

# SUSTAINABILITY IS SHAPING HOTEL GUEST EXPECTATIONS:

THE EMERGENCE OF THE CONSCIOUS TRAVELLER



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*"Our guests are raising the bar for the hospitality industry. They expect responsibility, transparency and action. To earn customer loyalty, sustainability must be embedded in every decision we make."*

—Robert Godwin,  
CEO, Lamington Group





# 1. The Evolving Guest

Conscious travellers are reshaping hospitality, with sustainability now a decisive factor in how guests choose, value and engage with hotels.

The hospitality industry is transforming, shaped by a fundamental shift in consumer values. A growing number of conscious travellers are prioritising sustainability in their travel decisions and this evolution in expectations is encouraging a re-evaluation of traditional hospitality practices, with a greater emphasis on authentic environmental and social responsibility.

Research shows that over 80% of global travellers consider sustainability important, 70% are more likely to book a property if

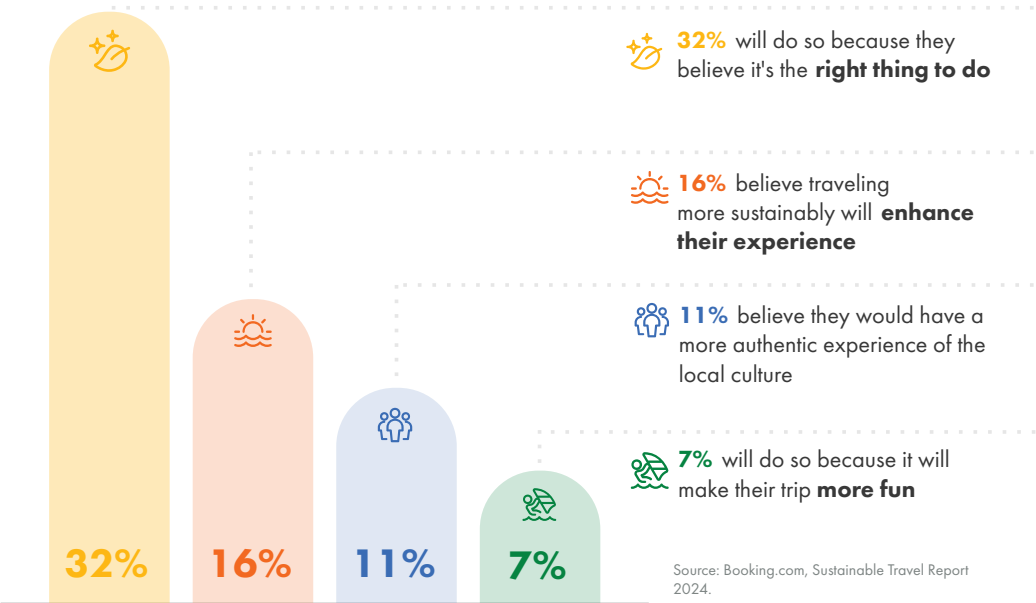
it's eco-friendly,<sup>1</sup> even when not specifically searching for one, and 75% plan to travel more sustainably in the coming year.<sup>2</sup> This shift is driven by emotional and ethical motivations, such as personal responsibility and purpose-led values, that shape consumer behaviour. What was once a niche preference has become, for many, a way to stay true to their values.

As the demand grows, the industry is being challenged to adapt and innovate. Sustainability initiatives must now go

beyond surface-level commitments and comprehensively address a wide range of priorities, from reducing environmental impact to supporting local communities and ensuring long-term business resilience.

This document explores the evolving dynamics of guest expectations around sustainability and outlines how the hospitality sector can meet and exceed these rising demands.

Motivations for Making More Sustainable Travel Choices



## 2. Understanding the Conscious Traveller

Growing climate awareness is transforming hospitality, led by younger generations seeking authentic sustainability practices.

Globally, awareness and concern about climate change are rising. Forty-one percent of consumers say they feel anxious about climate change, a figure that climbs to nearly two-thirds among 18–34-year-olds.<sup>3</sup> This heightened awareness is increasingly shaping purchasing decisions, particularly in travel and hospitality. Today, 88% of travellers say sustainability factors into their hotel booking choices, favouring accommodation that demonstrate a clear commitment to environmental and social responsibility.<sup>4</sup>

Demand for sustainably marketed products is growing faster than for conventional alternatives, indicating that the appetite for conscious travel is here to stay. For many consumers, choosing ethical sourcing, natural materials, and a reduced environmental footprint aligns closely with their broader lifestyle choices.

**“88% of travellers say that sustainability factors into their hotel booking decisions.”**

Sustainability is now associated not only with environmental responsibility but also with personal wellbeing. Terms like “responsibly made” and “natural” signal health, quality

and care. Many travellers are willing to pay more for such options. Nearly one-third of UK consumers have stopped buying from certain brands due to sustainability or ethical concerns and 40% of consumers are prepared to spend extra on products and services that align with their values.<sup>3</sup>

Demographics are amplifying this shift. Gen Z and Millennials, who make up a growing share of hotel guests, are leading the conscious travel movement. More than 60% actively seek sustainable travel options, and nearly three-quarters are more likely to book with providers that showcase sustainability practices.<sup>5</sup> Their expectations for transparency and responsibility are redefining meaningful action and setting new benchmarks for the industry.

**“40% of consumers are prepared to spend extra on products and services that align with their values.”**

This represents a clear opportunity for hotels: consumers are showing a marked preference for brands that deliver and communicate authentic sustainability efforts, often rewarding them with greater loyalty, stronger reputation and a willingness to pay a premium.

Yet, there are important nuances. Constant exposure to climate-related messaging can create “climate fatigue,” especially when linked to emotions such as fear, hopelessness, or guilt. Research from Imperial College London cautions that climate communication can unintentionally trigger negative emotions such as sadness, fear and guilt, which, if not balanced, may lead to disengagement.<sup>6</sup> Added to this is the growing scepticism toward “greenwashing,” now being addressed through the UK’s Green Claims Directive.

For hospitality brands, the challenge is clear. Combine credible, transparent and genuinely impactful practices with clear, positive and specific communication. Doing so builds trust, inspires guests and avoids alienating those fatigued by empty or exaggerated claims.





### 3. Elevating Experience

Authentic sustainability enriches the guest journey, building trust and long-term brand value.

When approached authentically and embedded into core operations, sustainability becomes a powerful tool to enhance the guest experience and strengthen brand identity. Far from compromising comfort or convenience, it can enrich stays through intentional design, cultural connection and educational touchpoints. For a growing segment of environmentally conscious travellers, these experiences are not simply appreciated, they are expected.

For sustainability to become a genuine part of the guest experience, it must be present throughout the customer journey. From initial website visits and booking platforms to in-room materials and staff engagement, hotels have multiple touchpoints to inform, inspire, and connect with their guests.

Empowering messaging, rather than instructive or guilt-driven language, leads to greater guest satisfaction and engagement. When sustainability initiatives enhance the guest experience, rather than feel burdensome, they become drivers of both reputation and revenue. Positive, meaningful guest experiences both encourages glowing online reviews and fuels authentic storytelling via social media and word of mouth, creating powerful, trust-based marketing. Research shows that 84% of consumers trust peer

recommendations above all other advertising sources<sup>7</sup> and 79% say user-generated content significantly influences their purchase decisions.<sup>8</sup> When guests share genuine positive experiences, it builds credibility and attracts new customers.

Today's consumers are better informed and more discerning, particularly when it comes to sustainability. Vague claims or unverified messaging can quickly erode trust. Guests are looking for transparent commitments backed by tangible examples. Third-party certifications, data-led results and open reporting can also influence credibility.<sup>3</sup> Demonstrating real-world outcomes, whether in reduced energy and water use, increased waste diversion or investment in local communities, provides visible proof of impact and builds lasting credibility.

Guests who share a hotel's sustainability values are more likely to return, refer others and develop long-term brand loyalty. Trust remains one of the top three drivers of purchasing decisions, and when sustainability is communicated transparently, it plays a powerful role in earning and maintaining that trust.<sup>3</sup>



Local artist at room2 Belfast, in the free and publically accessible art gallery.



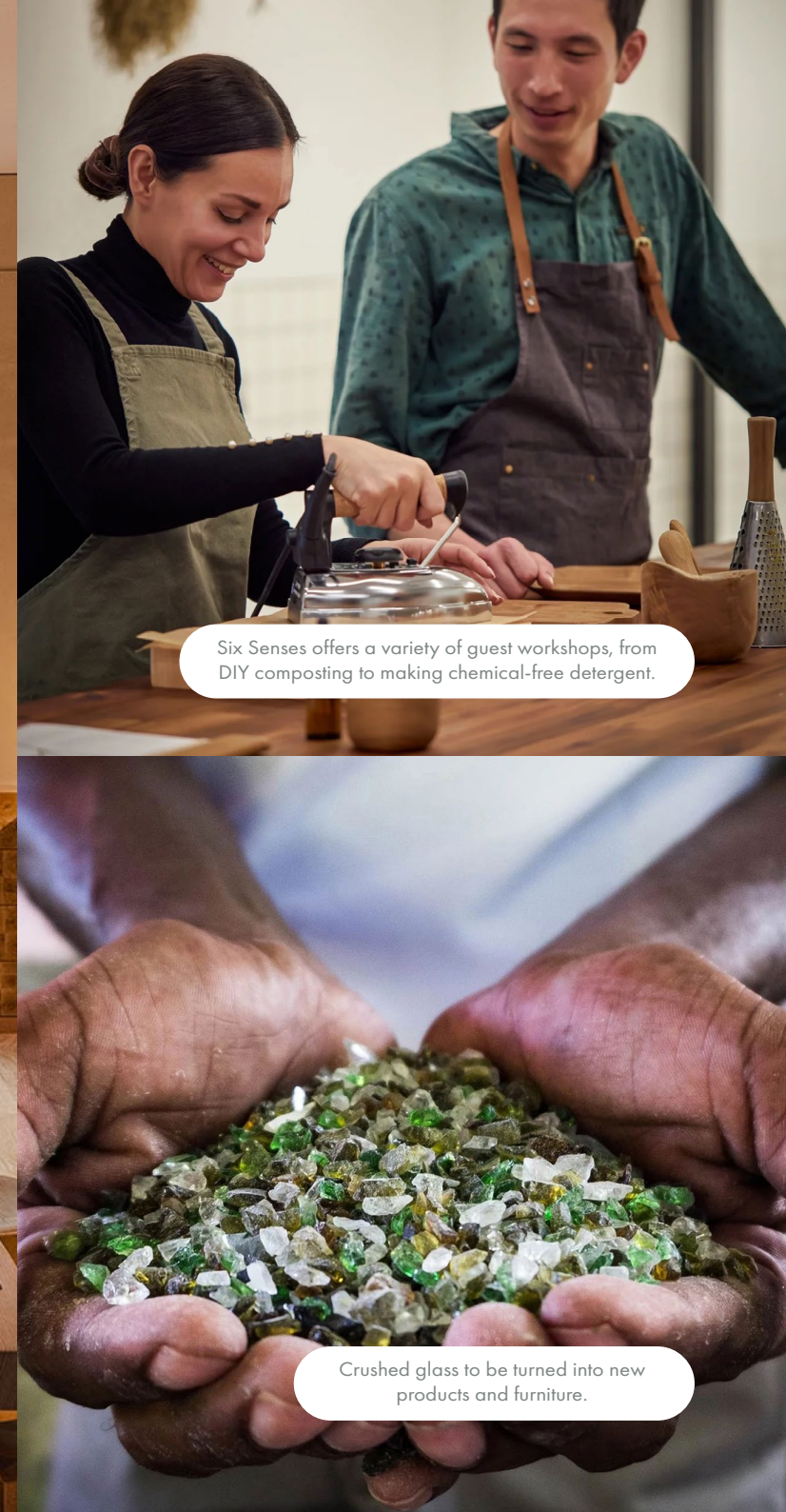
The hospitality sector already offers strong examples of communicating sustainability leadership. Six Senses, for instance, has made environmental and social responsibility a core part of its brand. Through initiatives like Earth Lab, guests are invited to engage directly with low-impact living practices, from composting and plastic reduction to water conservation and renewable energy. This hands-on, educational approach transforms what would be a passive stay into a meaningful experience where guests leave with new skills and ideas to live more sustainably.<sup>9</sup>

Lamington Group's journey, grounded in circular economy principles and carbon reduction strategies, is another example of how aligning operations with values creates deeper guest connections. As the developer behind the award-winning homotel brand room2, consistently ranked number one on TripAdvisor across all its locations, Lamington demonstrates that in a values-driven market, sustainability is strategically necessary. Hotels that integrate sustainability into the heart of their guest experience will be best positioned to meet evolving expectations, and contribute meaningfully to a more responsible hospitality industry.

The following sections will explore examples of how sustainability initiatives like *Farm-to-Fork Dining* and *Holistic Waste Management* can powerfully enhance the guest experience when communicated with authenticity and clarity.



The Earth Lab at Six Senses, a hands on space to engage with sustainability.



Six Senses offers a variety of guest workshops, from DIY composting to making chemical-free detergent.



Crushed glass to be turned into new products and furniture.



### 3. Elevating Experience

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#### 3.1 Farm-to-Fork Dining

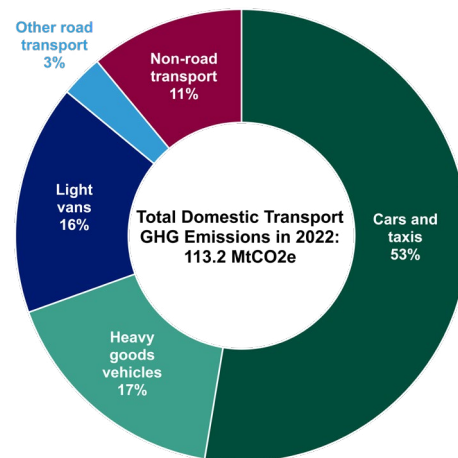
Food and beverage offerings are a defining element of the guest experience and a local focus, achieved through a farm-to-fork approach, can be a powerful market differentiator.

What began as a culinary trend has evolved into a broader reflection of shifting consumer values, shaped by greater awareness of food provenance, sustainable agriculture and support for local economies. As guests become more conscious of the environmental and health impacts of their meals, expectations around sourcing, seasonality and transparency continue to grow.

“What began as a culinary trend has evolved into a broader reflection of shifting consumer values.”

In a globalised food system, ingredients often travel vast distances before reaching the plate. In the UK, the average food item – whether it be a tomato, poultry, or dried good – travels approximately 2,400 kilometres from production to consumption, roughly equivalent to driving the entire length of Great Britain from Land’s End to John o’ Groat’s.<sup>10</sup>

This reliance on long supply chains contributes directly to transport emissions, which make up 28% of the UK’s total greenhouse gas emissions. Sourcing closer to home can significantly reduce this impact.



UK Department for Transport, Transport and Environment Statistics, 2024.

Prioritising seasonal ingredients is another simple and effective way to cut food-related emissions. Produce grown in its natural cycle requires fewer artificial interventions, such as heated greenhouses, excessive irrigation and chemical preservatives. This not only reduces energy use but also delivers fresher, more nutrient-rich food with better flavour and quality.



Local, nutrient-rich food served at Winnie's Cafe and Bar.



Transparency in sourcing also empowers guests to make informed choices, fostering a more ethical dining culture. By highlighting ingredient origins and supplier relationships, through menu design, storytelling or even on-site events, restaurants can deepen guest engagement and build brand trust.

**“Culinary sustainability is particularly important for Millennial and Gen Z travellers, who tend to see food choices as part of a broader commitment to wellbeing.”**

Examples of this ethos are already influencing the UK dining scene. Angela’s of Margate embraces a straightforward yet profound commitment to local sustainability, serving exclusively seafood sourced ethically from day-boat fishermen, with minimal plastic and a daily-changing menu based on fresh catches and organic, pesticide-free vegetables. Since opening in 2017, Angela’s has earned widespread acclaim, including a Michelin Green Star in 2021, for its high-quality, unpretentious seafood cookery and authentic, local-first ideals. It’s celebrated by national awards diners and critics alike as offering some of the best seafood cooking in the UK.

Similarly, Apricity takes a farm-to-fork approach rooted in seasonality, regenerative farming and a zero-waste ethos, showcasing British produce, sustainable meat and fish and circular economy principles across both food and interiors. Their menus are plant-forward, inventive and deeply connected to local suppliers, earning recognition with a Michelin Green Star, three stars in the Food Made Good Standard and consistent praise from critics and guests alike for delivering an exceptional dining experience where ethics and flavour go hand in hand.

Research supports the success of sustainable dining, with studies showing that many guests are willing to pay more for meals that reflect their values. Culinary sustainability is particularly important for Millennial and Gen Z travellers, who tend to see food choices as part of a broader commitment to wellbeing.<sup>3</sup>

The farm-to-fork movement can drive systematic, long-term change by supporting local economies, lowering the carbon footprint of meals and enhancing food quality. For hotels, embracing these principles transforms food and beverage offerings into an immersive, values-driven experience that elevates guest satisfaction while contributing to a more resilient and sustainable food system.



Angela’s of Margate serves exclusively seafood sourced ethically from day-boat fishermen.

Locally-sourced mushroom dish at Apricity, London.

Local, nutrient-rich food served at Winnie’s Cafe and Bar.



## 3. Elevating Experience

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### 3.2 Holistic Waste Management

With its fast pace and constant flow of guests, hospitality can be both resource and waste-intensive. For many consumers, waste is a visible and tangible environmental issue, making effective waste reduction and management critical to meeting the expectations of conscious travellers. A comprehensive approach involves reducing waste at the source, reusing materials, recycling, and only then, properly disposing of non-recyclable items.

One of the most significant challenges is the prevalence of single-use plastics. The volume is staggering – a 200-room hotel can use approximately 300,000 pieces of single-use plastic each month. Whilst many properties have moved away from single-use toiletries, the global hotel sector still produces an estimated 289,700 tonnes of plastic waste annually, with the UN Environment Programme and World Travel & Tourism Council estimating that up to 95% is unnecessary.<sup>12</sup> The environmental consequences are long-lasting. Plastic can persist in the environment for up to 500 years, threatening wildlife and ecosystems. Common solutions include replacing plastic water bottles with glass alternatives, installing refill stations, introducing refillable toiletry dispensers and using zero-waste packaging across housekeeping and food service.

Hotels are also adopting broader waste reduction strategies beyond plastics. In food and beverage operations, careful inventory management and portion control reduce food waste, while biodegradable or compostable packaging is increasingly used for takeaways and room service. Reuse programmes, such as linen and towel reuse, reduce unnecessary laundering. In kitchens, reusable containers for

storage and delivery are becoming standard. Linen and towel reuse programmes reduce unnecessary laundering, and strong recycling infrastructure, such as clearly labelled bins in guest rooms and public spaces, supports correct sorting.

Stakeholder engagement underpins these efforts. Training staff on proper separation

practices and the broader purpose behind them builds accountability, whilst guest education through signage, digital platforms and storytelling encourages participation. Supplier collaboration is also critical, whether through reducing packaging, introducing returnable containers or adopting reuse models that can ripple across the supply chain.

#### ROOM2, LONDON UK

room2 hometels has taken a holistic approach to eliminating waste across the guest journey. Single-use plastics have been almost entirely removed, with guests provided refillable toiletries, reusable cutlery and kitchenware, a reusable milk bottle and a market bag to avoid disposable packaging. The brand has also committed to zero waste to landfill. Check-in, billing and communications are fully paperless, while housekeeping uses reusable cleaning materials and only recyclable or compostable packaging. To make recycling intuitive, room2 designed custom bins that target guests at the point of use, making it easy to separate recycling, waste and compost efficiently.





Desa Potato Head's WASTED collection repurposes materials into new products.

## DESA POTATO HEAD, BALI

Desa Potato Head has established itself as a pioneer in holistic waste management, diverting over 97% of its waste from landfill. Through its in-house design programme, the WASTED collection, materials such as plastics, glass, linens and cooking oil are repurposed into furniture, décor and other functional items, in collaboration with local artisans and designers. The hotel extends its impact beyond its walls through a 2,000m<sup>2</sup> Community Waste Centre, which has set an ambitious target of helping surrounding businesses to cut landfill contributions by 50%. Guests are also directly engaged

through "Follow the Waste" tours, offering transparency and inspiring behaviour change. This model demonstrates how hospitality can embed circularity at every level, design, operations, guest experience and community, turning waste into a driver of creativity and engagement with environmental responsibility.

## SILO, LONDON UK

Silo operates as a "restaurant without a bin," pushing the concept of zero-waste dining to the extreme. Every element of its operations is designed to eliminate waste: ingredients arrive in reusable containers; flour, butter and other staples are produced in-house; scraps are fermented or composted; and furniture and tableware are crafted from upcycled materials including recycled glass, cork, plastic and even mycelium. With up to 95% of waste diverted from landfill, Silo demonstrates that ethical, waste-free practices can coexist with fine dining, setting a bold example for hospitality by showing how design ingenuity and zero-waste principles can inspire systemic change across the sector.

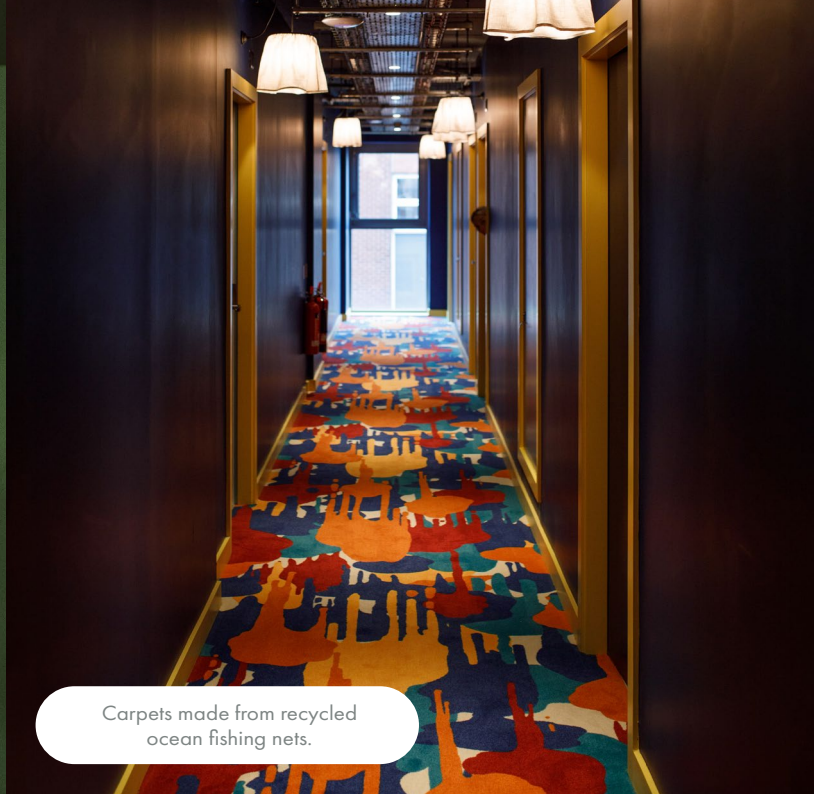


Zero-waste restaurant, Silo, has condensed 18 months of their unavoidable waste into this 4 x 4 inch block.





Lampshades made out of recycled and bio-based materials at room2 Belfast.



Carpets made from recycled ocean fishing nets.



Bespoke 3-in-1 bins for guest rooms, to encourage proper waste sorting.

“Managing guest expectations through clear, engaging communication can turn potential resistance into enthusiasm.”

Whilst there are clear environmental and operational benefits, hotels may face several challenges in implementing this approach. In high-traffic environments, logistical complexities can arise, particularly where convenience has been prioritised in the past. Identifying sustainable alternatives that maintain expected standards of hygiene and ease of use can be difficult, and in some cases, solutions may come with higher upfront costs.

Managing guest expectations through clear, engaging communication can turn potential resistance into enthusiasm, and ensuring that new systems are genuinely sustainable strengthens credibility and impact. Staff engagement is equally vital and with the right training and shared sense of purpose, teams can take pride in playing an active role in reducing waste.

By embracing waste reduction as both an environmental responsibility and a guest experience enhancer, hotels can lead the way towards a cleaner, more resource-efficient future for the industry.



## Case Study: room2 Belfast Welcome Table

Belfast's welcome table, made from recycled shampoo bottles, reflects room2's zero waste to landfill commitment.

H O M E T E L



Broken shampoo bottles were collected from other room2 locations.



Our partner, Spared®, chipped the bottles to be turned into a countertop.



Bringing new life to waste, the unique end product is first to welcomes guests.



## 4. The Conscious Traveller Era

Sustainability is here to stay.

The findings in this white paper reflect a fundamental transformation in the hospitality industry: sustainability is becoming a defining feature of the guest experience. As global concern about climate change grows, so too does the demand for more responsible travel options.

Guests expect more than token gestures – they are looking for accommodation that demonstrates authentic environmental and social responsibility. And many, especially younger travellers, are willing to pay more for sustainable offerings, driving long-term change across the sector.

This shift is reshaping the entire guest journey. Sustainability is no longer a peripheral concern but a core consideration in how guests evaluate and connect with hotel brands. While some guests may remain sceptical of green claims, clear actions paired with transparent communication continue to build trust and loyalty. Hotels that embed sustainability into their operations and culture are best placed to attract this growing segment of conscious travellers and stand out in a competitive market.

Across the industry, there are examples of organisations already demonstrating leadership. PIG Hotels has built a reputation

around hyper-local sourcing, with each property operating kitchen gardens and menus crafted from within a 25-mile radius, reducing food miles and deepening guest connection to place. 1 Hotels integrates biophilic design and reclaimed materials across its portfolio, pairing this with robust sustainability programming and partnerships that engage guests in environmental initiatives. Soneva Resorts in the Maldives and Thailand operate on-site waste-to-resource centres, generate a significant portion of their energy from solar power and support marine conservation projects that engage guests directly.

As these examples show, sustainability is central to building trust, enhancing guest experience and ensuring long-term business success. The industry now has an opportunity, and a responsibility, to move beyond incremental change and embrace sustainability as the foundation for hospitality's future.

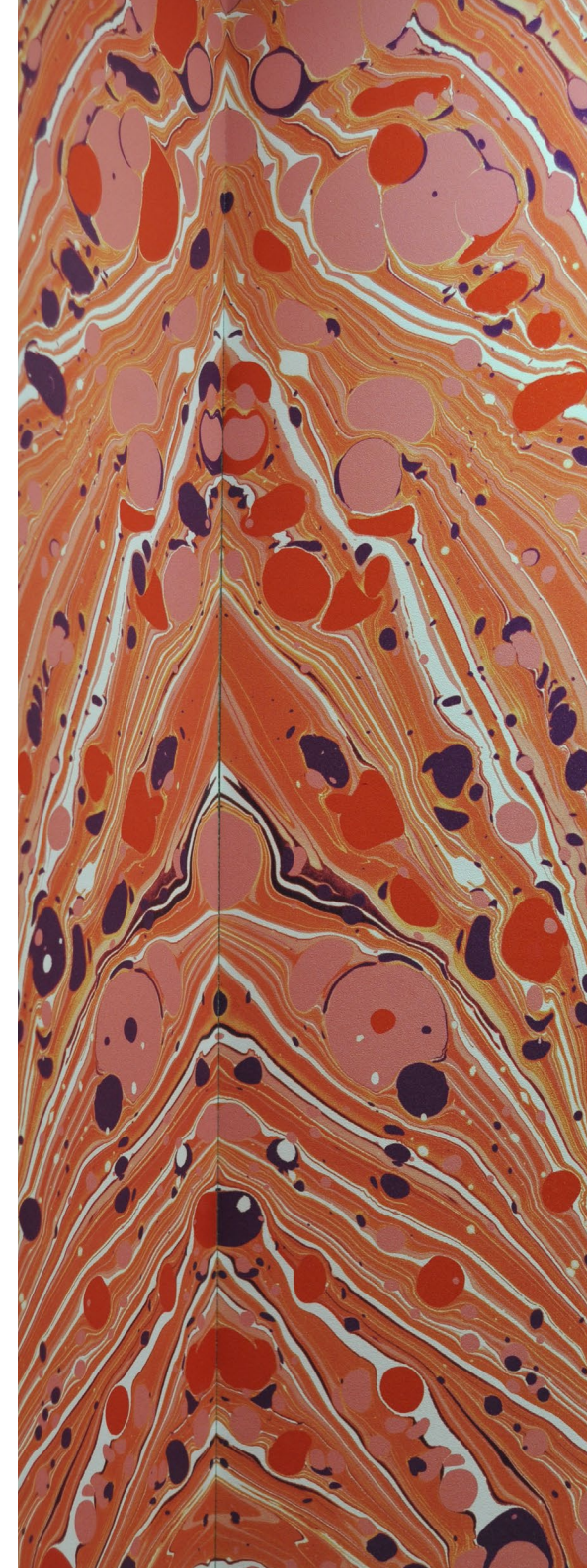


Studio bedroom at room2 Belfast homtetels.



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## About Lamington Group

Designing, building and operating sustainable spaces to connect people and the planet.

Lamington Group is a forward-thinking hospitality company with a long-standing commitment to sustainability. At the core of its mission is the creation of spaces that feel like home while actively supporting people and the planet. This guiding principle shapes every aspect of the organisation's operations, from the design and development of its room2 hometels, to the guest experience to their long-term strategic objectives.

Through the One Planet Living framework, Lamington Group has set ambitious targets that reflect a deep commitment to responsible growth. A key goal is achieving net-zero operational emissions, even as the Group targets expansion to 5,000 keys by 2030. A significant milestone in the Group's journey was achieving B Corp certification, recognising its high standards of environmental and social performance, transparency and accountability. At Lamington, sustainability is deeply embedded in the company culture and business model.

Lamington Group's strategy is built around three core pillars: People, Places and Planet. Across its room2 hometels and wider portfolio, the Group seeks to create inclusive, healthy and inspiring environments where guests and staff can thrive. Each property is designed to reflect its local context, reduce environmental

impact and support biodiversity. The flagship room2 brand is recognised as a leader in sustainable hospitality, actively progressing toward net zero and applying circular economy principles throughout the entire lifecycle of its buildings - from design and construction through to operations.

In 2021, Lamington Group launched its Net Zero Carbon Roadmap, making an industry-leading commitment to achieve net zero by 2030. This pledge set out a comprehensive programme to address emissions across the entire building lifecycle. The Group is developing and operating net zero carbon buildings by phasing out fossil fuels, electrifying systems and prioritising circular low-carbon materials. All properties are supplied with 100% renewable electricity, supported by advanced energy solutions such as heat pumps, rooftop solar PV, occupancy-enabled heating and cooling and building management systems. To reduce embodied carbon, detailed lifecycle assessments and strategic procurement frameworks guide the selection of lower-carbon building materials.

The Group is also taking steps to address Scope 3 emissions. Initiatives include reducing business travel, supporting low-carbon transport options and enhancing waste management systems.

Carbon footprint data per night of stay is published on the website, empowering guests to make informed decisions. On average, room2 properties emit 61% less carbon per night than a typical UK hotel. All stays are carbon neutral, with remaining emissions offset via verified, nature-based carbon removal projects.

Circularity is also central to Lamington Group's approach, with an emphasis on transforming waste into useful resources. In-room recycling systems, repurposed fit-out materials, and design innovations – such as a welcome desk at room2 Belfast made from shampoo bottle waste and lampshades created from orange peels and mycelium – demonstrate the integration of circular economy thinking into both guest-facing and operational elements.

Transparency is cornerstone to the Group's sustainability efforts. Lamington Group publishes comprehensive annual Sustainability and GHG Emissions Reports, with all data independently verified to BSI ISO 14064 standards. By sharing both achievements and areas for improvement, the Group ensures accountability and hopes to raise standards across the industry, promoting meaningful, science-based climate action within the hospitality sector.







At Lamington Group, we believe the future of travel is sustainable travel. Through our pioneering room2hometels and industry-leading commitment to net zero, we are reinventing what hospitality can and should be.

To learn more about Lamington Group and ways you can partner with us in our expansion to 5,000 keys by 2030 email [info@lamingtongroup.com](mailto:info@lamingtongroup.com).

[www.lamingtongroup.com](http://www.lamingtongroup.com)

