

THE CATERER

Cateys 2021: Sustainable Business Award: Whatley Manor

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Since 2019 Whatley Manor has been driving hard towards best-practice environmental and social sustainability. In the process, it has demonstrated that hotels can provide a luxury guest experience without excessive consumption.

The five-red-AA-star, 23-bedroom property in Malmesbury, Wiltshire, has partnered with EarthCheck, a scientific certification and advisory group for the travel and tourism sector. EarthCheck benchmarks the hotel's annual performance against stringent criteria. The hotel's latest rating is five out of five.

Sustainability underpins every business decision, with data and measurement essential at every step. The ethos is that you cannot manage what you have not measured.

The hotel has partnered with Too Good to Go to minimise food waste, and it was one of the first UK restaurants to be awarded a Michelin green star for its efforts in sustainable food purchasing, cooking and waste management. Its targets include net-zero emissions by 2028, with a 75% reduction target by 2026.

The pandemic hasn't driven sustainability down the Whatley agenda. General manager Sue Williams and non-furloughed staff have been making the most of the enforced closures to improve the hotel's credentials. Williams, for example, used the time to complete a nine-week course on businesses transitioning to net-zero emissions. The final assignment was a decarbonising business strategy, which Whatley will now implement.

The hotel understands that achieving its sustainability goals depends on the buy-in and support of everyone in its operational mix. The hotel has an environmental taskforce, headed by Williams and Whatley's sustainability co-ordinator Kate Church, and made up of employees from all departments. It meets every six weeks to share ideas and progress and take on new research and projects. Every member is empowered to contribute ideas, and sustainability has been woven into all HR processes, from interview to training.

The hotel has conducted a full supply chain review over the past year. It aims to encourage suppliers to decarbonise their operations – or find alternatives where necessary. All Whatley suppliers must sign a code of conduct that includes modern slavery, fair pay and welfare.

Removing plastic and packaging from deliveries has reduced the hotel's bin requirement from 14 a week to just four, saving £7,000 a year. What waste is produced is turned into carbon-neutral building blocks.

A pre-arrival email explains to guests the commitment to sustainability and outlines how they can support this during their stay. The hotel also uses the marketing support of Itmustbenow.com to point guests looking for ethical travel towards the property, while it continues to explore how it can do better and minimise its impact on the environment.

What the judges said

"An outstanding winner that submitted a great application, with every question answered in depth and with evidence to back it up. Its approach is across the full business, from the rooms to the meals. It was good to see from the website and online presence that Whatley is transparent with its systems and belief in a sustainable business and its vision for the future." - Calum Richardson

The shortlist

- 15Hatfields, London
- Hickory Food
- Whatley Manor, Wiltshire

The judges

- Mike Hanson, head of sustainable business, WSH
- Andrea Nicholas, chief executive, Green Tourism
- Calum Richardson, owner, the Bay Fish & Chips

MESSAGE FROM NOW

Whatley Manor is a member of the NOW Force for Good Alliance. View their NOW SUSTAINABILITY profile [HERE](#).