



We visit the Blackpool bed and breakfast where luxury does not compromise being environmentally friendly.

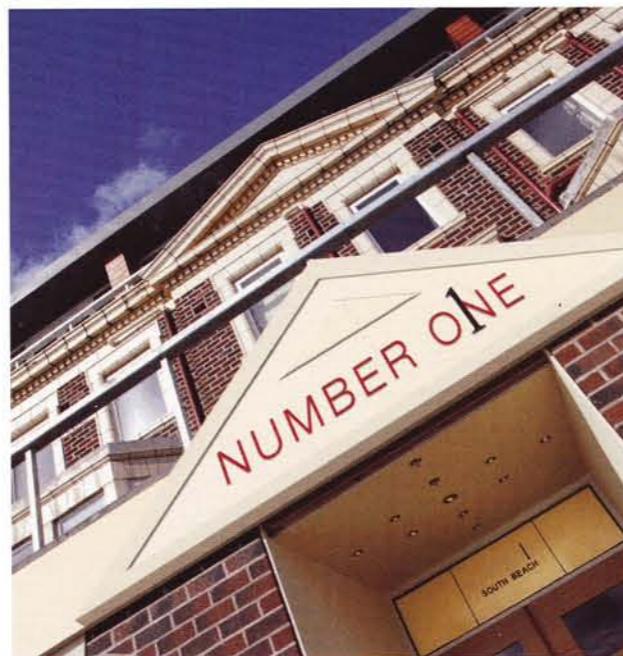
Words: Emma Mayoh

NUMBER One, South Beach is no ordinary bed and breakfast. A plush lounge with comfy never-want-to-get-up-from sofas, a bar that glitters - literally - and huge plasma televisions in every individually designed room, including the bathrooms.

It resembles a boutique hotel and doesn't exactly fit the stereotype associated with the British B&B. Neither is it the type of bed and breakfast you would associate with green living and being environmentally aware. But Number One, run by business partners Graham Oxley, Mark Smith and wife Claire, is reputed to be one of the most energy efficient hotels in the region if not the country.

Claire, who also runs the award-winning Number One, St Lukes, with Mark, said: 'We have a personal responsibility for our children and grandchildren and to make sure the world they live in will be a good place to be. There are little things we can all do like using fewer carrier bags.'

'Here we do this as well as refilling the shampoo bottles rather than buying in new ones and we reuse everything we



can. People need to start taking responsibility for what they do or do not do to help the environment. Once you get into the swing of it, it becomes second nature.'

Take a peek behind the scenes and the list of energy saving products used at the bed and breakfast read like a government checklist on how to minimise your carbon footprint. Everything from eco-friendly wall and loft insulation, energy saving glass, roof-top solar water heaters and gas boilers offering 98 per cent

Above: Mark and Claire Smith with business partner, Graham Oxley. Main pictures by John Cocks



Picture by John Cocks

fuel efficiency are there. Add low energy lighting, infra red detectors and a key card system that makes sure lights aren't on when rooms aren't occupied and water control measures that reduce water consumption and you begin to realise the extent the work.

Everything down to the last detail has been thought of including paintings on the wall done by a local artist who is one of Claire's old school teachers and photographs of Blackpool and the Fylde that were done by a family friend for an A-Level project. Local contractors and suppliers were also used in the £1 million redevelopment and the bed and breakfast is also aptly located facing the environmentally friendly Solaris Centre and the seafront.

Mark said: 'All the fitting and a lot of the work has been done by local people. When people ask where we get our stuff from I'm proud to say that a lot of it is from around here.'

'Local people have helped us to build this business and it's something that's very important to us. Yes, we might have plasma televisions but hopefully we are balancing things out by doing the environmentally conscious things at the hotel.'

But it doesn't stop there for the trio who are now determined to transform the resort into a short break hot spot. And who better to take the job on as Number One, St Lukes, has won a catalogue of awards including Britain's Best Bed and Breakfast Award last year. A previous hotel they owned, The Old Coach House, on Dean Street in Blackpool, also picked up a string of accolades.

'Blackpool has the stigma that it's all about hen and stag parties and horrible, cheap B & Bs,' Claire explained. St Lukes is the only bed and breakfast with a five diamond grading and we want the same for South Beach. If everyone could come up one grade, Blackpool would be a place to be reckoned with.'

'Gone are the days when people used to come here for a week's holiday. Blackpool is having a huge regeneration and it's already feeling like a different place. We've learned our lessons. Blackpool could be a top class short break destination. Hopefully people will use this time of change to make a go of it and by making ourselves better, others will follow.'

www.numberoneblackpool.com/southbeach