



## OUR GREEN STORY

In buying Banceithin and moving to West Wales, we hoped to slow down, down-size, live more sustainably, and generally remember how to appreciate the simpler things in life. Like many other people before and after us, the early River Cottage television series and books were our inspiration. The reality has proved to be very different and, at times, hard work, but more rewarding than we could ever have hoped it would be.

Limited by our available budget, we were not always able to use traditional methods in the renovation of Banceithin's derelict farm buildings, but wherever possible materials for the cottages were recycled from the original buildings, including roof tiles, building stone and timbers.

Our main focus was, and still is, on how we live and manage both the business and the smallholding on a day to day basis, which is reflected in the goals set out in our Environmental Policy:

- to provide the highest quality holiday accommodation while minimising the impact on the environment, and
- to run Banceithin and our self-catering cottages as sustainably as possible.

We are proud to be a Gold Member of the national Green Tourism Scheme, the largest and most established sustainable grading program in the world, and winner of their Best Self-catering Accommodation Goldstar Award in 2013.

We are also members of the Alistair Sawday's Ethical Places Collection and the first members for Ceredigion of Green



Holidays in Wales, a small co-operative of sustainable tourism accommodation providers in Wales.

### **So what does all of this mean in practice?**

Establishing and running Banceithin on a sustainable basis involves us adopting a myriad of green technologies and practices, from the "big ticket" items like renewable energy right through to the nitty gritty detail of where we source the tea bags provided in the cottages.

#### **Energy:**

- Heating and hot water are provided by a wood fired boiler in a carbon neutral, district heating system. Wood for the boiler is sourced from a local supplier and is from managed hardwood forests or tree surgeons. Wood provided for the cottage stoves is either from the same source or from fallen or felled trees on our own land.
- Cwt Mochyn cottage has solar thermal tubes installed on the roof that supply the majority of its hot water in the spring and summer months.
- Our electricity is sourced from a green supplier (Ecotricity) on a 100% green energy tariff. A 4kWh 22 panel solar photovoltaic array on our wood shed provides electricity for the main house, including the boiler and related systems that run the cottage heating and hot water, with any surplus being fed back into the National Grid. *[We track electricity usage against our solar PV generation on a quarterly basis, including calculating a kWh per guest night consumption rate (see the enclosed charts), allowing us to assess the impact of occupancy and climate on our consumption and whether or not our electricity generation has exceeded our consumption over the year.]*



- All lighting in each cottage is low energy, with appliances being reused or, where new, low energy models fitted.

### **Water:**

- Banceithin is off mains, so all water is sourced from a spring rising on the neighbouring land. Waste water is treated through a reed bed filtration system.
- Rainwater is harvested for animals and watering cottage gardens.
- We use only eco-friendly, chemical and phosphate free cleaning and laundry products, the majority being the BioD brand, an independent UK family-owned company, dedicated to promoting the use of hypoallergenic, environmentally responsible detergents. The washing up liquid, laundry liquid and dishwasher tablets provided are BioD and Ecover purchased through Ethical Superstore.
- The hand soap provided is supplied by Myddfai, a community run social enterprise based in the village of the same name near Llandovery.

### **Sustainable Procurement:**

- All new wood, including flooring, is Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified, and minimal / low VOC or VOC free wall paint has been used throughout.
- Much of the furniture is second-hand, the most notable pieces being sourced through a Welsh business that specialises in rescuing and reclaiming furniture from landfill and house clearances.
- Much of the glassware and crockery is second-hand, purchased at charity & antique shops.
- Duvets are hypo-allergenic and made from 100% recycled polyester fibrefill and unbleached cotton. Pillows are non-allergenic and contain recycled polyester.



- The vintage Welsh wool blankets are supplied by a local business (Jane Beck Welsh Blankets, Llwynygroes).
- The majority of our marketing is online, minimising use of printed material. The Guest Information Book and all other Banceithin paperwork is printed on paper made from recycled material. Printer cartridges are returned to HP to be recycled through their closed loop system.

### **Waste Minimisation:**

- Recycling facilities are provided on site for: glass, plastics, polystyrene, cardboard, paper, aluminium and waxed cartons.
- Plastic milk and other bottles tops are collected for LUSH, who use them in production of containers for their cosmetics.
- Composting facilities are provided for all food waste: cooked food and other waste that cannot go into our garden composters goes to a Council composting facility and all other food waste goes into our composters and finds its way onto our veg plot. Only biodegradable or corn-starch bin liners are used.
- We use The Green Sack refuse sacks made from 100% recycled UK waste farm plastics.
- Cleaning cloths are washable and re-usable and the scrubbing pad is biodegradable, 100% natural loofah.
- The aluminium foil and toilet paper are made of 100% recycled material. Storage containers are provided as an alternative to cling-film.
- Shopping bags are provided to discourage use of new plastic bags and re-useable water bottles to discourage purchase of bottled spring water.

### **Social Responsibility:**

- Bed linen and bath towels are made from organic and/or Fair Trade cotton.



- Our own or locally sourced meats, vegetables and fruit are used in the homemade frozen food, which is provided in washable, re-usable dishes or recyclable foil trays.
- Vegetables and other produce ordered in advance are supplied by the Organic Fresh Food Company in Lampeter.
- The teabags and sugar provided are the Café Direct Fair Trade and Billington's Fair Trade brands sourced from the Ethical Superstore.

### **Are we doing anything else?**

We've rediscovered a love of the outdoors and wildlife and whilst our aim is to minimise our impact on the environment so that we, you and future generations can enjoy it, we also want to share our enjoyment of it with others and encourage even more wildlife to make its home here. So this is what we've done:

- planted native trees and, for pollinators, planted fruit trees and other bee-friendly shrubs, to be supplemented (hopefully) by wildflower and cut-flower patches from summer 2016
- constructed a treehouse and stream-side boardwalk in our front field, and stiles and a stretch of boardwalk to a secluded corner of our grassland
- set up bird feeders in each garden, kept stocked for greedy birds with seed and suet balls sourced from the RSPB
- built a pond dipping platform over our front pond, created a smaller wildlife pond by the polytunnel and provided a kit for pond and stream dipping
- built a small bug hotel to encourage solitary bees and other little critters to set up home
- provided binoculars and bird spotting guides
- installed a barn owl box and other nest boxes around the site



- created a guide to wild flowers and other forms of wildlife found here throughout the year, together with information on the bat species resident on site and guides for identifying butterflies and trees
- created a Nature Adventure Box full of fun things to do, find and make, including a Treasure Nature Trail for children as a means of exploring every corner of our smallholding
- provided a Planisphere, telescope and binoculars for discovering our dark and starry skies.

### **What about the future?**

We're always on the look out for changes we could make or innovations we could adopt to make us even greener. If you think of any, however small (or big), we'd love to hear about them!

Our newest initiative, which we're starting in spring 2016, relates to management of the wet grassland area that makes up the majority of our acreage. We dismissed the idea of draining the land for additional grazing or creating a fishing lake because of the potential adverse long term impact on the existing eco-system. As an alternative means of making some of the land more productive, but without changing the habitat, we are setting aside an area to plant a variety of willow which, in four year's time and on a four year cycle thereafter, will be coppiced to provide what will, we hope, be the majority of a year's supply of wood for our biomass boiler.

Providing electric bikes and installing a charging point for electric cars remains a "big ticket" item under consideration for the future. At present there is neither the demand for this nor the network of charging points across Ceredigion to



make this feasible for us. But who knows where we'll be in five year's time!