

*Environmental  
Initiatives in  
London Hotels:  
1997 survey results*

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## *Overview of findings*

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*In early 1997 a survey was carried out of London hotels to enquire about the actions they were taking to reduce the environmental impacts of their activities. 36 hotels responded, representing 7608 bedrooms, an average of 211 bedrooms per hotel. The main findings of the survey are as follows:*

- The vast majority of respondents claim to be taking action to reduce the environmental impact of their hotel, and half bring their actions to the attention of guests.*
- Two-thirds of hotels claim to be recycling materials, with glass the most common reported by 64%, followed by paper (42%) and metal (25%).*
- Recycling of other materials is undertaken by less than 20% of the sample.*
- Just over half the sample report actions to reduce the consumption of resources by conserving energy; just over a quarter claim to be taking action to conserve water.*
- Fewer than 10% claim to be avoiding the use of tropical hardwood.*
- Two thirds of respondents report fair employment and/or equal opportunities practices.*
- Only one respondent reported the ethical sourcing of goods.*
- Two thirds of respondents report taking action to reduce environmental pollution, most of whom are acting on CFCs in refrigeration plant and/or aerosols.*
- Half the respondents report re-using goods or materials, but there was little agreement about the specific actions they were taking.*
- Actions to protect biodiversity were reported by just 11% of the sample.*
- Actions to exploit renewables were reported by just 6%.*
- Fewer than a quarter of the hotels report that they have an environmental policy. A fifth said they had staff who were members of an institution or association with an environmental policy, but none kept a copy of the institution's policy in their office.*
- One third were members of a local authority environmental scheme. But fewer than 10% were members of any other hotel environmental organisation, and none was a member of any environmental organisation outside the hotels sector.*
- Environmental reviews of operating practices had been undertaken in one third of the responding hotels - half by the local authority, half by in-house staff. None of the reviews had been carried out by private sector firms or environmental organisations.*
- Three-quarters of respondents said they would know where to look for information about environmental initiatives. Local authorities were cited as a potential source of information by 38% of respondents, government agencies were cited by 17% of the sample. However, only 47% of respondents had used published information on how to reduce environmental impact.*

- *The independent hotels which took part in the survey were typically smaller than those which were part of chains, but independent hotels were neither more, nor less, likely to take actions on the environment. Neither was there any significant correlation between size of hotel and the taking of initiatives - large hotels appear to be no more, nor less, likely to take action to reduce their environmental impact.*
- *There was no evidence to suggest that a small number of environmentally-motivated hotels were responsible for taking the majority of the actions recorded. Rather it appears that the taking of actions was on an individual hotel by hotel basis; some hotels were active on some fronts, others on other fronts, with no shared agenda or set of priorities apparent across the sample as a whole.*

## Conclusions

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*At best, many of these findings are very positive for the hotels sector. 94% of hotels reported they were acting to reduce their environmental impact. The actions included those being taken to conserve resources like energy and water, to reduce consumption of non-renewable resources, to re-use items like containers, and to recycle materials like glass, metals and paper. Three quarters of the respondents reported that they knew where to seek information about environmental initiatives, and a significant fraction of the sample were members of a local authority environmental scheme. One third reported they had had an environmental review of their operating practices carried out either by in-house staff or by the local authority.*

*However, not all of the picture this survey reveals is a positive one. At worst, and perhaps most crucially, the respondents did not share an agenda for improving the environmental performance of their hotels. No single action was being undertaken by more than two-thirds of those who responded, even those initiatives that might be thought of as ubiquitous, such as glass recycling or conserving energy. Many of the actions reported were being undertaken by fewer than 10% of the respondents, including some recycling activities and the re-use of certain items, exploiting renewables, protecting biodiversity, and avoiding the use of tropical hardwoods. Valuable though these activities are in the small fraction of hotels pursuing them, it is questionable whether the initiatives are sufficiently widespread to have a substantial benefit.*

*One third of respondents reported membership of a local authority environmental initiative, putting them in the minority. Fewer than one quarter had an environmental policy, none said they referred to the environmental policies of professional institutions; fewer than 10% were members of any hotel-sector environmental group, and none claimed membership of a non-hotel-sector environmental organisation.*

*In sum, there was no shared agenda or set of priorities apparent across the sample as a whole. The hotels that responded present themselves as operating in comparative isolation rather than part of a concerted or co-ordinated industry-wide initiative to reduce environmental impact of the hotel industry.*

## *Conduct of the survey*

In early 1997 a survey was carried out of London hotels to enquire about the actions they are taking to reduce the environmental impacts of their activities. Survey forms were sent to 150 London hotels - both chain and independent - and 36 scripts were returned, a respectable response rate of 24%. Of these 23 were from hotels that are part of a chain, representing 6314 bedrooms and with an average size of 293 bedrooms. The remaining 13 were independent hotels containing a total of 1294 bedrooms and with an average size of 100 bedrooms.

Because of the relatively small numbers of respondents in each category, the analysis treats the responses as a single sample. There was no evidence to indicate significant differences in the responses between chain and independent hotels. Nor was there any correlation between the size of hotel and the extent of the environmental actions reported.

## *Actions to reduce environmental impact*

Respondents were asked whether they were taking any actions to reduce their impact on the local or global environment. 34 of the 36 hotels reported that they were taking such actions; all 23 hotels which were members of chains and 11 independent hotels. Only two respondents - both independents - reported they were not taking any actions.

## *Actions to reduce the consumption of resources*

Hotels were asked whether they were taking action actions to reduce their consumption of resources. 23 of the 36 hotels (64% of the sample) reported they were.

<b>Actions</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Energy conservation	20	56%
Lighting	8	22%
Combined Heat and Power	3	8%
Staff awareness campaign	1	3%
Water conservation	10	28%
Avoidance of tropical hardwoods	3	8%

- The most frequently reported actions to reduce the consumption of resources was those associated with the conservation of energy, cited by 56% of respondents; lighting was specifically identified by 22% of respondents and 8% said they had invested in combined heat and power generation.
- 28% of hotels cited actions on water conservation.
- 8% of hotels said they were avoiding the use of tropical hardwood.

Although 94% of hotels claimed to be acting to reduce their impact on the environment, there is no agreement among them about priorities among actions to reduce the consumption of resources. The most frequently cited action to reduce consumption was in energy, but only just over half the respondents claimed to be acting to conserve it. Beyond energy, and to a lesser extent water, there is little agreement about what other actions should be taken to reduce the consumption of resources.

## *Exploiting renewables*

Hotels were asked whether they had taken actions to exploit renewable resources. Just 2 (6%) reported they had done so.

<b>Actions</b>	<b>number</b>	<b>percentage</b>
Exploiting daylight	2	6%

- Exploiting renewable resources is a very low priority for action among respondents. The only two instances where renewables were cited relate to the use of daylight.

## *Reducing environmental pollution*

Hotels were asked what actions they had taken to reduce environmental pollution. 23 hotels (64% of the sample) reported they were taking actions. Not all stated what actions they were taking, but those cited were as follows.

<b>Actions</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Acting on CFCs in refrigeration systems	12	33%
Avoiding use of aerosol spray cans	7	19%
Reducing carbon dioxide emissions	3	8%
Using environmentally friendly chemicals	1	3%
Putting filters on air handling units	1	3%

- There is very little agreement among the respondents about what actions should be taken to reduce environmental pollution. Apart from CFC-related issues, a very limited range of actions were cited, and only by a small number of respondents.

## *Exploiting re-usable items*

Hotels were asked whether they were exploiting re-usable items. 18 hotels (50%) reported exploiting re-usable items. Where they described what actions they were taking, these were:

<b>Actions</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Buying chemicals in bulk	5	14%
Returning containers to suppliers	3	8%
Re-using plastic containers	2	6%
Re-using stationery	2	6%
Using recycled cartridges	1	3%
Using refillable soap dispensers	1	3%
Using old sheets for painting	1	3%
Using damaged towels for cleaning cloths	1	3%

- A reasonably wide range of actions were cited, but most were being undertaken by only one or two hotels. There is no agreement across the respondents about the most important or appropriate items to re-use.

## Recycling

Hotels were asked whether they were recycling materials. 24 hotels (67%) reported taking action to recycle materials. When asked to specify what actions they were taking, these were:

Actions	Number	Percentage
Glass	23	64%
Paper	15	42%
Metal	9	25%
Cardboard	7	19%
Plastics	7	19%
Oil	3	8%
Toner and print cartridges	2	6%
Food waste	1	3%
Batteries	1	3%
Postage stamps	1	3%
Christmas cards	1	3%

- Recycling represents the largest area of agreement about environmental initiatives. 64% of respondents report they recycle glass, 42% paper, and 25% metal. Recycling of cardboard and plastics is reported by 19% of respondents. Other recycling initiatives are reported by just three, two or one respondent.

## Protecting biodiversity

Organisations were asked whether they were acting to protect biodiversity and what actions they were taking. 4 hotels (11%) reported they were protecting biodiversity.

Actions	Number	Percentage
Award winning grounds	1	3%
'Safe-drain' cleaning chemicals	1	3%
Not specified	2	6%

- Of the four hotels which reported any actions, two failed to specify what these actions were. Of the other two, one reported award-winning grounds, the other that it used 'safe-drain' cleaning chemicals.
- Protecting biodiversity appears to be a very low priority among these city centre hotels.

## Reducing social inequality

Hotels were asked whether they were taking actions to reduce social inequality. 23 hotels (64% of respondents) reported they were.

Actions	Number	Percentage
Fair employment/equal opportunities	22	58%
Ethical sourcing	1	3%

- Like recycling, actions to reduce social inequality are an area of substantial agreement.
- 22 hotels (61%) claim to operate either fair employment or equal opportunities practices.
- Only one other action was cited - ethical sourcing - and this was by only one hotel.

## *Environment policy or statement*

Hotels were asked whether they had an environmental policy or statement.

- Only 7 (19%) respondents reported their hotel had a policy on the environment. Another respondent said staff were briefed, although there was no written policy. Two respondents were unsure whether they had a policy or not.

## *Membership of a professional institution or trade association with a environmental policy*

Hotels were asked whether any of their staff belonged to a professional institution or trade association which had an environmental policy. 7 respondents (19%) said they had staff who belonged to a professional institution or trade association with a environmental policy. Two further respondents were unsure whether they did or not. The associations cited were as follows:

Associations cited	Number
British Institute of Facilities Management	1
Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers	1
Institute of Energy	1
Hotel and Catering International Management Association	1
Westminster Considerate Hoteliers	1

- When asked whether they kept a copy of the institution's or association's policies in their office, none of the respondents reported doing so.

## *Notifying guests about environmental initiatives*

Hotels were asked whether they brought their environmental initiatives to the attention of their guests. 18 (50%) hotels reported they did so, and cited the following methods:

Actions	Number	Percentage
Tent cards or signs in guestrooms	9	25%
Information aimed at children	2	6%
Energy saving plaque in public area	2	6%
Guest publication	2	6%
Not stated	3	8%

- Half the sample reported bringing one or more environmental actions to the attention of guests and of these, half used signs in guestrooms.

## *Environmental reviews or audits*

Hotels were asked whether they had had an in-house or external (independent) environmental review or audit of their premises and/or their operating practices. The replies were as follows.

<b>Actions</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Environmental review or audit of premises and operating practices	7	19%
Environmental review or audit of premises only	2	6%
Environmental review or audit of operating practices only	5	14%

The audits or reviews had been carried out by:

<b>Actions</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Local Authority under an environmental programme	5	14%
In-house review	4	11%
In-house staff awareness campaign	2	6%
Review by head office	1	3%

- One third of respondents report having had an environmental review or audit of their operating practices.
- One quarter of them claim to have had an environmental review or audit of their premises carried out.
- There is an approximately equal split between having an in-house review within the hotel or by head office (7 respondents), compared with having a review carried out by the local authority (5 respondents).
- None of the respondents reported having had a review carried out by a private sector firm, or by any environmental organisation.

## *Negotiating with suppliers*

Hotels were asked whether they included environmental criteria in negotiations with suppliers. 10 hotels (28%) reported they did so and cited the following examples:

<b>Actions</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Environmentally friendly goods/materials	6	17%
Packaging reduction	3	8%
Purchasing policy	1	3%
Bulk buying	1	3%

- Only one sixth of respondents (17%) reported negotiating to purchase environmental friendly goods or materials.
- Packaging and bulk buying were the other specific actions reported, and by only 11% of respondents.

## *Membership of environmental organisations*

Hotels were asked whether they were members of any environmental organisation. 15 hotels (42%) reported they were, including two hotels that were members of two organisations.

Organisation	Number	Percentage
Local authority hotel environmental scheme	12	33%
International Hotels Environment Initiative	3	8%
Green Globe	1	3%
Not stated	1	3%

- Local authority environmental schemes are by far the most common organisation cited, with one third of the respondents reporting they were members.
- Only two other organisations were cited - IHEI and Green Globe.
- All green organisations cited are hotel-sector specific - no-one reported membership of an environmental organisation outside the hotels sector.

## *Use of published information*

Hotels were asked whether they used published information on how to reduce environmental impact. 17 hotels (47% of the sample) reported they did so. The following sources were cited:

Organisation	Number	Percentage
Energy Efficiency Office	4	11%
BRECSU	4	11%
Westminster Council	3	8%
Green Hotelier	2	6%
Staff magazine	2	6%
Health and safety management	2	6%
Department of Environment	1	3%
ETSU	1	3%
Posters	1	3%

- Government sources are the most frequently cited: referred to 10 times by 6 respondents (17% of the sample).
- In-house sources were cited by two hotels which were part of chains.
- Private sector sources are almost completely absent from the list.
- No information from professional institutions or trade associations was cited.

## *Knowing where to look for information*

Hotels were asked whether they would know where to look for information on how to reduce their environmental impact. 27 hotels (75%) reported that they would know where to look, and they cited the following sources.

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Westminster Council	7	19%
Council (other or unspecified)	7	19%
Energy Efficiency Office	4	6%
BRECSU	4	6%
Company Environmental Group/Initiatives	2	6%
Department of the Environment	2	6%
ETSU	1	3%
Building Services magazine	1	3%
In-house Environmental Co-ordinator	1	3%
Green Hotelier	1	3%
Local Health Authority	1	3%
The Building Centre	1	3%
Directory (for example, Kelly's)	1	3%
Green Globe	1	3%
'Green' publications	1	3%

- The majority of hotels claim they would know where to look for environmental information.
- Local authorities emerges as the most important source of information, although it should be noted that the sample comprises central London hotels which may be better served by local authority information than those in the provinces.
- Beyond the council there is no agreement about sources, with many sources being cited by only one or two respondents.
- There is little reported awareness of government sources. Although in the aggregate the Department of Energy, Energy Efficiency Office, BRECSU and ETSU were cited 11 times, this was by a total of only 6 respondents (17% of the sample).

## *Summary of findings and conclusions*

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94% of respondents reported they were taking action to reduce the environmental impact of their hotel. Half said they bring their environmental initiatives to the attention of their guests; a quarter by means of a sign in their guestrooms, the remainder through other means.

- ***The majority of respondents claimed to be taking action to reduce the environmental impact of their hotel.***
- ***Half the hotels brought their actions to the attention of guests.***

Recycling was the most frequently cited environmental action, with 67% of respondents reporting they were taking action. Glass was the most frequently cited recycled material, with 64% of respondents claiming to recycle it, followed by paper (42%) and metal (25%). Other materials or items reported as being recycled included cardboard (19%) and plastics (19%). Six other items/materials were also reported as being recycled but by less than 10% of the sample.

- ***Two-thirds of hotels claimed to be recycling materials, with glass the most common, followed by paper and metal.***
- ***Recycling of other materials was undertaken by less than a fifth of the sample.***

Reducing the consumption of resources was claimed by 56% of the sample. Of these, all said they were acting to conserve energy, with lighting cited by 22% of the sample. 8% of the sample had combined heat and power plants. Only one hotel claimed to be running an energy awareness campaign for staff. 28% claimed to be taking action to conserve water. And 8% cited the avoidance of tropical hardwood.

- ***Just over half the sample were acting to reduce the consumption of resources by conserving energy.***
- ***Just over a quarter claimed to be taking action to conserve water.***
- ***Less than a tenth claim to be avoiding the use of tropical hardwood.***

64% of respondents reported they were taking action to reduce social inequality, and of these all but one was doing so through fair employment and/or equal opportunities practices. Just one hotel reported ethical sourcing of goods.

- ***Two thirds of respondents cited fair employment and/or equal opportunities practices.***
- ***Only one hotel reported the ethical sourcing of goods.***

64% of hotels reported they were taking action to reduce environmental pollution. 33% were acting on CFCs in refrigeration plant, and 19% reported avoiding the use of aerosol spray cans. Other actions cited were reducing carbon dioxide emissions (8%) using environmentally friendly chemicals (3%) and using filters on air handling plant (3%).

- ***Two thirds of respondents reported taking action to reduce environmental pollution, most of whom are acting on CFCs in refrigeration plant and/or aerosols.***

The re-use of goods or materials was surveyed. 50% of respondents reported actions to re-use goods or materials. 14% said they bought chemicals in bulk, 8% said they returned containers to suppliers. 6% re-used plastic containers, and 6% re-used stationery. Just 1 hotel (3%) reported a list of other items that it re-used.

- ***Half the respondents report re-using goods or materials, but there was little similarity among the items they claimed to re-use.***

Other environmentally benign actions which were surveyed included protecting biodiversity and exploiting renewables. 4 hotels claimed to be acting to protect biodiversity, but only two specified the actions they were taking; one reported award-winning landscaped grounds, the other to using 'safe-drain' chemicals. Only 6% of the sample reported they were exploiting renewables; both said they were utilising natural daylight.

- ***Actions to protect biodiversity were reported by just 11% of the sample.***
- ***Actions to exploit renewables were reported by just 6%.***

Environmental policies were unusual in this sample; only 19% claimed their hotel had one, while a further 6% were uncertain whether they did or not. 19% reported having staff who were members of a professional institution or trade association with an environmental policy but, surprisingly, none of them kept a copy of the institution's policy in their offices. One third of the hotels were members of a Local Authority hotel environmental scheme; 3 hotels (8%) were members of the IHEI, one of which was also a member of Green Globe. None of the hotels reported membership of an environmental organisation outside the hotels sector.

- ***Fewer than a quarter of the hotels report that they have an environmental policy.***
- ***A fifth had staff who were members of an institution or association with an environmental policy, but none kept a copy of the institution's policy in their office.***
- ***One third were members of a local authority environmental scheme.***
- ***Fewer than 10% were members of any other hotel environmental organisation, and none was a member of any environmental organisation outside the hotels sector.***

Environmental reviews or audits of operating practices had been undertaken in one third of the responding hotels, while one quarter had had their premises reviewed or audited. Generally the two types of review were directly correlated; just two hotels had had reviews of premises but not of operating practices. About half the reviews were carried out by the Local Authority, the other half by in-house staff. No reviews by private sector firms or environmental organisations were reported.

- ***Environmental reviews of operating practices had been undertaken in one third of the responding hotels, half by the local authority, half by in-house staff.***
- ***No reviews by private sector firms or environmental organisations had been undertaken.***

When asked about the use of environmental information, 47% of respondents said they used information sources. Government sources were the most frequently cited, referred to 10 times by 6 hotels (17% of the sample). In-house sources were cited by 2 hotels that are part of hotel chains. Private sector sources were almost entirely absent. When asked if they knew where to look for information, 75% of the respondents said they did. Local authorities emerged as the most frequently cited potential source of information, mentioned by 38% of respondents; government sources were cited 11 times by 17% of the sample. A range of other sources was cited, but most by individual respondents only.

- ***Three-quarters of respondents said they would know where to look for information about environmental initiatives.***
- ***Local authorities were named as the most popular potential source of environmental information. They were followed by government agencies, which were cited by a total of one sixth of the sample.***