



Visit
Wales

Tourism Case Study – Industry

Swansea Valley Holiday Cottages

“Green Accommodation” Collection

Major Themes – Nature, Culture



Achievements

- Green Dragon Environmental Standard® Level 2
- Runner-up in the Wales Business & Sustainability Awards, Tourism Category, 2007
- 30% increase in business since promoting biodiversity on own website and 25% repeat business

Accommodation information

- Visit Wales 5 star
- Holiday Cottages
- Location – Pontardawe, Swansea Valley

Owner details

Richard Bowen, Swansea Valley Holiday Cottages, Plas Farm, Cilybebyll, Pontardawe, Neath Port Talbot SA8 3JQ

Tel: 01792 864611

Email: enquires@walescottages.com

www.welsholidaycottages.com



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Swansea Valley Holiday Cottages

Background

Swansea Valley Holiday Cottages are situated on Plas Farm in Pontardawe, Swansea. The accommodation comprises four self-catering cottages.

There is no excuse for anyone staying at Swansea Valley Holiday Cottages not to end their holiday having become very well informed about all aspects of sustainability, the local wildlife and the local culture. The provision of useful and interesting information is a particular feature of staying here. Feedback from guests shows how much they appreciate it and many have returned for that very reason.

“If we want people to fall in love with the Welsh countryside, we must help them to understand it. By embracing green tourism, we are giving people more reasons to visit Wales.” **Richard Bowen, Owner**

Sustainable Tourism Accreditation

Operating in a sustainable manner makes good business sense in addition to protecting Wales' greatest asset – its spectacular landscapes – and making best use of resources to ensure they will remain for the benefit of future generations.

“Green” tourism is growing fast and is increasingly important to visitors to Wales.

Green Dragon Environmental Standard®

The owners of Swansea Valley Holiday Cottages have implemented an environmental management system to help them manage their business in an environmentally sound way and to enable them to monitor and measure their achievements. In addition to attracting visitors, the environmental programme has identified cost savings.

Success Stories

Nature

A long-term biodiversity programme is being implemented at the farm and around the cottages. In addition to the simple deployment of bird and mammal boxes, which alone makes a big difference to the wildlife, the owners have also planted native shrubs, trees and other plants according to their ability to attract wildlife. In particular, butterfly-friendly species have been chosen.

Other measures have been the planting of species-rich hedgerows and the removal of rhododendron.

An online database of all species spotted at the farm has been created and guests are encouraged to take part in an ecological survey to monitor biodiversity on site. Guests are provided with the equipment to do this and the feedback shows that they find this particularly rewarding. The results are posted on the owners' extensive website and many guests have been attracted to the cottages as a result of searching for information on biodiversity rather than holiday accommodation!

The owners' commitment to sustainable tourism is also demonstrated by their carbon offsetting scheme whereby guests are given the opportunity to plant Welsh oak trees at the farm to reduce the environmental impact of their holiday. This is proving very popular with guests who are increasingly concerned about their “carbon footprint”.

Energy

The owners are keen to utilise renewable resources to reduce the amount of carbon-emitting energy they use. They are monitoring water flow down the river and local rainfall to collect data for a potential micro-hydro project. There are also plans to install a small wind turbine at the farm.

The provision of information and signage in the cottages is resulting in a reduction in energy costs.

Waste

The owners use consumables made from recycled materials and recycle everything that it is possible to recycle. Different coloured bins for separating waste are made available for guests. The information provided for guests encourages through example and goes that one step further in providing interesting statistics to show why it is important. There is also useful information on where to obtain recycled consumables.

Paper, glass, cans and domestic plastic are all collected for recycling; all organic waste is composted on site; printer cartridges are sent to a recycling facility; used tyres are sent for recycling for use as sports pitches and rubber flooring; construction and demolition waste is recycled into sand and single sized aggregates by a local company.

Swansea Valley Holiday Cottages

Large plastic items are recycled into plastic lumber and used to make garden and street furniture for local councils and schools.

Culture

The provision of useful and interesting information for every aspect of a stay in the cottages has been a long term project for the owners. The result is impressive and also good for business as guests particularly remark that this is one of the major attractions for staying at the cottages

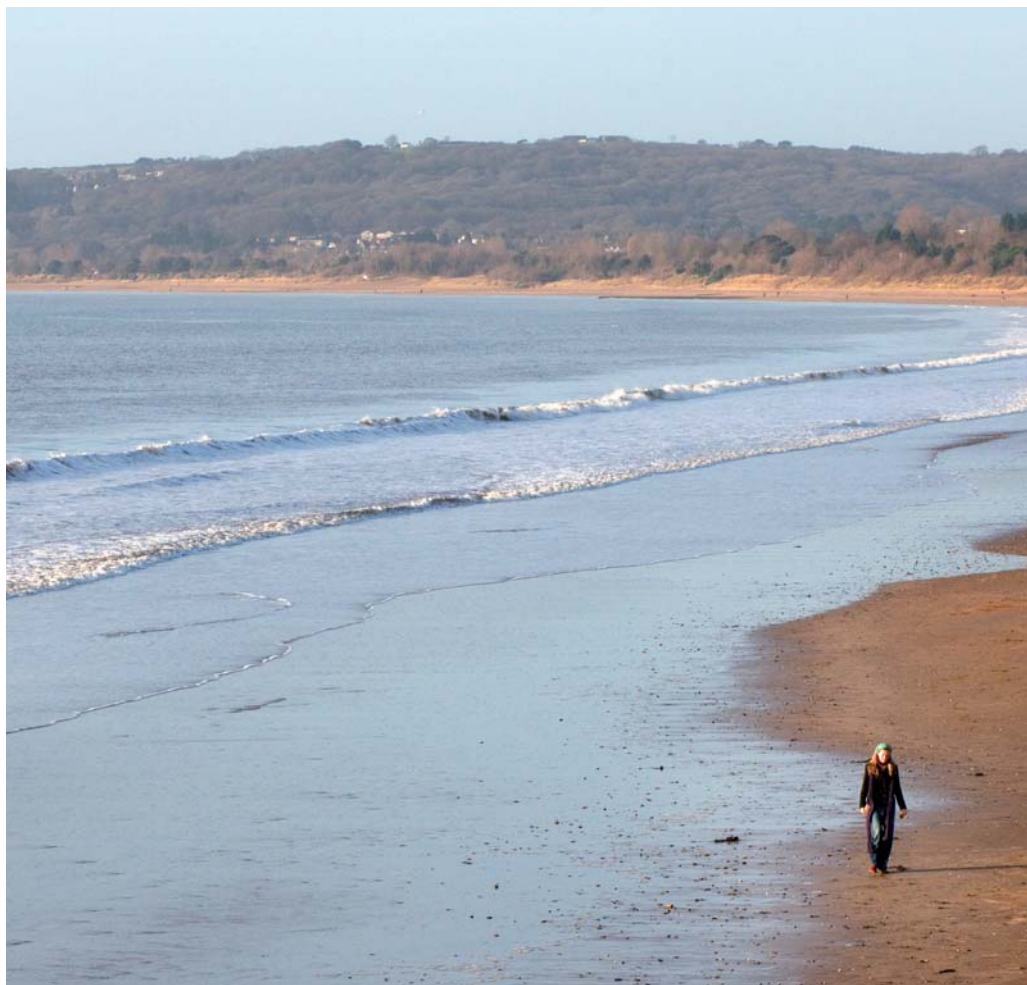
The website provides excellent and detailed information, especially about the wildlife around the cottages. The site is kept up to date with photos and sightings by guests.

Guests will never wonder what to do when staying at the cottages. They are provided with an impressive folder of detailed information on the area, the wildlife and a vast array of useful information. Fifteen well thought out and timed itineraries have been devised

to ensure guests lose no time in exploring the area. One of the benefits is that guests realise how much there is to see and rebook year after year to continue their explorations. There is a veritable library of well organised, indexed and up-to-date brochures on all aspects of local culture, events etc

The owner has written a book comprising a detailed description of the Plas Farm Trail with information on the area's history, wildlife, famous people, local stories, language and much more. A copy is kept in each cottage.

Contributing to environmental charities is an important part of the owners' commitment to doing something positive. A proportion of the booking fee from members of certain environmental charities is contributed to the charity in question. In 2006, the business became partners with the Plant a Tree for Life organisation which runs community projects to help combat climate change, and with the Born Free Foundation which runs a basking shark monitoring programme off the coast of Wales.



Swansea Valley Holiday Cottages

Further Information

Energy Saving Advice

fs4b.wales.gov.uk

Welsh Assembly Government, Flexible Support for Business has information and environmental advice. Alternatively call 03000 6 03000

www.energysavingwales.org.uk

For useful tips on how to save energy.

www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/business

Useful information and case studies to help your business to be more energy efficient.

www.carbontrust.co.uk

Advice on energy efficiency and CO₂ emissions. Also has information on how to get loans to change to energy efficient appliances and equipment.

Food & Buying Locally

www.foodwales.com

Quality local food and drink suppliers.

www.farmersmarketsinwales.co.uk

For details on farmers markets and local producers.

www.organic.ac.uk

Downloadable copies of Where to Buy Local Organic Food, free of charge from Organic Centre Wales.

www.fairtradewales.com/

Information on the Fair Trade campaign in Wales.

www.walescoop.com/what-we-do/fair-trade/

Information on how Fair Trade can help your business.

Green Cleaning Products

www.greenchoices.org

Background information about producers of environmentally friendly cleaning products in the UK.

www.greenbuying.co.uk

Tools such as green services directory and eco shop.

www.wwf.org.uk

World Wildlife Fund's shop sells environmentally friendly cleaning products.

www.ecover.com

Environmentally friendly household and cleaning products.

www.greenconsumerguide.com

Web based resource for environmental, ethical and sustainable products, services and news.

Green Tourism

www.industry.visitwales.co.uk/

Information on Visit Wales star grading scheme, marketing opportunities for your business as well as advice on how to make your business more sustainable.

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/tourism/development/sustainable/?lang=en>

On the Visit Wales website, you can find a number of case studies showing best practice in the tourism industry.

www.green-snowdonia.co.uk

Advice and tips on sustainable tourism from the Green Snowdonia Project.

www.greendragonwales.com

How to make your business more sustainable with the help of the Green Dragon Environmental Standard.

www.green-business.co.uk

How to make your business more sustainable with the help of the Green Tourism Business Scheme (GTBS).

Recycling & Waste

www.wasteawarenesswales.org.uk

Information about managing materials and resources more sustainably, and reducing waste.

www.compost.org.uk

The Composting Association researches and promotes the benefits of composting and other biological treatment techniques.

Swansea Valley Holiday Cottages

www.ciwm.org.uk

Chartered Institution of Wastes Management (CIWM)

Professional body for waste and resource management including factsheets on energy and waste, training and careers, along with tenders.

www.cylch.org.uk

Cylch aims to promote sustainable resource management in Wales through education and practical action.

www.wrap.org.uk

WRAP works in partnership to encourage and enable businesses and consumers to be more efficient in their use of materials and recycle more things more often.

Water Management

www.dwrcymru.com

Water and sewerage services to people living and working in Wales.

www.environment-agency.gov.uk/savewater

The Environment Agency deals with issues relating to national and international water resources, demand management and water conservation.

www.wras.co.uk

Advice to help you to meet national requirements for the design, installation and maintenance of plumbing systems, water fittings and water-using appliances.

Transport

www.sustrans.org.uk

Sustrans – the sustainable transport charity – works on practical projects to encourage people to walk, cycle and use public transport in order to reduce motor traffic and its adverse effects.

www.traveline-cymru.info

All the information you need to plan a journey in Wales.

www.industry.visitwales.co.uk

Information on sustainable transport including best practice case studies.

Welsh Language

www.byig-wlb.org.uk

Welsh Language Board

www.wales.gov.uk/topics/tourism

Look out for information on the 'Croeso Cynnes Cymreig – A Warm Welsh Welcome' programme on the Visit Wales website.

General information

www.netregs.gov.uk

Government help for small businesses guiding them through environmental regulations.

www.envirowise.gov.uk

Free advice and support for businesses on ways to increase profit, minimise waste and reduce environmental impact. Cleaner design, water, waste and legislation.



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Email: infosustainabletourism@wales.gsi.gov.uk