

**YHA**

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# **Green SPIRIT Plan**

## **2011-2014**



[www.yha.org.uk](http://www.yha.org.uk)



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# YHA and the Environment

YHA is aiming to reach out and enhance the lives of young people. We encourage a spirit of adventure for people of all ages, inspiring them to discover the world around us, and to broaden their horizons.

It's really important that in doing this we do everything we can to reduce the impact we can have on the environment, to reduce the energy and water we use and the waste we produce.

We will monitor the most significant impacts of the way we work on the world around us, setting realistic targets to reduce those effects. We will tell everyone clearly where we have performed well and how we can improve what we are doing.

I want everyone involved with YHA, whether as a volunteer, as a paid member of staff, or as a guest to be aware of what we want to achieve and where we are going. This plan will help to do that.

We can all take responsibility and ownership of this plan so that YHA as a whole can really make a difference to the lives of all and especially the lives of young people.



*Caroline White*

**Caroline White**

# The Green SPIRIT Plan

Right from the beginning YHA has aimed to help everyone and particularly young people to a greater knowledge, love and care of the countryside. As we continue this work to inspire all, especially young people, to broaden their horizons, gaining knowledge and independence through new experiences of adventure and discovery we are always conscious that our actions have an impact on the environment.

## What is Green SPIRIT?

We are committed to measuring and reducing this impact, and the work we will undertake over the next 3 years to do this is in this plan.

We've created the Green SPIRIT plan so that we can share our objectives and achievements with all of our customers and our staff and volunteers, and more widely with everyone new to YHA as a key part of our work. Every year we will report on the progress we have made against our objectives in our Annual Review.

We've called this our Green SPIRIT plan because our SPIRIT values represent everything we are about, and we will apply our values to everything we do to meet our environmental, or 'Green' objectives.

Our Green SPIRIT plan reaches across our whole organisation, encompassing our people and customers, our hostels and national office.

These values reflect YHA's personality and image and are there to guide how we work together:



### Sustainability

We contribute to the care of the environment.



### Passion

We are positive and enthusiastic in our approach.



### Innovation

We are creative in improving what we do.



### Responsibility

We take ownership for everything we do.



### Inclusivity

We encourage diversity and welcome people from all communities.



### Trust

We deliver on our promises and are open and honest.

This is the **SPIRIT** of YHA.

# spirit



# Measuring our Impact

We have established key measures for the work we will do in the next three years so that we know we are making progress and helping protect the environment by reducing our impact.

Every year we will report our progress in YHA's Annual Review.

By meeting these targets, we will have significantly improved the way we work.

We will have clearly reduced our impact and achieved our targets to reduce our consumption of energy for every customer we serve, as well as helping our

staff, volunteers and customers to play their part in protecting the environment.

Our Aim	Overview	By March 2012	By March 2013	By March 2014
We will manage and reduce our energy consumption	We want to reduce our energy consumption and therefore the impact that is caused by the production of energy. We recognise this is linked to the number of customers we serve, and so we will measure our usage as kWh electricity used per customer overnight	Reduce kWh/Overnight by 2% against our 2009/10 usage	Reduce kWh/Overnight by 5% against our 2009/10 usage	Reduce kWh/Overnight by 7% against our 2009/10 usage
Every hostel will have local targets to reduce their impact on the environment	We will provide all hostels with 'Hostel Environmental Plan' templates, where they can choose a target to reduce their impact in relation to energy, water, waste, chemical usage and the wider environment	All hostels to have set local environmental targets	All hostels to publish their performance against the previous year's targets, with new targets set for each year	All hostels to publish their performance against the previous year's targets, with new targets set for each year
We will achieve external accreditation for our environmental performance	To ensure the standards we adhere to are challenging and right, we will apply for accreditation to the EU Ecolabel scheme, which considers how we work in terms of physical (our buildings) as well as operational (our people) issues	Gain accreditation for 13 hostels to the EU Ecolabel	Gain accreditation for a total of 20 hostels to the EU Ecolabel	Gain accreditation for a total of 30 hostels to the EU Ecolabel
We will take responsibility for our waste production, and strive to reduce, re-use and recycle wherever possible	So that we can monitor and manage our levels of waste and recycling, we will establish a national waste contract which will allow us to measure our performance and target improvements relating to waste	All of our hostels waste will be managed through a single supplier. We will establish a benchmark for the volume of waste produced, as well as the percentage of our waste we recycle	We will report a significant improvement on the percentage of waste we recycle, measuring at least 5% improvement on our benchmark year	We will report further improvement in the volume of waste we recycle, measuring at least a 10% improvement on our base year
We will use 'green' energy sources wherever it is reasonable to do so	Through the installation of renewable technologies, such as solar panels, and / or the purchase of 'green' energy direct from our supplier, we will significantly increase the volume of energy drawn from renewable sources	We will have established an agreement through which we can source renewable technology for our buildings. We will have established a base figure of the volume of energy we currently draw from renewable sources	We will have increased the number of installations of renewable technology in our network. Renewable energy from installations or purchased 'green units' will account for 3% of our overall energy demand (7% electricity demand)	We will have demonstrated a significant increase in the percentage of our energy drawn from renewable sources. Renewable energy from installations or purchased 'green units' will account for 5% of our overall energy demand (15% electricity demand)

Our Aim	Overview	By March 2012	By March 2013	By March 2014
<p>We will take responsibility for the way we do business and the environmental impacts that it causes</p>	<p>We will identify aspects of our work that have an impact on the environment, and take action to reduce that impact. Reducing our travel and paper consumption and making use of digital communication wherever possible</p>	<p>We will establish a base level figure for the amount of miles completed using company vehicles. We will establish a baseline for the use of stationery and printed materials</p>	<p>We will report on the amount of business miles completed using company vehicles, and the steps we have taken to promote reducing this figure</p>	<p>We will continue to publish our annual business miles completed using company vehicles, reporting on the success of the steps we took to reduce that level. Through changing the way we work, as an organisation we will have reduced our overall paper consumption by 10%.</p>
<p>We will help our team members make informed decisions that promote protection of the environment</p>	<p>Through training and awareness we will ensure that all team members are able to make informed decisions in relation to the way we work</p>	<p>We will provide environmental training to all hostel managers We will have established a framework for communicating across the organisation, by selecting 'green champions' or through forming a 'green forum'</p>	<p>We will ensure environmental issues feature in our induction training programme. We will provide electronic training materials which hostel managers can use to train their teams</p>	
<p>We will take responsibility for making our buildings as environmentally sound as is reasonable</p>	<p>Wherever we undertake construction or major refurbishment we should follow clear guidelines to help improve the environmental performance of the building</p>	<p>We will consider the criteria from the EU Ecolabel when undertaking any construction or major refurbishment work</p>	<p>We will have reviewed the products that we regularly purchase and consume to maintain our buildings, namely fixtures and fittings, to ensure they are the most environmentally sound option available, whilst still meeting the needs of our customers. All construction projects will consider the viability of renewable energy solutions</p>	
<p>We want every customer to feel involved in our journey</p>	<p>We recognise our impacts are linked to the number of customers we serve. As part of our customers' experience, we want them to be able to see what we are doing to promote environmental sustainability, and hope that this is something they can take beyond their stay at our hostels</p>	<p>Every hostel's environmental action plan will be written in plain English, and presented at all times for our customers to see. All of our Ecolabel accredited hostels will display useful and relevant environmental information for customers relating to conserving energy and resources</p>	<p>We will offer a paperless membership product for our customers. All of our Ecolabel accredited hostels will display useful and relevant environmental information for customers relating to conserving energy and resources</p>	<p>All of our Ecolabel accredited hostels will display useful and relevant environmental information for customers relating to conserving energy and resources</p>

# What we already do

We've always worked with people who are passionate about the environment, and we've noted some successes in environmental performance, which have come together thanks to the hard work and enthusiasm of individuals.

Seven of our hostels use solar PV installations, two hostels use nearby watercourses for a hydro-electricity installation, and one hostel has its own wind turbine. Each of these installations provides the hostel with a renewable source of electricity.

We currently have eight hostels with solar hot water systems and three hostels have biomass boilers, using wood-chips from renewed harvested woodland for heating.

Our hostel at Lee Valley is heated using warmth collected from a nearby lake.

Three of our hostels have been externally accredited with the EU Ecolabel and we have audited every hostel in our network against a set of environmental criteria. We will repeat this every six months so that we can constantly review our performance and improve the way we manage our estate.

The majority of our hostels have 'hippos'

in the toilet cisterns, or use a reduced flush system to reduce the amount of water we use - six hostels use rainwater harvesting systems, which collect water to flush toilets, reducing the demand for treated water.

We're really proud to contribute to the care of the environment, and through this plan we look forward to reporting on even greater steps taken to reduce our environmental impact.



Solar PV at YHA Lockton



Solar hot water collectors at YHA National Forest



# Our Customers

The experience YHA offers sets us apart and we want to continuously evolve to meet the challenges of today and the future. One of those challenges is in meeting our customers' expectations for environmental responsibility.

One of the core expectations is the ability to provide facilities to enable recycling at least to the standard we would enjoy at home. This is especially the case in our self-catering facilities. Our customers should be able to continue their good practice of separating and recycling waste, and YHA as an organisation should also take on that responsibility.

How we communicate with our customers has a big impact too, both in the message that we send, and the way we send it. We want everyone to know that we have a love and care for the natural environment and by proudly demonstrating this to our customers, we can inspire people about the contribution they make to protecting the environment long after they have enjoyed their stay with us.

By taking the opportunity to communicate electronically wherever possible, we can lessen our impact through reducing our use of stationery and printing materials.

Looking into the future, we're excited by various plans developed by others to promote carbon offsetting and carbon reduction. Leading by example, hostel associations in other countries have been able to introduce optional carbon offsetting payments on their bookings, allowing their customers to contribute towards carbon reduction programs, either run by the hostel, or in support of low energy technology in developing countries.

We will strive to develop such a scheme so that our customers can choose to make a contribution to the environment, and we look forward to reporting back on what this scheme might look like.

## Managing waste

YHA has a duty to effectively manage our waste. We want to be able to report on our volume of waste, and what percentage of that waste we recycle, or divert from landfill. This information will help us change the way we work, and the recycling facilities we offer for the benefit of the environment.

### Year 1 (2011/12)

We will establish a national waste management contract, enabling us to see the volume of waste we produce and the percentage of waste we recycle.

We will use the information from our waste contractor to establish a benchmark for the level of waste we produce, and how much we are able to recycle.

### Year 2 (2012/13)

Using 2011/12 as a benchmark figure, we will report significant improvements in the volume of waste that we recycle, ensuring that this is at least a 5% improvement.

Using our auditing process, we will ensure that every hostel has a minimum standard of recycling facilities for our customers.

### Year 3 (2013/14)

Using 2011/12 as a benchmark figure, we will report continued significant improvements in the volume of waste that we recycle, ensuring that we report at least a 10% improvement.

## Communicating with customers

The message we share with our customers in relation to the environment is key to our success in sustainability.

### Year 1 (2011/12)

We will have developed a standard 'pack' of printed materials that every EU Ecolabel accredited hostel will display to tell our customers what we are doing, and why we are doing it.

Every hostel will display a 'hostel environmental plan' communicating to the customer what that hostel aims to do to promote environmental sustainability.

### Year 2 (2012/13)

We will have developed an E-membership product, which significantly reduces the amount of printed materials that we need to serve our members.

All YHA email addresses will include a standard footer requesting that email recipients consider the environment before printing any email.

Every hostel will display a report on their environmental achievements, based on the previous year's hostel environmental plans, alongside their environmental plan for the current year.

### Year 3 (2013/14)

Every hostel will display a report on their environmental achievements, based on last year's hostel environmental plans, alongside their environmental plan for the current year.

# Our People

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Our people, both staff and volunteers, are at the heart of what we do. They are knowledgeable, welcoming and non-judgemental. They create an environment for our customers that is safe, comfortable and reliable. We know that without their support, and the application of their skills we won't achieve our aim to reduce our environmental impact, and promote environmental sustainability.

Environmental sustainability has long been in the focus of dedicated team members locally, volunteers and guests and we want to build on this success.

Through training and awareness we will provide everyone; staff, volunteers and

customers with support to make informed decisions that reduce our impacts on the environment. We will identify and take responsibility for the way we do business and the environmental impacts that it causes, such as our use of travel and

stationery.

We will use the passion of our people to set stretching targets, presented in a way that everyone can share in achieving them, and we will report our progress year on year.



Solar water heating and sedum roof at YHA Lockton

## Making informed decisions

By giving the right training, making resources available for hostels and giving information about our impacts, our people will be able to make conscious decisions as to how they act in each of our buildings – and the effect on the environment.

### Year 1 (2011/12)

We will provide environmental training to all hostel managers. The training will include sharing our Green SPIRIT plan with them, providing them with the right information to set local environmental targets, and training in managing utility and waste at their hostel.

### Year 2 (2012/13)

We will ensure that environmental issues feature in our induction-training programme. YHA has a large number of seasonal staff and by ensuring that all new and seasonal staff receive information on environmental management, we will have a significant impact on the level of knowledge shared across YHA.

## The way we work

With a diverse network, spread across England and Wales, we need to travel and communicate often to support each other. Both travel and communication have an environmental impact, and there is usually a 'best option' that causes the smallest impact, such as the use of public transport rather than an individual travelling by car. As an organisation we will be conscious of the decisions we

make, and how this might affect the environment.

### Year 1 (2011/12)

We will establish a base level figure for the amount of miles completed using company vehicles, so that this level can be used for future years' reporting.

We will establish a baseline for the amount of paper and printed materials we use and produce.

### Year 2 (2012/13)

Every year we will report on the number of miles completed using company vehicles. We will also report on the steps we have taken to encourage the reduction in mileage, and promotion of other modes of transport.

We will ensure that stationery from sustainable sources is available for purchase throughout our network, and that wherever reasonable, this is the only option available.

### Year 3 (2013/14)

We will report on the impact we made on our business mileage by promoting alternatives to car transport.

We will have taken the opportunity to implement on a trial basis, digital technologies that reduce our need to travel as often, such as video conferencing. We will report on the mileage that the use of such technology has saved.

Through changing the way we work, as an organisation we will have reduced our overall paper consumption by 10%.

## Setting our targets

We want to capture our people's passion for their work, and part of this comes

from local teams setting their own targets to promote sustainability and protect the environment. With a diverse network of buildings and locations, what can be achieved will vary greatly, and depend on our staff, volunteers and customers at each hostel.

We will provide every hostel with the tools to set, and guidance to meet, their own environmental targets. These targets will focus on the following key areas:

- The energy we use
- The water we use
- The waste we produce
- The chemicals we use
- Our wider impact on the environment and surrounding location.

### Year 1 (2011/12)

All hostels will have been provided with the guidance and templates to create their own 'hostel environmental plan', with targets to reduce their overall impact. The plans will be posted prominently at the front of house, so that every customer can see what the hostel they are staying at has committed to do.

### Year 2 (2012/13)

All hostels will publish their performance against the previous year's environmental plan at the front of house, next to their plans for the current year, to build on or improve on the targets set previously.

### Year 3 (2013/14)

All hostels will publish their performance against the previous year's environmental plan at the front of house, next to their plans for the current year, to build on or improve on the targets set previously.

Creating hostel environmental plans will have been embedded as part of 'the way we work'.

# Our Resources

YHA's second largest running cost comes from our utilities, which really puts into perspective the significant quantity of water, fossil fuel and electricity we need to sustain our work. It is not only the cost of these resources but the impact on the wider environment that should drive our actions.

We want to take every opportunity to improve the way we manage our energy and water resources, to take energy from renewable resources, and to limit the amount that we use.

## Managing our utilities

From a great idea in one place to reduce the amount of energy we use, we can quickly spread this idea across our network, positively contributing to the protection of the environment. We want to accurately measure the energy we are using, identifying and sharing the best practices, and working to improve where our performance could be better. We acknowledge that the amount of energy we use is linked to the number of customers we accommodate and serve, so we will report energy usage as kWh per Overnight (kWh/ON).

### Year 1 (2010/11)

Using 2009/10 as a benchmark, we will reduce our overall consumption of electricity by 2%, measured as kWh/ON.

We will provide every hostel in the network with a monthly report showing electricity consumption, measured as kWh/ON, so that hostels can actively monitor their performance, and make comparison to other hostels.

We will provide all of our hostels with utility usage information (water, fossil fuel and electricity), showing consumption for every month, compared to the previous year.

### Year 2 (2011/12)

Using 2009/10 as a benchmark, we will reduce our overall consumption of

electricity by 5% measured as kWh/ON.

We will commission SMART meters at every hostel for mains energy - providing us with half hourly data to show where we are using our energy, highlighting where we could reduce consumption.

### Year 3 (2012/13)

Using 2009/12 as a benchmark, we will reduce our overall consumption of electricity by 7% measured as kWh/ON.

We will continue to provide monthly utility consumption information to all hostels.

## Renewable energy

One of the biggest steps forward we can take in reducing our environmental impact is to change the sources of our energy. By using renewable technology (such as solar panels, woodchip boilers, ground source heat pumps and wind turbines), we prevent the need for power stations to produce that energy for us.

Wherever it is reasonable to do so, YHA will consider using renewable technology at our hostels, and where we cannot afford to install renewable technology, we will consider purchasing 'green units' from our energy provider, energy produced by someone else's renewable technology.

In the past YHA has benefitted from renewable technologies on a local level and in 2009/10, 1.2% of our energy came from these renewable sources. This level is something we really want to build upon, showing a significant increase in the amount of our energy coming from renewable sources.

### Year 1 (2011/12)

With our Board's approval, complete trial installations of solar panels, which will

include our national office, and one of our larger hostels.

From our own supply or from the purchase of 'green units' supply the hostels with Ecolabel accreditation (13 hostels by the end of the year) with 50% renewable energy.

### Year 2 (2012/13)

Report on the installation of new renewable technology, either through replacement (i.e. biomass boilers) or through installing new equipment.

Renewable energy will account for 3% of our overall energy demand (7% of our electricity demand).

### Year 3 (2013/14)

Renewable energy will account for 5% of our overall energy demand (15% of our electricity demand).

We will be in a position to report a significant increase in our use of renewable energy, in comparison with our base figure (2010/11).

# Our Buildings

YHA's hostels are diverse. Many are located in exceptional places, and their features vary greatly, which can affect their environmental performance.

We are proud of our buildings, and whilst we ensure we provide unique experiences for our customers, we also want to do our best to protect the environment, by managing our buildings effectively.

With buildings at various stages of their life, we also undertake an ongoing programme of refurbishment and renewal, which gives us a great chance to look at how we can improve the way we design and manage buildings.



## EU Ecolabel Accreditation

The European Ecolabel is a voluntary scheme, established in 1992 to encourage businesses to market products and services that are kinder to the environment.

Product groups include cleaning products, appliances, paper products, textile and home and garden products and services such as tourist accommodation.

YHA is proud to say that we have 3 Ecolabel accredited hostels, and moving forward we really want to build on this – aiming to have 30 hostels accredited by 2014.

Our hostels are measured against physical aspects, such as the efficiency of boilers and the presence of good controls for heating systems, as well as operational aspects, such as how we serve our breakfasts and the information we provide our guests and customers.

In the words of the European Commission for the Environment: “While the logo may be simple, the environmental criteria behind it are tough, and only the very best products, which are kindest to the

environment, are entitled to carry the EU Ecolabel.”

More information on the EU Ecolabel can be found on the website: <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/Ecolabel/>

### Year 1 (2011/12)

We will gain accreditation for 13 of our hostels to the EU Ecolabel scheme.

### Year 2 (2012/13)

We will gain a total of 20 accreditations for our hostels to the EU Ecolabel scheme.

### Year 3 (2013/14)

We will gain a total of 30 accreditations for our hostels to the EU Ecolabel scheme.

## Designing our buildings

Our ongoing refurbishment programme uses a specification which is regularly updated to meet the needs of our customers. We want to ensure that this specification also meets the needs of the environment wherever reasonably practicable.

### Year 1 (2011/12)

Our hostel design specification will use

the EU Ecolabel criteria as the minimum requirements when undertaking any major hostel refurbishment project or new build.

Our hostel design/development team will use an additional set of environmentally sound design features which are over and above the requirement for the EU Ecolabel which will be applied wherever reasonably practicable.

### Year 2 (2012/13)

We will report our success against the essential EU Ecolabel criteria, and the number of opportunities where we have been able to add more environmentally desirable features.

We will have reviewed the products that we regularly purchase and consume to maintain our buildings, namely fixtures and fittings, to ensure they are the most environmentally sound option available, whilst still meeting the needs of our customers. We will report on the changes we are able to make to our standard supply list and the positive environmental impact we expect them to have.

# Naming our Plan

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Our people, both staff and volunteers, are at the heart of what we do. They drive YHA's innovation, and so in order to create a name that fully captured what this plan was all about, we invited every hostel to come up with a great name.

The prize for the best name was awarded to YHA Perranporth, who were the first to suggest 'Green SPIRIT'.

The name represents our desire to be environmentally sustainable, or 'Green' and to do this through the application of our SPIRIT values.

For suggesting the winning name, the team at Perranporth won a technical utility management audit, and up to £3,000

worth of work to reduce the environmental impact of the hostel.

It's fantastic that the team at Perranporth, who were so engaged by the idea of naming the plan, have the opportunity to make their hostel more sustainable.

In addition to the improvements we will make following the technical survey at YHA Perranporth, the hostel is also scheduled for a significant refurbishment project.

This project will be undertaken using the EU Ecolabel criteria, which will help improve the environmental performance of the hostel.

We will continue to report on the story at YHA Perranporth as part of our annual review of progress against this Green SPIRIT plan.



YHA Perranporth

# Hostelling International

We're proud to be part of Hostelling International, a non-governmental, not-for profit organisation representing 71 Member Associations, from all over the world.



There are over 4,000 hostels registered with Hostelling International, and through establishing good relationships with other Member Associations we have the opportunity to share best practice and learn from others.

It is a fantastic thought, that one great idea to promote sustainability in one hostel could be shared across so many hostels across the world - with a vast overall impact.

Through Hostelling International we will have the opportunity to benchmark the use of our resources against hostels in other countries - identifying areas of good performance, and where we can learn from others.



Wind turbine and solar hot water at YHA Langdon Beck

# **YHA** **Green SPIRIT Plan** **2011-2014**

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YHA (England & Wales)  
is a member of Hostelling International  
**Call 0800 0191 700**  
**[www.yha.org.uk](http://www.yha.org.uk)**