves. The philosophy here is that we will give guests all the information and the tools to undertake recycling themselves whenever possible.

We already use recycled goods both in the office and in our apartments eg toilet paper plus we only use recycled paper.

#### 5.1 **Key Objectives**

- Continue to search for a more ethical linen supplier in the Birmingham area throughout 2011.

#### 6.0 **Energy Saving**

Our electricity is 100% renewable from Ecotricity – and has been since 2008. Our housekeeping supervisor goes into apartments when guests check out to turn off appliances saving about two hours per apartment per day electricity. We strive in our apartments to strike a balance between creating a warm and welcoming atmosphere for our guests – particularly in Winter – through mood lighting and energy conservation. We therefore:

- only turn on one small lamp when we know a guest is arriving late at night (to provide a friendly welcome). Otherwise, all apartments are left in darkness until they are needed
- keep the apartment as temperate as possible for the season (except in particularly cold spells) but give guests the necessary information to increase the temperature during their stay while ensuring that the settings default back down to the lower temperature
- all non-essential goods such as alarm clocks, blenders, washing machines, dishwashers, TVs etc all left switched off/unplugged
- all apartment guides give instructions for a 30 degree wash. A guest has to look in the appliance manual for other instructions.
- Keep the Apple Mac switched off at all times with instructions on how to turn it on
- Complete the switch to all energy saving bulbs by October 2010

We are also working on ways we can get guests to be more proactive around energy saving when they are in the apartment eg adding a line to their welcome text asking them to switch off when they leave if we know we won't be arriving for a few hours.

#### 6.1 **Key Objectives**

- Employ an energy consultant in 2012 to advise on boiler settings to minimise energy consumption while still providing a ready supply of hot water and temperate climate for guests and implement their findings by the end of October 2010
- To reduce electricity usage a further 10% in Birmingham in 2012 compared to 2011.

## 7.0 **Our Carbon Footprint**

Our company policy is that whenever possible we try to walk or take public transport. All our Manchester apartments are strategically located along the one mile stretch of the Deansgate corridor and in Birmingham they are in the same building, so it is relatively easy to achieve.

We don't pay mileage costs to staff for journeys that could be made by train – the maximum reclaimable sum is the advance purchase rail fare which acts as a deterrent to using a car. We don't provide company cars and we pay a lump sum car fee to just one car user per month again to further discourage excessive car use.

We also try to encourage guests to use public transport – or walk – through the advice in our apartment guide and signage. We provide maps of Manchester and Birmingham as well as an A-Z in each apartment. We have also been charging separately for car parking since January 2008, which we have previously included within our room rate. Although as a company we dislike the *hidden extras* philosophy, this may discourage some guests from bringing their cars and certainly won't penalise people who don't.

We have a series of guided walks in our apartments.

## 7.1 **Key Objectives**

- Update all the walking guides by June 2012.
- Use our funds in the 100 Club to support environmentally friendly projects in 2013.

8.0 **Ethical Policy**

Where possible we try and behave ethically. We try to treat our employees and our guests how we would like to be treated ourselves. We try to be thoughtful and mindful of others whenever we can. This view pervades everything we do. We don't charge for basics such as wifi, coffee, late check-outs to avoid eleventh hour hidden extras.

8.1 **Key Objectives**

- To include green issues in staff's annual performance targets from March 2012.
- To include questions about people's interest in green matters at all job interviews.
- To change each city's Green Champion every April and to allocate a £500 budget.

9.0 **Review**

All the above objectives are reviewed at our monthly management meetings (green issues is a standard agenda item).

Tracey Stephenson  
Director  
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