

GOING GREEN

– *Birchwood's environmental management programme*

Birchwood is committed to becoming a responsible provider within the tourist industry, with its environmental vision to achieve global and specific sustainability.

Birchwood has affiliated itself with the Heritage Environmental Rating Programme, which provides



Greg Dillon

environmental management systems for businesses and rates them on their environmental accountability.

“In my opinion, the market is more and more focused on buying according to green accolades - if we don't get on board we are going to lose out,” says Greg Dillon, Commercial and Legal Manager and Director of Birchwood's Green portfolio. “In addition it is about our own sustainability.”

Birchwood's coordinated green team is working on a number of projects.

Recycling is already in stage two. With a new service provider, Birchwood is stepping up their game by reducing the tonnage sent to landfills, through increasing the amount of recyclables they take out of the waste stream. As part of this, the kitchen process is being redesigned. Wet waste is diverted so water and solids can be separated and used as grey water and compost. By keeping papers, plastics and cardboards dry recyclables are up by four times.

There are plans to separate water from the kitchens and showers and to collect grey water from Birchwood's sizable parking lot and roof space. This will be used to water the gardens, thus reducing fresh water consumption.

Birchwood is also implementing plans to keep energy consumption down. All 250 of the new rooms have solar powered geysers and special showerheads that reduce the amount of water used and thus the energy needed to heat it, without compromising customer comfort. With 80% reduction to energy costs on the new rooms, the company is looking to expand solar power to its other rooms as well. “It comes at a cost, but we understand there will be a return on investment over time.”

In addition, efficient lighting and energy optimisation mechanisms are being implemented, including a plug system that switches off affiliated plugs when it detects the master plug has been put on standby.

“I would like to think that within a year's time we'd be well down the road. Ideally I'd like Birchwood to join the Green Globe international standards certification system in the next financial year, and be winning some of Heritage's Impel awards by October next year.” 