



## The White Rock, Hastings, East Sussex.



### Re-inventing a Hospitality Business- Responsibly

On the Hastings seafront, the family owned White Rock Hotel is a 40-room, mid- -luxury market property which has undergone a complete transfiguration thanks to its current owners .

Once a noisy, seedy, smoky pub offering karaoke and 1960's rooms, new owners, Mr & Mrs Bell took on a struggling business and created a thriving, inviting and environmentally responsible establishment. With a name change, culture change and complete refurbishment implemented by the Bells and their team came a changed client base and fortunes too.

Today The White Rock operates at 60% occupancy year-round with an in-house laundry, 30 staff, a successful café/bar serving food until 10pm and non-smoking outside terraces – all with environmental responsibility top of the agenda. Popular with locals and visitors alike, The White Rock is achieving its goal of being good for Hastings and good for the environment and with a growing turnover– it's a success all round!

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## 5 Steps to a green business

The new owners' intentions were to set up a profitable business that was good for Hastings and environmentally responsible – a challenge in many ways not least because The White Rock Hotel is not purpose built premises. In the words of its owners, "It is ten seafront houses knocked together, meaning many long corridors, devoid of natural light and presenting unique refurbishment challenges." Reinventing the property and changing the client base presented a dilemma: should they close the facility and completely refurbish to re-launch, or should they stay open and make changes in stages? The bank answered the predicament and they were to stay open and undergo the refurbish and transformation in steps, shrinking the carbon footprint of the business as they went.

### Step 1 – Lighting the way for energy management

Energy costs for the business were high and lighting accounted for at least 25% of electricity costs. The new owners knew that lighting was an area they could make a big difference on with a relatively small



investment and money saved on energy goes straight to the bottom line, increasing revenue without the need to increase sales. Looking at every area of the property, the Bells noticed that the hotel's facilities and many of its corridors were all lit using ordinary incandescent bulbs. The first step on getting the energy

bill down was replacing all the hotel's lighting with low-wattage compact fluorescent bulbs which provided immediate savings.

The hotel refurbishment was undertaken in phases, ten rooms at a time and with the bar area converted to a café-restaurant during the first phase.

Light fittings were changed to accommodate LED lighting when the rooms were redecorated and new bathrooms installed. LEDs offer many choices for lighting and typically use 75% less energy than incandescents. However, good quality LEDs are not cheap – they are an investment that will reduce energy consumption and last ten times longer than old style bulbs and The White Rock wanted to make sure their choice of LED was the right investment for them. The new owners trialed and monitored their chosen LEDs in the new café-restaurant facilities before installing them in the next phase of refurbishment.

New lighting in the café-restaurant covered a wide area and needed to create changing moods for service throughout the day so it was the acid test for the new bulbs. The Bells installed banks of 3 - 5 Watt LED lamps which provide adjustable, atmospheric lighting, with a total energy consumption of under 200 Watts. Trained staff use colour-coded dots on the lighting control

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panel to adjust light settings for different times of day. It was a big hit...the LEDs were go for the rest of the property upgrade.

The many long corridors connecting each part of this hotel have no natural daylight so lighting is left on constantly, an expensive necessity. With the installation of 3-5 watt LED bulbs, energy consumption and costs have been reduced to a minimum. The owners are now considering installing motion sensors in the corridors to further reduce electricity consumption.

Look after the pennies and the pounds look after themselves....Small details matter to reducing energy consumption and so all the kettles placed in rooms are limited to 50cl capacity – perfect for guest requirements without wasting electricity on unneeded boiled water.

Effectively trained staff switch off equipment when it is not in use. Checking thermostat settings on hot water cylinders regularly to minimise unnecessary water heating and ensuring pipework and hot water cylinders are properly insulated also make a difference. With these changes energy consumption is now around 27kWh per guest night – pretty good for a property which requires more lighting than normal due to the extent of corridors connecting the property.

Lawrance Bell

Owner, The White Rock Hotel, Hastings

**“Most important of all: You must change suppliers to save energy costs. At every time for re-negotiation, look around for changing prices and change suppliers. You can save lots of money by changing contracts at every renewal period. It is a nuisance, but you have to do it. Give your supplier notice within the contract terms and change suppliers – even if they try to keep you as a customer. It will always save you money.”**

## Step 2 – Water



While the bathrooms were being refitted, water savings were taken into account and showers were fitted with low-flow, aereated shower heads. Water-saving shower heads can be fitted to shower installations quickly and easily, are easy to clean and can deliver a reduced flow rate of 6-9 litres per minute (compared with 20 litres of water per minute running at typical mains pressure)while not reducing the guest experience of a good shower. Efficient showers save not only water and effluent charges but also reduce energy consumption due to the amount of energy

required to heat the water for a hot shower. Making showers more efficient is one of the easiest ways to reduce water and energy and to save money!

The White Rock owners have found that over time, guests have become more environmentally-minded and are more likely to choose to shower over a bath. As a result, the property owners are refurbishing their remaining rooms with just showers and no baths.

To keep the water savings flowing, the Bells and their team are looking into opportunities to fit flow restrictors to taps. Several devices exist which can be fitted to taps and contribute to water savings of up to 80%. They are often cheap and easy to fit onto existing taps, resulting in short pay back periods. Isolating ball valves, flow restrictors, spray taps or tap aerators can reduce flow by 10 litres per minute and incur minimal capital costs.

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### Step 3 – Laundry, washing down the costs.

The White Rock Hotel has its own laundry. The owners find it convenient and economic for their 40-room property with no transport required and the ability to maintain control of laundry energy consumption (and costs) by ensuring full loads and energy efficient settings for their machines.

To wash up more laundry saving, the FoodWise Project suggested the introduction of a towel reuse policy for the hotel. Now commonplace in hotels large and small,



customers are asked to hang their towel up if they are willing to use it for more than one day and place those for laundry in the bath. There might be further laundry efficiencies to be made by reducing the number of towels and pillows provided in single occupancy rooms too.

### Step 4 – Want not, waste not!

The White Rock made sure they were maximising their recycling and recycle all dry mixed recyclables and glass. Minimising the waste from day to day operations is a key part to maximising green credentials and keeping costs down, something that The White Rock Hotel is already good at. The FoodWise project found opportunities to make a few extra savings by matching the quantity of soaps and bath products provided in rooms with the room occupancy, (providing a single soap for a single occupancy) or installing dispensers alongside a stock of individually packaged products for guests that prefer them. These changes can deliver savings of up to 50% on these products and reduce what goes into the bin too!

### Step 5 – The big ticket item, Photo Voltatics

As part of their commitment to being environmentally responsible, owners of The White Rock Hotel invested £50,000 in 54 photo voltaic panels (PVs) with an expected pay-back period of 10 years. The panels were installed on south-facing flat roofs and the system is linked to a screen in reception, showing guests:

- how much energy the PVs are generating at any given time of day;
- the total amount of energy generated since they were installed;
- how much CO2 has been saved from the atmosphere.

While the pay-back period will be slightly longer than expected, the owners say:

**“It is a nice thought we’re generating solar power and not contributing as much to global warming. Our guests also seem to appreciate what we’re doing.”**

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## Lessons Learned

Lawrence Bell says that updating the property from a dilapidated pub to a modern hotel would have been easier if the building(s) had been purpose built. It's fair to say that closing the property and refurbishing completely before reopening would have been a more efficient way to change the customer base and property image quickly. But, the staggered refurbishment of The White Rock did bring some benefits as it gave the business a chance to try out the environmental technologies, evaluate the impact of the changes and pick the very best before implementing them across the property.



The ERDF FoodWISE Sustainable approaches to food waste in the hospitality sector project aims to help 250 SMEs working within, serving or supplying the hospitality sector to make cost savings and improve their environmental track record on purchasing, preparing and disposing of food.

The Project is managed by Oxfordshire County Council and part funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). For more information on the project and its delivery partners visit [www.Food-wiseuk.co.uk](http://www.Food-wiseuk.co.uk).

