

Credit Crunch and Green Tourism

The deepening recession looks set to make Britain more environmentally friendly, maintain experts. Academics studying the impact of the global financial crisis on company practices claim that far from ending the green dream it will inject a new wave of enthusiasm for saving money which could actually help save the planet.



"Skeptics who suggest that the recession will put an end to enthusiasm among consumers and companies for the environment are guilty of muddled thinking," said Professor Ken Peattie of Cardiff University.

"It assumes that being 'green' is more expensive, whereas in many cases it involves using fewer resources, using them more efficiently and avoiding waste - all things which save money," said the Professor who is Director of the Centre for Business Relationships Accountability, Sustainability and Society (BRASS).

"The premise that firms will give up environmental policies also ignores the opportunities that developing cleaner technologies and products can provide for investment and employment."

"President Obama's election campaign included a pledge to invest \$150 billion in clean energy projects, creating 5 million 'green collar' jobs. It was unsustainable lending to support unsustainable levels of consumption that got us into the credit crunch mess in the first place. If we just scramble to get back to the same economic activity we had before then all we will do is line ourselves up for another disaster when oil supplies decline and climate disruption impacts on business activity."



A climate change report from Sir Nicholas Stern, current economic advisor to the Government, highlighted that its impacts threaten to shrink the global economy by 20 per cent. The Green Tourism Business Scheme, Britain's leading independently verified accreditation body, has seen membership numbers soar in recent months.

"We've seen a huge increase in enquiries from businesses looking for help to cut their operational costs," said Andrea Nicholas, Director of the GTBS which has more than 2,000 members across the UK. "Despite the credit crunch we are still seeing an increase in membership and no evidence of a slow down."

The Green Tourism Business Scheme, which is now operational in all regions of England and Scotland, ensures members have to meet rigorous minimal standards from over 150 measures of best practice before being awarded a bronze, silver or gold award. The measures include a range of actions from efficient lighting and heating, to nature conservation, renewable energy, use of local produce and community involvement.

Far from losing money studies by Leeds Metropolitan University into green hotels and B&Bs in the UK have shown that they enjoy repeat custom from between 40 and 50 per cent of their visitors, far higher than enjoyed by regular accommodation providers.



“There is no danger of the credit crunch spelling the end of the green dream because a lot of the green movement actually leads to eco-savings. If anything the culture will move towards making more efficient use of resources, in terms of water, waste and energy, which will make the eco-movement stronger than ever,” said Dr Xavier Font, Director of Studies at the International Centre for Responsible Tourism at Leeds Metropolitan University.

“A lot of research has shown that businesses can get the same profit by increasing customers by 5 per cent or by reducing operating costs by 10 per cent. Hotels can reduce water and energy costs by up to 30 per cent with some minimal changes. The Ramada Jarvis chain of hotels put in an environmental management plan and they saw their utility bills go down from £5m to £4m a year. A million pound saving is surely reason enough to do it.”

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