

# Sustainability Champions



Thyme

## Thyme

Molly Tait-Hyland, Happenings Coordinator / Sustainability Lead

**A historic country estate covering 150 acres, Thyme is a village within a village, a place to slow down and reconnect with nature. Happenings Coordinator and Sustainability Lead Molly Tait-Hyland, explains how sustainable practices are woven into all aspects of their business.**

### What nature-related practices do you have at Thyme?

"Much of Thyme is dedicated to our conservation area which is formed of water meadows, grassland, and woodland, which we carefully manage for wildlife. We have a wide variety of species that reside on the estate from all five species of native owl to dormice to hare. We have a close relationship with the West Oxfordshire Bird Project and ornithologists regularly attend the site to monitor our bird populations."

### How do you minimise waste?

"Thyme is committed to resisting throw-away culture: we have never used single-use slippers in our bedrooms, and on request, we supply bamboo toothbrushes and tablet toothpaste. We are committed to reducing single-use plastics across the business: plastic bin bags have been replaced with paper bin bags in all guest areas; recyclable materials are used by our shop when packing and shipping goods;

and in our restaurants, straw straws are used in drinks and baking paper or lids are used instead of clingfilm.

"Chef Director Charlie Hibbert is passionate about making use of the entire animal and most butchery is done in-house, whether that be chicken, pig, or cow. Unavoidable plate waste is sent away for anaerobic digestion. Any waste oil is returned to our vegetable oil supplier and this waste oil is made into biofuel.

"All our Bertioli beauty products are plastic-free - including our 3-in-1 shampoo and conditioning bars, hand & body wash, and lotion (which are refilled in every bathroom on the estate), breathing balm and diffusers. Any 3-in-1 bars left in bedrooms are used for washing hand towels."

### How do you ensure that Thyme is as energy efficient as possible?

"Thyme has a sophisticated ground-source heating system. Ground source heat pumps are used as a sophisticated and efficient heating



Fuelled by British renewable energy



Paper bin bags

system in our barns. Locally sourced wood pellets power our three biomass boilers; thus, the entire site is fuelled by British renewable energy. Great attention was paid to the buildings' insulation and ventilation. There are four boreholes across the property that tap into thermal springs, this spring water is served in our restaurants and feeds into our outdoor swimming pool. LED bulbs are used across the business - except for where there are specialist fittings. Currently, we have one electric vehicle used for housekeeping purposes."

### Tell us about your 'reuse' ethos

"If an item is worn or needs to be replaced, we always try to reuse what we have. Reupholster, repaint and revarnish is our motto. When reupholstering items, fabrics are carefully chosen with sustainability in mind. We look to fabrics that will not be easily marked - as replacing them after a short amount of time also would not be sustainable."

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Molly Tait-Hyland



Electric vehicle for housekeeping purposes



Wood pellets power biomass boilers

## Thyme continued

### You grow lots of your own produce, how are your gardens managed?

"We grow a wide variety of fruits and vegetables at Thyme which are used in our restaurants and bars. The farm and gardens are carefully managed to maximise abundance from the land whilst maintaining healthy rich soil. Featuring an herb garden, cutting gardens and poly-tunnels – to extend the seasons – the garden is productive all year round, growing flavoursome and unusual varieties to for the restaurants, cookery school and spa. Where possible, we use techniques such as companion planting so that chemical usage is minimised. All green waste is composted on-site and once biodegraded it is used in the gardens. Wool from our flock of Welsh Black Mountain Sheep is used as mulch on our dahlia bed to maintain moisture and protect these plants from slugs."

### Is sustainability embedded in your procurement policy?

"Across the business – from retail partners to food producers – we look to work with like-minded suppliers that are characterised by sustainable standards: transparency, inclusivity, fairness, and product excellence."

"When furnishing our spaces, we primarily look to natural fibres such as linen, cotton and wool, and use suppliers that are also ecologically minded. Our own Bertoli fabric range is responsibly made in the UK using 100% natural fibres."

"We source eggs, dairy and meat with high

welfare standards, and all our eggs and meat are free-range."

### What are you hoping to do next?

"This year we have introduced an initiative where instead of single-use slippers, guests can borrow a pair of Crocs throughout their stay – and purchase a pair of British wool socks to wear with them. We are also looking at how we can serve more invasive species on our menus, and finally, introducing comprehensive sustainability training for staff."

### Have you had any feedback from customers about your sustainability work?

"Guests often make positive comments about our sustainable practices, particularly the omission of plastic across the site, such as the paper bin bags in all guest areas, and the 3-in-1 Bertoli beauty bars. Guests are also very enthusiastic about the produce from our Kitchen Garden – especially things like the companion planting and the sheep wool mulch – and of course, our conservation area."

### What would be your advice to a business who is just starting out on their sustainability journey?

"Everything counts; start with switching your toilet paper or building a compost heap. Lots of minor changes will suddenly become a big shift."

### Do you have any suggestions of 'quick wins' for a business starting their journey?

"Omitting plastic from your business is much easier than you think it might be – there are so many brilliant alternatives out there – and a lot of information too."

"Small adjustments to daily habits can have an instant impact. For example, we have found offering our guests a complimentary Bertoli 3-in-1 hair and body bar during their stay is a compelling way to highlight their efficacy, especially to those who are ambivalent about switching from their favourite products in plastic bottles. We encourage our guests to take it home with them and look at the plastic products in their own bathroom in a new light."

### Is there anything that you wish you'd known before you started your journey?

"You never stop learning; there are always innovative and exciting things happening – brands pushing boundaries or solutions on a larger scale."

### Are your staff involved in your sustainability practices?

"All of our staff partake in and are aware of our sustainability practices. They are proud to uphold them and to speak about them with visiting guests. We run an annual Sustainability Champions survey where we gather suggestions for improvements from the team which we then work to introduce over the next year."

[thyme.co.uk](http://thyme.co.uk)

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