

Higher Wiscombe



Photo: courtesy of Higher Wiscombe

Contact:

Alistair Handyside

Email: alistair@higherwiscombe.com

Telephone: 07771 678028

Relevant links:

Website: www.higherwiscombe.com

Overview

Higher Wiscombe offers 5 star sustainable self-catering accommodation in East Devon. It has 3 converted-barn cottages in the grounds of a 19th century farmhouse.

Alistair Handyside, owner of Higher Wiscombe, has already noticed changes in the severity of weather brought about by climate change, with more extreme storms, hail and heat. He expects more of this to come in the future and anticipates potential greater damage as a result.

Alistair sees adapting as vital, recognising that climate change will become a major driver for all to take action. Adapting is seen as complementary to the wide range of other sustainability actions that have been taken at Higher Wiscombe – plans to increase the business' self-sufficiency on water and power will both help to reduce their carbon emissions (and therefore help to mitigate against climate change) and to improve their resilience to potential restrictions on water-use brought about by climate change and rising energy prices

To begin the process of adapting to climate change, Alistair sought advice from a number of sources including SWCCIP and the Devon Association for Renewable Energy (DARE). A survey of the business was also undertaken to identify opportunities for improvement.

Climate change adaptation actions

- Carried out an initial assessment of the risks of flooding and plan to do more work on the driveway to manage run-off and reduce flood-risk
- Alistair is already noticing that there is a longer season in which visitors use the swimming pool, so drying facilities have been provided in the accommodation
- The modern re-development of the properties was done with the changing climate in mind, to ensure that staff and visitors remain comfortable whatever the temperature
- Some Sustainable Drainage Systems have been put in place and more re-development is planned
- Attended food hygiene courses to ensure that the business can operate safely

Benefits

- Improved working environment
- Good customer feedback has driven the business forward
- Increased custom, with guests returning as they can see the efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change are genuine and not just 'greenwash'
- Winner of Devon Environmental Business Initiative Sustainable Tourism Awards 2007, achieved Gold award in the Green Tourism Business Scheme (GTBS) and Silver in the South West Tourism Excellence Awards 2007/8 for Sustainable Tourism

Challenges

Costs and time are the biggest challenges, particularly in installing Higher Wiscombe's own power generation. However, in the long run it is considered cost-effective, with costs decreasing and the energy efficiency of the business increasing

Recommendations

- Attend relevant courses, as these can be beneficial – listen and engage wherever you can
- Move towards an all-weather business model e.g. provide wellies!
- Alistair has found Green Awareness courses, the GTBS and climate change events all helpful