



Wren Urban Nest

Keeping our island green

How the Irish tourism industry is making great efforts to become greener

“Sustainability is of vital importance to the future development of Irish tourism,” says Denyse Campbell, President, Irish Hotels Federation (IHF). “In addressing today’s environmental challenges, we all have a responsibility to minimise our impact on the natural environment. This means putting sustainability at the heart of our tourism development strategy, both nationally and at an individual business level.”

Denyse says that prior to Covid, the tourism industry generated over €9.2 billion in revenues each year. It also supported 270,000 livelihoods, including 67,000 jobs directly by hotels and guesthouses. “We are now making significant progress toward recovery. This creates enormous opportunities in terms of how we approach our businesses with a greater focus on sustainability.”

IHF is the national organisation of hotels and guesthouses, representing over 900 businesses throughout the country which collectively employ over 55,000 people. A key part of Denyse’s role as IHF President is to help lead the sector to achieve its full potential as Ireland’s largest indigenous industry.

“We are committed to making sustainability an integral part of the DNA of our sector and supporting Irish hotels and guesthouses to achieve their sustainability goals. We work closely with our industry partners, including Government and State agencies, to bring together practical tools, guidance and best practice to assist members to reach their sustainability goals.

“Key areas of focus include increasing energy management effectiveness, reducing levels of packaging waste and plastics, enhancing water conservation, and supporting more sustainable food practices and waste reduction. Resources range from immediate steps that can be implemented quickly to longer-term initiatives.”

► Working with industry

Some examples from IHF’s industry partners include: SEAI grants and resources to help meet energy savings targets; Irish Water’s conservation initiatives, including their Water Stewardship Training Programme; and the EPA’s food waste reduction programme. IHF also partners on Bord Bia’s Origin Green sustainable food sourcing programme; sustainability training through the Education and Training Boards; REPAK’s plastic and waste reduction initiatives; and, best practice



Denyse Campbell, President, Irish Hotels Federation (IHF)

resources from their European partners in HOTREC.

“More recently, we collaborated with Fáilte Ireland on a suite of Climate Action resources,” says Denyse. “These included a guide to help hotels and guesthouses play their part in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. We are also currently working with Fáilte Ireland on a bespoke carbon footprint calculator. This will allow businesses to measure and understand their carbon footprint, set targets for emission reductions, and benchmark their performance over time.”

Denyse says many IHF hotel and guesthouse members are re-examining all aspects of their operations with a view to enhancing sustainability. “The key areas include enhancing energy efficiency, investing in renewable energy sources, and reducing all sources of waste in terms of food, water, and packaging. Active engagement with employees, including training, is also key.

“A particular priority is energy usage and carbon reduction. This includes installation of solar photovoltaic panels, retrofitting energy systems, investment in heat pumps, and enhanced insulation. Other initiatives include the implementation of water tracking and conservation measures for bathrooms, laundry and kitchens; as well as working with suppliers to minimise packaging waste, eliminating single-use plastics and minimising food waste.”

An area of growing importance also for hotels is sourcing locally grown, seasonal

produce from local suppliers. Denyse says, “This reduces the carbon footprint and helps to support a local, sustainable economy.”

Some examples of sustainability initiatives by Irish hotels are published on IHF’s website: hotelnews.ie/section/sustainability/.

► Futureproofing

Across Ireland, there are many hotels making efforts to become more sustainable. But right in the heart of Dublin City, there’s a hotel fully focused on sustainability – Wren Urban Nest (wrenhotel.ie).

Owned by recycling and waste management company KeyWaste, the directors of Wren Urban Nest wanted to create a hotel brand that was not only built sustainably and future-proofed for generations to come, but which would also reflect their passion for the environment.

Tracey Moran, Communications Director of Wren Urban Nest, says, “The design of Wren Urban Nest evolved by imagining how guests of the future would engage and contribute to Dublin. Aligning with architects BDP, the combined ethos was that hotels of the future should have a responsibility to the city and proactively minimise the environmental and social impacts of their guests. Wren burns no fossil fuels, has zero local pollution and even improves the air quality around it, among other steps it takes as part of its focus on sustainability.”

Wren Urban Nest was constructed using the most advanced sustainable technologies, and uses 100pc renewable electricity to achieve ‘Net Zero Carbon’ status.

“Wren is the first hotel in Ireland to comply with the World Green Building Council’s definition of ‘Net Zero Carbon’ without



Tracey Moran, Communications Director of Wren Urban Nest

having to purchase carbon offsets,” says Tracey. “There are eco settings in bedrooms to minimise energy use and water wastage, along with a divided bin to encourage separating recycling and waste. The Smart HVAC system that the hotel uses, reduces energy use whilst keeping the temperature cool in the summer and cosy in the winter.”

The Wren kitchen at the hotel’s ALT Bar has no reliance on gas for cooking, ensuring the zero carbon commitment is fully followed throughout the premises. Tracey says, “Head Chef Ronato Palmer is passionate about using the best local produce and working in a way that has as low impact as possible. ALT also fights food waste in collaboration with Too Good To Go. This is an app that allows customers to buy food that hasn’t been sold in time, is still perfect and delicious but best of all, it doesn’t go to waste!”

Recently, Wren has also partnered with bee-keeping company OpenHive, to have their own bees and produce Wren honey.

► Responsible travel

With sustainable travel becoming a growing trend, how do we as responsible travellers really know if a hotel is meaningful in its green commitment?

Denyse Campbell, IHF, says, “It is very important for hospitality to have good communication with customers and guests. A key part of this is ensuring that information is readily available to guests as appropriate. For example, a hotel’s sustainability policy, certifications and details of specific initiatives undertaken.

“This might be set out on a hotel’s website, with various initiatives highlighted throughout the customer’s stay, for example, in the guestroom and leisure facilities. It is also enormously beneficial to empower employees to act as ambassadors when talking to guests about environmental initiatives.”

Speaking about the future, Denyse says, “Our future and long-term success as an industry lies in fully embracing best practices in sustainability and minimising our impact on the environment.

“Supporting hotels and guesthouses to achieve their sustainability goals will require significant additional support, given the scale and complexity of hotel operations. This is an area we are collaborating closely on with the Government and our industry partners. A particular measure we would like to see put in place by the Government is a nationwide hotel retrofitting scheme supported by Government funding, for example.”

Denyse adds, “We believe we are well-placed to lead the way by putting sustainability at the heart of our tourism offering.”