

North East England Tourism Awards 2009 Large Hotel of the Year Award

Gold award winner: Gisborough Hall Hotel

'The Gold award reinforces our desire to be the best, to deliver consistent high standards to our customers and provide them with exceptional value for money,' says Kim Yardley, general manager for the 4 Star Gisborough Hall Hotel. 'It also gives us a competitive edge, enabling us to market ourselves as "best in class" through our website, the local media and in all our communications. Winning has also increased staff pride in the hotel, motivating them to develop further excellence and enhancing their personal portfolio.'

Such benefits are part of the reason Gisborough Hall entered the 2009 North East England awards. Kim says, 'We were silver award winners in 2007 and 2008 and believed our performance through a difficult recessionary year had placed us above the competition. We had managed our costs and more importantly diversified in managing our sales activities to our targeted markets, allowing us to outperform the market.'

'Just as important, we entered to show the team that their efforts have been rewarded and to build their motivation. We also wanted to position ourselves as the best for the hotel owners, to increase their confidence in the hotel for the future so they would continue investment and support.'

Having entered the awards in the past, the hotel had the bones of their entry in place. 'However,' says Kim, 'the business development manager, HR, the maintenance and green teams, and the training officer were involved in building this year's entry.'

When asked, Kim highlights staff development, responding to customer needs and sustainability as key examples of activities, which he feels demonstrate the hotel's commitment to running an award-winning business.

'Gisborough Hall and Macdonald Hotels and Resorts, their management company have high standards in staff training,' he says. 'From induction to our performance management programme, staff are given continual development and training. As well as in-house programmes, such as "Commitment to excellence" – covering delivery and anticipative service – we offer opportunities in individual development through NVQs, the Macdonald Hotels' "stairways to success" programmes and college qualifications.'

Kim adds, 'We have also given each member of staff a copy of the award to put in their personal portfolio, to show they were part of an award-winning team.'

The hotel maintains awareness of changing customer needs through continual feedback and competitor research. Kim says, 'The hotel incorporates a rolling refurbishment programme. For example, the Madoc Suite for banqueting and events was fully refurbished following feedback from our wedding co-ordinator and potential clients. Our wedding business subsequently grew by 3%. Most recently, we've developed a second dining concept, converting the hotel bar into a bistro/bar in response to changes in guests' dining requirements.'

'We also continually assess our manning parameters, ensuring we put staff in the right place at the right time as customer needs change, for example having additional staff at peak breakfast times.'



Kim continues, 'We take sustainability very seriously. We have set up a hotel energy committee and green team. Our environmental policy is now discussed at staff induction and is prominent on our website. The aim is to target the emerging market where more customers, from large corporations and government business to the individual traveller, are environmentally aware. Our green credentials are also important to our staff, and the hotel owners are committed to investing in alternative energy, conserving utilities for the sustainability of the business and to achieving long-term cost reductions.'

'Feedback from the awards assessor has prompted us to refocus on our environmental policy. We have now set ourselves the target of achieving Gold in the Green Tourism Business Scheme in 2010. We've just put in our order for a bio mass plant.'

Kim concludes, 'Winning Gold has also supported the hotel owners' desire to invest in the property to ensure we maintain our positioning for the future. I hadn't appreciated just how pleased they would be in our achievements.'