



The company was accredited with a gold award from the Green Tourism Business Scheme in January 2014. This involved developing an environmental management system which monitors progress and sets targets for on-going improvements. An Energy Saving Trust survey was undertaken and this highlighted a number of initiatives that could be instigated to reduce energy and water use and minimise waste produced.

Some of the initiatives identified by the Energy Saving Trust (EST) include:

- Installed low cost measures to reduce energy usage including; heat reflectors behind radiators; thick curtains, blinds and reinstatement of shutters for windows; secondary glazing, lagging on pipes and water tank, water saving device (bag of sand) in toilets, bags in chimneys to reduce draughts.
- Selected new equipment and appliances based on energy and water efficiency e.g. new boiler based on EST survey, temperature and thermostat controls, washing machine (selected for water and energy use), tumble drier (selected for use of gas).
- Excess packaging returned to supplier for re-use and recycling.
- Pre-order of breakfast to minimise food waste.
- Any leftover bread is donated to local wildlife reserve.

The company use their environmental credentials as a marketing tool and Jessie Mac's approach to sustainability is appreciated by their customers. Guests are encouraged to be part of the development of the business through comments/ suggestion box and the occupancy rate for the hostel has increased by 130% over the past three years.

Jessie Mac's are active in the community and bed nights are donated to environmental charities in lieu of carbon off-setting. The local economy benefits as the majority of the food for the hostel is sourced locally using organic and fairtrade products where possible. In addition furniture is donated to, and some is bought from, the local Salvation Army Shop. A use is even found for redundant towels which are donated to the local dog shelter.

The team are to be commended for their enthusiasm and motivation and their approach to environmental improvement. The judges were particularly impressed with the drive and commitment to put sustainability at the heart of the operations and the practical measures they have taken to ensure this.

The business are involved with the Scottish Independent Hostel association whereby ideas are exchanged with other hostels to share best practice, they have hosted a best practice visit through the Hostel Hub and have also presented at an event on the benefits of using an environmental management system.

The company has future plans for improvement including reducing energy use further, reducing waste and increasing recycling. The ethos identified demonstrates that embedding sustainability into every day operations leads to a positive knock-on effect for the local economy.

*Brenda Roddy, owner of Jessie Mac's, said: "Looking after our environment is hugely important to us and as such, we have put sustainable practices in place at Jessie Mac's, encouraging our staff and customers to be as environmentally friendly as possible. It is fantastic to have our efforts recognised by the VIBES Awards, as for us, this is the environmental award that really counts."*

