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Thinking of starting an accommodation business in Wealden District?

Whilst operating a tourism business can be very enjoyable, there are many things to be considered when deciding to take the plunge and it can be a very daunting challenge. This information pack is designed as an introduction, with some useful contacts and other publications and resources recommended for further information.

This information is produced for businesses in the Wealden District. If you are located in neighbouring districts, we suggest that you contact your local tourism office for their advice.

Eastbourne Borough Council	Tel: 01323 415450	Email:
tourism@eastbourne.gov.uk		
Lewes District Council	Tel: 01273 483448	Email: lewes.tic@lewes.gov.uk
Mid Sussex District Council	Tel: 01444 477363	Email: tourism@midsussex.gov.uk
Rother District Council	Tel: 01424 787838	Email: battletic@rother.gov.uk
Tunbridge Wells Borough Council	Tel: 01892 554229	Email:
tourism@tunbridgewells.gov.uk		



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1.0 GOOD STARTING POINT

There are many things to consider when running an accommodation establishment, from complying with the relevant legislation to ensuring that you know what your rights are when guests don't pay or cancel their booking, and what records you need to keep for overseas visitors.

If you have never operated such a business before we suggest that you subscribe to 'Accommodation Know-How' (previously known as 'The Pink Book') which provides detailed information on all practical and legislative concerns applicable to running an accommodation establishment. It is an invaluable on-line resource that is updated regularly. An annual subscription is £29.95 (or £37.45 which includes a hard copy). It is available free of charge to quality assessed accommodation.. To subscribe visit: www.accommodationknowhow.co.uk or Tel: 01635 588897.

Visit Britain publishes a business series with tailored advice on best practice and compliance for small enterprises. There are three titles priced at £9.99 each – 'How to Run a Quality Bed and Breakfast', 'How to Run Quality Self-Catering Accommodation' and 'How to Market your Business Effectively' these can be purchased from www.accommodationknowhow.co.uk or Tel: 01903 828503.

Tourism South East also has a range of useful information available from their website at www.industry.visitsoutheastengland.com/site/starting-a-business or you could purchase a copy of their Business Support handbook priced at £35.00 (or £25.00 for TSE Members). For further information visit their website or Tel: 023 8062 5498/99

2.0 QUALITY ASSURANCE

Visit Britain is leading the national policy to ensure that high quality accommodation is available to visitors – especially in the lead up to London 2012. Regional tourist boards and most local authorities in the UK operate an assessed only policy which means that they only promote establishments with a 1 – 5 star rating awarded by either Visit Britain (via Quality in Tourism) or the AA as part of the National Quality Assessment Scheme (NQAS). Across Sussex, all but one of the local authority areas promote only star rated accommodation to ensure that visitors can be assured of a minimum standard of quality accommodation rated independently against a trustworthy criteria.

All accommodation promoted by the Enjoy Sussex Visitor Guide and Website (www.enjoysussex.info) must carry a valid assessment awarded by Quality in Tourism or the AA.

Even if you decide to operate your business without a star rating we recommend that you request a copy of an assessment pack to gain an understanding of the standards and expectations of the industry. To request an assessment pack that is relevant to your business, or to find out more about Quality Assessment please contact one of the following agencies:

Quality in Tourism

Farncombe House, Broadway, Worcestershire, WR12 7IJ

Tel: 0845 300 6996

Email: qualityintourism@gslglobal.com

www.qualityintourism.com

AA Hotel Services

14th Floor, Basing View, Fanum House, Basingstoke, RG21 4EA

Tel: 01256 844455

www.theaa.com/travel_editorial/hotel_services_guest_accommodation_recognition_scheme.html

There is an annual fee for this service, which varies depending on accommodation type and room numbers. There is also a one off registration fee. Please shop around for details as they can vary between the above agencies who may offer incentives that suit your specific business requirements.

3.0 PLANNING & BUILDING CONTROL REGULATIONS

It is important to contact the District Planning and Building Control Office before you start any work or open your business to ensure that you have the necessary permissions and you are not breaching any conditions on your property.

In some cases, planning permission may not be required to let out rooms within a house. Whether a change of use application is required will depend upon the number of rooms let as a ratio to those retained for family use within the house. Self catering conversions will always require planning permission.

In terms of Building Regulations, these will need to be considered when carrying out any alterations to your premises and will depend on the number of people that will be sleeping on site (including guests, staff and owners).

If you are in a conservation area or a listed building and propose any structural alterations, installing new bathrooms, fire detection systems etc, then it is likely that you will need to make a Listed Building and/or Conservation Area Consent application. It is a criminal offence to carry out works to a listed building without the necessary consents in place, so it's always best to double check before starting any work to avoid future problems.

Planning advice & enquiries

Wealden District Council, Pine Grove, Crowborough, TN6 1DH

Tel: 01892 602777

Email: planning@wealden.gov.uk

Web: www.wealden.gov.uk/planning_and_building_control/index.aspx

Building Control

Wealden District Council, Pine Grove, Crowborough, TN6 1DH

Tel: 01892 602777

Email: planning@wealden.gov.uk

Web: www.wealden.gov.uk/planning_and_building_control/index.aspx

4.0 SIGNAGE

The display of all outdoor signage is governed by the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 1992. These regulations concern lighting, height, fixing and size of lettering of figures on a sign. The legislation can be very complicated and it is therefore important that you discuss potential signage with the District Planning Authority before commissioning signs for your premises to clarify what permissions you may require.

If your property is a listed building, the procedure is different and it is likely that you will require Listed Building Consent for any sign to be put up on your building.

It is always best to double check before you commission signage to avoid future problems.

Planning advice & enquiries

Wealden District Council, Pine Grove, Crowborough, TN6 1DH

Tel: 01892 602777

Email: planning@wealden.gov.uk

Web: http://www.wealden.gov.uk/planning_and_building_control/index.aspx

Brown & White Signage

Only certain businesses meet the criteria to qualify for brown and white signage on the roads. East Sussex County Council are responsible for the maintenance of roads and public footpaths in the district. All brown and white signs require an application to the appropriate authority and a fee will be charged – dependant on size, location etc.

The criteria for brown and white signs varies depending on the local area but the basic Highways Agency conditions can be viewed at

www.highways.gov.uk/business/2147.aspx

For further information about brown and white signs contact:

East Sussex County Council (Highways)

Tel: 0845 60 80 193

Email: highways@eastsussex.gov.uk

5.0 FIRE RISK ASSESSMENTS

In October 2006, new Fire Safety Laws came into force making businesses directly responsible for the safety of all premises users. As a result, fire certificates have been abolished and new risk assessments have to be completed by a designated 'responsible person'. The new laws apply to all tourism businesses including self catering and smaller establishments who were previously exempt from fire certificates.

The law states that operators must take responsibility for fire safety themselves, so all accommodation businesses will have to carry out a fire safety risk assessment. In smaller premises the operator can probably do their own assessment but in large, complex premises a trained professional is more likely to be needed. Preventative or protective measures required following the risk assessment must be installed and maintained.

Fire officers will carry out spot checks and whoever performed the risk assessment is liable for anything found to be incorrect or if anything goes wrong. Magistrates will be able to impose fines of £5,000 for each offence, while a Crown Court can impose unlimited fines and up to two years in jail. Quality in Tourism assessors can also ask to see your risk assessment as part of your assessment.

For further information about the new laws and completing a risk assessment there is a wealth of information available to help you:

Tourism South East - www.industry.visitsoutheastengland.com/industryissues/fire

Central Government - www.communities.gov.uk/fire/firesafety/firesafetylaw/

Business Link - www.businesslink.gov.uk/bdotg/action/layer?r.s=sl&topicId=1074253164

East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service

Tel: 0845 130 8855

www.esfrs.org

6.0 ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH & FOOD SAFETY

Wealden's Public Protection Team will be able to advise on all matters relating to Food Hygiene and Health & Safety. They can provide information on training courses and have a range of free leaflets available.

As the person with control over the premises, you have responsibility for the safety of every person who comes onto those premises. You will have a 'duty of care' to guests and must make sure that your premises are reasonably safe for the purpose for which guests are invited to use them. For example, you must make sure that floors are not slippery, passageways are clear, furniture is secure and guests are familiarised with emergency procedures.

You will also be responsible for the Health and Safety of your employees, whether you have one or one hundred. You must ensure that they are adequately trained, have safe working conditions and are provided with adequate equipment to do their work safely.

Under Food Hygiene legislation, all serviced accommodation providers must register with their local authority. You will then be contacted to discuss food safety issues relating to your business and to arrange an inspection if needed (free of charge). You can contact the Public Protection Team to benefit from their advice.

For more information, to register or request free leaflets contact:

The Public Protection Team

Wealden District Council, Vicarage Lane, Hailsham, BN27 2AX

Tel: 01323 443302

Email: foodandsafety@wealden.gov.uk

Web: www.wealdenbusinesshelp.co.uk

7.0 BUSINESS RATES

A domestic property may be used for Bed & Breakfast and generally won't be subject to Business Rates if;

- the business operates less than 6 bed spaces
- the property remains the sole and main residence of the taxpayer
- the B&B business is subsidiary to private use

If your establishment has more than 6 bed spaces then you will be liable for business rates. Self catering units are not classed as domestic properties and are therefore liable for business rates.

Further information about Business Rates can be found on the Valuation Office Agency website address: http://www.voa.gov.uk/business_rates/index.htm. For other information on business rates please contact:

Wealden District Council, Vicarage Lane, Hailsham, BN27 2AX

Tel: 01323 443387

Email: businessrates@wealden.gov.uk

Web: http://www.wealden.gov.uk/Business/Business_Rates/Index.aspx

8.0 INSURANCE

You need to ensure that you have adequate insurance cover. Most household policies will not cover the use of your premises for business purposes, your liability to employees and guests, or any damage caused by guests.

Some insurance companies offer special packages for accommodation providers including Public Liability Insurance, Employers Liability Insurance and Property and Contents Insurance.

To find out what cover you will need and costs, contact your insurance company

9.0 VISITORS WITH DISABILITIES

The Disability Discrimination Act applies to all businesses providing a service to the public regardless of size. The legislation ensures that all businesses provide reasonable access to visitors with disabilities - and it is important to think of disabilities in the widest context and not just around wheelchair access. To comply with the Act you may have to:

1. Change a practice, policy or procedure which makes it impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled people to make use of services.
2. Take reasonable steps to provide auxiliary aids or services if it would enable or make it easier for disabled people to make use of the services which you offer to the public.
3. Take reasonable measures to remove or alter physical features that are barriers to service delivery or provide a reasonable alternative method of making services available.

Visit Britain has recently launched a new publication 'Easy Does It' which is a free publication with helpful tips and simple, low cost changes that could benefit your business and your visitors. It is free to download from www.tourismtrade.org.uk/quality/assessmentstandards/NationalAccessibleScheme/Access/New_accessibility_guide.asp

Tourism South East produces a booklet entitled 'Creating Accessible Tourism' which includes helpful advice and information along with a self completion audit so you can see how your establishment fairs. The booklet is priced at £20.00 (£10.00 for TSE members). For further information or to order a copy visit their website www.industry.visitsoutheastengland.com/site/business-advice/disabled-guests or Tel: 023 8062 5498/99

There is currently a shortage in the district of fully accessible accommodation and consideration of setting up suitable facilities could offer a key business opportunity. For further information about the National Accessible Scheme visit www.industry.visitsoutheastengland.com/site/business-advice/disabled-guests/nas

10.0 ENJOY SUSSEX & NEIGHBOURING TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRES

Wealden District Council works in partnership with Lewes, Horsham, Mid Sussex District Councils to promote their combined areas as a visitor destination under the Enjoy Sussex brand. Opportunities are available for quality assessed (star rated) businesses to advertise with Enjoy Sussex on an annual basis.

The Enjoy Sussex Visitor Guide is produced annually and is supported by the www.enjoysussex.info website. 20,000 A4 Guides with an A5 booklet are distributed nationally to Tourist Information Centres and in response to our marketing campaign with a further 50,000 A5 booklets distributed to local outlets and Tourist Information Centres. Enjoy Sussex is supported by the Lewes, Seaford, Horsham and Burgess Hill Tourist Information Centres (operated by neighbouring authorities).

If you have missed the opportunity to advertise in the current Visitor Guide, there is an interim website option available for www.enjoysussex.info - subject to proof of an assessment grading & payment of an interim fee (currently £75 +VAT).

For further information about advertising with Enjoy Sussex contact::

Economic Development & Tourism

Wealden District Council, Pine Grove, Crowborough, TN6 1DH

Tel: 01892 602887 or email regeneration@wealden.gov.uk

Benefits of Advertising with Enjoy Sussex include:

- Advertisement in 70,000 brochures promoting the area as a visitor destination
- Listing on www.enjoysussex.info – including the option to show accommodation availability
- Participation in the National BABA (Book A Bed Ahead) Scheme with Tourist Information Centres across the country. Subject to a 10% booking fee of the first night stay booked.
- Invitations to Sussex Literature Exchanges and other networking events
- Opportunities to participate in business development workshops & training at subsidised rates or free

We cannot guarantee that our Enjoy Sussex activities & the neighbouring Tourist Information Centres with associated websites will be your main source of business although we will endeavour to provide the best possible service. We recommend that you use additional sources for bookings to ensure an even spread of business throughout the year (eg. Local community networks - shops, churches, other tourism organisations and publications and e-commerce activities.)

If you do not wish to operate with a National Quality Assessment Scheme rating then we regret that we are unable to feature your establishment in any of the Wealden District tourism promotional activities.

11.0 BUSINESS LINK & TRAINING

Business Link is the key agency offering free advice and information on many issues that will help your business to grow. They can also signpost you to training courses that will help your personal and business development. Business Link also provide Free Business Reviews, where an experienced tourism sector professional will visit your business, assess your needs and then help you to develop new opportunities.

For further information contac:

Business Link Sussex

Tel: 0845 600 9 006

www.businesslink.gov.uk

Tourism South East offers a range of training opportunities throughout the year on everything from customer service to social media.

For full details of the courses provided by Tourism South East visit:

www.industry.visitsoutheastengland.com/site/skills-and-training

12.0 SUSSEX BREAKFAST

An accredited Sussex Breakfast is made from at least 60% local, seasonal ingredients – and must include free range eggs and sausages or bacon from free range or low intensive barn reared pork. These must be sourced direct from an approved producer or farm shop that are supplied by local farmers and craft processors.

Businesses that can demonstrate a commitment to sourcing local produce against a monitored criteria are eligible to display the Sussex Breakfast marque in their advertising activities.

For further information on how to apply to be an accredited Sussex Breakfast provider contact: :

Economic Development & Tourism

Wealden District Council, Pine Grove, Crowborough, TN6 1DH

Tel: 01892 602887 or email regeneration@wealden.gov.uk

For details of local food sources and suppliers contact A Taste of Sussex for a free copy of the Sussex Food Finder. Tel: 01444 259265 or visit www.sussexfoodfinder.co.uk

13.0 SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Businesses that can demonstrate a commitment to green and sustainable practices might be interested in subscribing to the Green Tourism Business Scheme (GTBS) to achieve a bronze, silver or gold accreditation. For further information about GTBS visit: www.green-business.co.uk

Sustainable Tourism for Dummies is a new book in the Dummies series of easy to use guidance by Wiley publishers designed to help tourism businesses of all sizes to be more sustainable. View a copy of the publication on line at www.industry.visitsoutheastengland.com/site/business-advice/sustainable-tourism

14.0 FURTHER INFORMATION

We hope that this information is useful to you whilst you research your new accommodation business. If you would like any further information please do not hesitate to contact:

Economic Development & Tourism

Wealden District Council, Pine Grove, Crowborough, TN6 1DH

Tel: 01892 602887 or email regeneration@wealden.gov.uk

GLOSSARY OF TOURISM ORGANISATIONS:

- Visit Britain (VB) Visit Britain is the national tourism agency which is responsible for marketing Britain worldwide and for developing England's visitor economy.
Visit Britain, Thames Tower, Black's Road, Hammersmith, London, W6 9EL Tel: 020 8846 900
Consumer Website: www.visitbritain.co.uk
Industry Website: www.tourismtrade.org.uk
- Visit England Visit England is the leadership and stakeholder body for England's tourism industry. It has an executive team within Visit Britain and works in partnership with regional tourism agencies. It has responsibility for delivering a tourism strategy for England.
Consumer Website: www.enjoyengland.com
Industry Website: www.visitbritain.com/visitengland
- Tourism South East (TSE) Tourism South East is the regional tourism agency, working with local businesses and key UK organisations to support the industry and promote the economy of the south east region.
Tourism South East, 40 Chamberlayne Road, Eastleigh, Hants, SO50 4JH. Tel: 023 8062 5400
Consumer Website: www.visitsoutheastengland.com
Industry Website: www.industry.visitsoutheastengland.com
- Wealden District Council (WDC) Wealden District Council is the local authority working with local businesses to promote the Wealden District as a visitor destination. The Council also has responsibility for legislative regulation such as planning & environmental health.
Wealden District Council, Pine Grove, Crowborough, TN1 1DH.
Tel:018920 653311. Web: www.wealden.gov.uk
- Tourist Information Centres (TIC) Tourist Information Centres are usually funded and managed by the local authority. TICs are part of a national network that offer marketing and booking channels for attractions and accommodation and promote the local area to visitors.
- Enjoy Sussex Enjoy Sussex is a marketing partnership between the Lewes, Horsham, Mid Sussex and Wealden District Councils working together to promote their combined areas as a UK visitor destination. The partnership is supported by an annual visitor guide, marketing campaign and www.enjoysussex.info website.
- Sussex Tourism Partnership Sussex Tourism Partnership is a sub regional partnership across East & West Sussex made up of representatives from the private sector, local authorities and Tourism South East. The partnerships aim is to support a prosperous, sustainable visitor economy which spreads across the whole of Sussex. One of the STP activities is the management of the www.visitsussex.org website which provides a portal information site for Sussex.