WTM Responsible Tourism Awards 2017

Leaders in Responsible Tourism

One of the differentiating characteristics of the Awards which are presented each year at World Travel Market London on World Responsible Tourism Day is that every year since 2011 we have published the judges’ reasons for the awards they make. Responsible Travel launched the Responsible Tourism Awards in 2004. At the time British Airways was making extensive redundancies and cutting costs across its business; the company did not feel that they could continue to fund and run the Tourism for Tomorrow Awards. Justin Francis stepped in to launch the Responsible Tourism Awards with First Choice (2004-6) as the sponsor and Harold Goodwin as chair of the judges. They were subsequently sponsored by Virgin Holidays (2007-12) and then in 2013 they were rebranded as the World Responsible Tourism Awards, the headline sponsor’s recognition no longer extending to their name being included in the Awards’ title.

The Responsible Tourism Awards focus on the contributions made by tourism businesses and organisations and by destinations – we want to recognise those who are making a difference. The change makers, those leading the way to make tourism more sustainable by taking responsibility for driving down the negative impacts of tourism and increasing the positive impacts. Sustainable Tourism remains an aspiration, a worthy goal but it is important to differentiate a lofty ideal from efforts to achieve. Responsible Tourism and Sustainable Tourism are not the same things. Responsible Tourism is about what people and organisation to address issues and to move towards the goal of sustainability. Communicating the issues being addressed, what is being done and the outcomes and impacts is at the heart of Responsible Tourism. The Awards are important in identifying and promoting good practice and enabling commercial and consumer purchasers to distinguish those who are taking responsibility and are effective in reducing negative and increasing their positive impacts from those who are merely greenwashing. With the increasing awareness of the concept of Responsible Tourism comes a significant, and potentially damaging, increase in greenwashing.

Over the thirteen years that Responsible Travel ran the Awards we saw the bar rise higher each year, more was expected each year. “Open to anyone in the world, winners have inspired many others who are working tirelessly to create a more responsible form of tourism. And while we like to think our holidays put smiles on all our travellers’ faces, nothing beats the smile when award winners’ names are announced. And rightly so.” The Awards were presented at World Travel Market London to

“celebrate the very best innovations and practice in responsible tourism globally. We found and awarded new ideas, which we’ve since seen copied globally, and they acted as a benchmark for new stages of development in the responsible tourism movement. We saw awareness of the sector grow quickly throughout this period.”

Irish, African and Indian Responsible Tourism Awards were established using the same judging criteria and processes. Responsible Travel “watched the number of awards schemes grow and flourish” and felt that their “hopes and plans” had “been fulfilled.” All the stories of the inspiring Responsible Tourism Award winners are archived on their site. Responsible Travel decided not to run
Awards in 2017 or for the foreseeable future. Responsible Travel is “pleased that WTM have chosen to continue with a global Awards”.

**WTM Responsible Tourism Awards**

After Responsible Travel decided not to run the Awards again in late 2017, it took a while to establish their successor the WTM Responsible Tourism Awards. 2018 is an interim year, and the Awards were only announced in May. This resulted in a truncated application period.

Recognising the UN's International Year on Sustainable Tourism for Development and UNWTO’s celebration of the contribution which tourism makes to development and the importance of the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals, the SDGs. We challenged businesses, destinations and organisations to transparently report the outcomes and impacts of their efforts to make tourism more sustainable. We were looking to recognise a range of approaches to reporting impact and communicating it to local people, consumers, and governments.

There is no established system for Responsible Tourism reporting, different approaches are being developed and new ones will emerge. This diversity is an inevitable and desirable consequence of the fundamental principle of Responsible Tourism: that issues, their salience and importance, vary from place to place. First determine what matters locally, what issues you can address and then, alone or with others, tackle them. We want to encourage more tourism businesses and destinations to publish details of their outcomes and impacts.

**Our Judging Criteria**

We are looking for examples which will inspire and challenge others to take more responsibility for managing tourism to make it more sustainable, to minimise the negative impacts and maximise the positive. The WTM Awards continue to use the same criteria that were used for the World Responsible Tourism Awards in 2016. We expect leaders in Responsible Tourism to have established practices with the following characteristics:

1. **Evidence-based:** The panel are looking for evidence of real change, businesses which can convincingly demonstrate positive impacts, or reduced negative impacts, quantified wherever possible.

2. **Replicability:** The Awards aim to inspire change, we seek to identify examples of best practice which can be replicated across the sector and around the world.

3. **Innovation:** The judges are looking for innovative practices that make a real difference, the Awards highlight new good practices, which the judges believe, can, and should, become common practice.

4. **Influence:** We look for businesses and organisations that are not only doing good work themselves, but are using their influence to ensure their peers and suppliers to do the same.

5. **Sustainability and longevity:** The judges seek to Award those businesses that understand that taking responsibly for tourism is a long journey, that it encompasses the economic, social and environmental impacts of their activities and who have a clear vision for the long-
term success of the work, with future targets and plans in place.

6. **Overall commitment to Responsible Tourism:** Alongside the category-specific focus, there needs to be a clear overall commitment to positively impacting local communities, economies, cultures and environments.

In the first years of the Awards the judges looked for innovation— for ways of taking responsibility across the triple bottom line of economic, social and environmental sustainability. As the Awards evolved and practice in the sector improved we took more account of the sustainability and longevity of the applicant's practices and then of evidence provided on those impacts.

There is often a tension between novelty and evidence of impact, between the new idea and the evidence that it works. Often several years are necessary to demonstrate what can be achieved by taking responsibility and making a particular change. However, real change comes from the consistent application of an approach that has real positive impacts, impacts which move the business or destination closer to sustainability. Application over the full range of the business’s activities and over a few years is required to make significant change. Increasingly the judges will look for the routinization of innovations across a business or destination and at the impacts achieved.

This routinization is by its very nature more difficult to make exciting and innovative and to communicate its importance to consumers, governments and business partners. The challenge of communicating the importance and impacts of routinely addressing energy use, water consumption or employment and local sourcing over several years and successfully drawing attention to it is both significant and important. It is the routine of taking responsibility which achieves results at a scale which makes a difference. We need to achieve change at scale across the sustainability agenda.

The judges focussed not just on which companies, organisations and destinations are running the most inspiring projects, but also on those who could show the measurable impact of their work. This year's applicants presented a very wide range of approaches to identifying indicators and presenting data which substantiates their claims. The same challenge needs to be addressed by the certification schemes. The certificates are opaque in that they communicate nothing about what has been achieved nor about how much progress is being made year on year. 6

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Many submissions reported against a wide range of SDGs way beyond those which specifically mention tourism (SDGs 8, 12 &14). The original categories proposed were not appropriate to the applications received and the diversity was so great this year that the judges decided not to choose an overall winner. The judges identified twelve leaders in Responsible Tourism, leaders in demonstrating Responsible Tourism impact, six winners and six highly commended.
The winners were announced in the following categories,

1. Best for Accommodation,
2. Best for Carbon Reduction,
3. Best for Communication,
4. Best Community Initiative,
5. Best for Poverty Reduction, and
6. Best Tour Operator.

The six Highly Commended, are also leaders in demonstrating Responsible Tourism impact and awarded as such.

The Judges
The judges for the 2017 Awards were:

Marcia Balisciano Director, Corporate Responsibility, RELX Group
Jen Bobbin Managing Director, JUSTreport Global
Harold Goodwin (Chair) Responsible Tourism Partnership and WTM Advisor
Rebecca Hawkins Managing Director, Responsible Hospitality Partnership
Mirieme Hill, Corporate Responsibility and Stakeholder Engagement, RELX Group
Simon Press, Senior Exhibition Director World Travel Market & Arabian Travel Market
Jon Proctor, Chief Exec Green Business,
John de Vial, Head of Financial Protection at ABTA Limited & Travel Foundation
Matt Walpole, Senior Director, Conservation Programmes, Flora and Fauna International
Nikki White, Director of Destinations and Sustainability at ABTA

We followed the same practice as in previous years. Following the shortlisting the judges worked in pairs to consider groups of applications and then made recommendations with detailed reasons to the full judging panel on the judging day. All the judges were asked to declare their knowledge and level of engagement and/or involvement with each of the applicants, as in previous years they were excluded from voting.

Leaders in Demonstrating Responsible Tourism Impact

Box 1 Leaders in Responsible Tourism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Africa</th>
<th>Asia</th>
<th>Australasia</th>
<th>Europe</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chobe Game Lodge, Botswana</td>
<td>Kumarakom Kerala, India</td>
<td>Crystal Creek, Australia</td>
<td>Green Tourism, UK</td>
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<td>Grootbos, South Africa</td>
<td>Sapa O’Chau, Vietnam</td>
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<td>Ljubljana, Slovenia</td>
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<td>Marine Dynamics, South Africa</td>
<td>Village Ways, Vietnam</td>
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<td>TUI Cruises, Germany</td>
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<td>Ol Pejeta Conservancy, Kenya</td>
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<td>Transfrontier Parks Destinations, South Africa</td>
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No less than five of the twelve leaders are from Africa, South Africa produced three and India two. The predominance of African finalists in part reflects the efficacy of the African and Indian Awards in raising awareness of the Awards and encouraging people to apply.

**Best for Carbon Reduction SDG13**

**Chobe Game Lodge  Botswana  [www.chobegamelodge.com](http://www.chobegamelodge.com)**

The only lodge located inside Chobe National Park they have a broad approach to responsibility, catering for travellers with disabilities, greywater recycling, a biogas plant, recycling – including crushing glass to manufacture bricks on site –, a boardwalk constructed from recycled timber and plastic. They have a youth development programme which has trained nearly 200 youths, and they have employed 55 of them; a profit share scheme for staff; and a programme of donations to 20 local initiatives. Their women’s empowerment programme has been particularly successful, now 65% of all staff are female, and they have an all-female team of professionally qualified guides.

Chobe Game Lodge has been previously recognised in the Africa Responsible Tourism Awards: Best for Resource Management in 2015 and Best for Responsible Employment in 2016. The judges recognised the breadth of their engagement with the Responsible Tourism agenda. They were particularly impressed by their fleet of electric vehicles and their commitment to reducing their carbon emissions by progressively introducing electrically powered vehicles and boats for game viewing and adopting solar energy and biodiesel. To date over half the lodge’s safari boats and vehicles have been converted; four safari boats, three electric game drive vehicles, and a utility vehicle. The guests enjoy a silent less intrusive game drive and CO₂ emissions are saved contributing to achieving SDG13: combatting climate change. At least one Zambian operation has followed their lead.
Best for Accommodation SDG13

Grootbos South Africa

www.grootbos.com

Grootbos is a multi-award winning Private Nature Reserve, 2 750 hectares of pristine Cape fynbos reserve on the Agulhas plains of the Western Cape in South Africa. Grootbos and the Grootbos Foundation employ 185 staff, 19% of whom work on community and conservation. Grootbos has previously been recognised for its social impact. In 2015 it won Gold in the Africa Responsible Tourism Awards and Silver in the World Awards for its achievements in poverty reduction.

They are now in the fourth year of measuring, collecting and collating sustainability data to Scope 3 using Defra emissions in line with the Green House Gas Protocol reporting standards. They have significantly reduced their use of mains power, by 10% in the last reporting year, and have installed a solar installation which powers Grootbos Garden lodge and the Grootbos Foundation. In the last financial year, 33,937 KwH solar power was generated.

The Grootbos Foundation publishes an excellent Annual Report which communicates their impacts across many of the SDGs. The judges were also impressed by the way they have combined all their sustainability data into a sustainability dashboard management tool, including water footprint monitoring, waste management, and diesel and electricity usage. Grootbos is also committed to sourcing suppliers within 100 km radius and the Grootbos Foundation assists with the development of a local supply chain supplying organic produce, eggs and products to the lodge for an authentic arm to table guest experience.

www.grootbosfoundation.org

Best Community Initiative SDG 8

Sapa O’Chau Travel Social Enterprise Vietnam

sapaochau.org

A female ethnic minority-owned enterprise in Vietnam employing 50 staff two-thirds of whom are female, and 90% of whom come from an ethnic minority. Sapa O’Chau comprises four interconnected parts: the boarding facility, the café, the Hmong handicraft store and the tour operation, all with the same purpose. Their vision is to create a life of opportunity for all their community.
provide every youth with a high school education, all members of the community with an opportunity to obtain a sustainable career and engage with others to create meaningful social change. They were recognised in the World Responsible Tourism Awards in 2016 for poverty reduction and inclusion winning Silver.

In 2017 Sapa O’Chau has legally transitioned from being a company to become a social enterprise and produced their second Social Impact Report. From the outset they have been committed to measurement recognising that only through measurement could they prove to others that they are making a difference, learn what works and what doesn’t and be held accountable to their mission. The study is undertaken by their volunteer coordinator and tour operations staff using a “mixed methods” approach they conduct informal interviews with their staff, family members, youth, volunteers and community members. They have advice from the University of Sydney but they conduct the research themselves. The judges were particularly impressed by the detail, quality and graphics of the data presented in their excellent annual Social Impact Assessment.

Best for Communication SDG11

City of Ljubljana Slovenia

The City of Ljubljana has developed a Sustainable Urban Strategy; adopted in 2016 it is now being implemented. Its ambition is to be a safe and open city which respects diverse cultures believing in respectful and peaceful coexistence in diversity. They are using the OECD’s recommended qualitative indicators for sustainable development. Ljubljana Tourism the city’s official destination marketing organisation is working to spread tourists beyond the city, to encourage the use of public transport and is encourage hotels to seek green certification. In 2015 a Green Supply Chains project was launched to enable hotels and restaurants to purchase locally produced foods and drinks through an online portal. In 2016 a survey showed that 92 % of residents believed that tourism had a positive effect on the development of the city and its identity, the survey was repeated in areas of high tourism impact in 2017, with similar results.
**Best Tour Operator SDG8 and SDG 12**

**Transfrontier Parks Destination (TFPD) South Africa**

www.tfpd.co.za & www.tfpdfoundation.org

This was one of the strongest categories. To make a real contribution to sustainable development requires consistent effort over a number of years; it is about determining an appropriate strategy to address the major local issues, addressing those that can be addressed through tourism and then monitoring progress year by year. TFPD was founded in 2004 to work with economically poor rural communities to commercialise community-owned lodges and develop local people to run those lodges in the future. Their role is to transform ‘white elephants’ into successful ventures.

The scale is significant. 50 villages now benefit, directly and indirectly, from the group’s operations. They have created 147 permanent jobs in rural areas, which in turn support around 955 dependents. The judges were impressed by the depth and quality of the data that TFPD was able to provide on the employment and local supply chain impact of the individual lodges and the tour operation as a whole. TFPD has adopted a “creating shared value approach” and worked through its supply chain to establish independent micro-enterprises and ensure their viability by providing regular business for them. This has generated R6.4M (£350,000) for microenterprises since 2004. The cumulative impact of TFPD’s commercialisation of the community lodges is R114.4M (£6.3m) of which staff salaries were R39M (£2.15m). Community-owned lodges are achieving viability and community members are being successfully trained to manage them as TFPD’s management contracts expire. TFPD impressed the judges with the quality of its data and lodge level community benefit statements and by its ten years of data.

TFPD’s Founders’ Charter & Operating Principles

www.tfpd.co.za/about/founders-charter-operating-principles

**Box 2 Creating Shared Value: TFPD’s Support for SMME’s**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lodge</th>
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<td>Maintenance</td>
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**Summary of TFPD Support**

- Decor & Gifts: 2,952,100
- Drapery: 355,900
- Furniture: 1,802,100
- Bar: 206,000
- Services: 790,000
- Amenities: 275,000
- TOTAL: 6,379,200

**Box 3 African Ivory Route SMME Impact 2014-17**

Figure 4 Growth in TFPD Operational Scale

- **2008**: 1
- **2017**: 285
- **Employees**: 147

*Although partnerships were agreed earlier, 2008 marks the first year of actual operations.*
Best for Poverty Reduction  SDG 2 and SDG 8

Village Ways, India www.villageways.com

Village Ways is a Mumbai based tour operator which develops and markets walking trails through rural India with the walkers accommodated overnight in community-owned guesthouses. The villages own the guest houses which are run and overseen by a committee which is responsible for recruiting the host team from a broad cross-section of village families for guiding, housekeeping, cooking, bookkeeping and so on, typically working on a rota system. This ensures that the economic benefit of receiving guests flows to as many village families as possible.

Village Ways was established to help stem rural migration, particularly by young people, to the cities and to provide additional livelihoods for local people to reduce poverty. They have created 19 village owned-and-run guest-houses across India, including two tented camps and one houseboat. They have created additional livelihoods for 261 families through employment. For example, before the development of the guest house at Satri the families had submitted a request to the government to abandon their village so as to receive compensation. They have since retracted this request and the eight families involved have received 223,045 INR incomes over the last four years. Village Ways have used Just Report’s Yardstick, to monitor their economic impact since 2013. Monitoring and transparent reporting are essential to Village Ways because from the outset they were concerned that the village enterprises should benefit as many households as possible and that any flow of income to one household should be revealed and managed in order to avoid elite capture.
The Six Highly Commended Responsible Tourism Leaders
All the finalists are leaders in Responsible Tourism – there are often only small differences between Winners and the Highly Commended.

Crystal Creek Meadows, Australia
www.crystalcreekmeadows.com.au
Crystal Creek Meadows provides four full self-contained cottages on a 16-acre site. Recognising that changes in the technology to make the property more eco-efficiencies may achieve only a 20% resource saving the owners have focused on reducing the use of power and water to minimize greenhouse gas emissions. The judges recognise that the efforts being made at Crystal Creek Meadows during the checking-in process to understand how the systems work in the cottage and how they can reduce their energy use and carbon emissions is both painstaking and innovative. Over the last 11 years they have achieved a 62% reduction in CO₂ emissions per guest night, a 28% cut in total energy use and through the introduction of the My Green Butler innovation used less electricity 31-36%, gas 10-27%, and water 13-26% depending on the particular cottage.

Green Business, Scotland
www.green-tourism.com
Green Tourism is a world-leading sustainable tourism certification programme. Now in its 20th year of operation, it has 2000+ members in all segments of the leisure and hospitality industry: hotels, guest houses, visitor attractions, hostels, campus accommodation, corporate offices, activity providers, tour operators and event & conference venues. They have worked with their members to reduce energy use by a third between 2010 and 2015 equating to an estimated total saving of 877,000 tonnes of CO₂. The judges were particularly interested in their Carbon Calculator and the way it is being used to measure the carbon saved by members acting on Green Tourism’s advice. Based on data for 2010-2015 they have developed benchmarks for average emissions per bed night. This enables businesses to judge their performance against comparable properties and to give an indication of progress. In 2015 the benchmark was 17.3kg/bed night down from 26.2kg in 2010.

Kumarakom, Kerala, India
www.keralatourism.org
Kerala hosted the 2nd International Conference on Responsible Tourism in Destinations in 2008, this initiative accelerated the development of its experiments in Kumarakom where the government sought to ensure that there were significant local community benefits from the development of tourism. 15% of the local community, are directly benefitting from tourism. More than 600 women, 500 farmers and 230 homesteads are earning money through this Responsible Tourism initiative: through self-employment, producer groups, micro-enterprises and innovative village life experience tours. The judges were impressed by the scale of the achievement in securing benefits for the local community and the zero waste and cleanliness campaigns. The judges were impressed too by the new state-level Responsible Tourism Mission and the efforts being made to extend the initiative across Kerala to benefit many more communities and to measure and report impacts.
Ol Pejeta, Kenya

www.olpejetaconservancy.org
www.olpejetaconservancy.org/community/

Set on 90,000 acres in Laikipia County, Kenya, Ol Pejeta Conservancy is the largest black rhino sanctuary in East Africa. Ol Pejeta is one of only two conservancies in Africa that have been listed on the IUCN List of Protected Areas. Tourism revenue provides vital funding for their community and conservation initiatives. In addition to tourism, Ol Pejeta runs a commercial livestock business, with a herd of 7,500 cattle and employing close to a thousand staff. The judges were impressed by the evidence presented of the success of their integrated system of wildlife, tourism and livestock and the range and scale of the community benefits generated. By the end of 2016, Ol Pejeta Conservancy had raised and dispersed over US$ 610,000 in support of its community development programmes in education, water, energy and health. The judges were pleased to see the efforts made to ensure that local children, over 24,000 of them, enjoyed educational field visits and that over 36,500 Kenyans visited in 2016.

Marine Dynamics, South Africa

www.sharkwatchsa.com  www.dict.org.za

Dyer Island Conservation Trust delivers unique conservation and research programmes in a fragile marine and critically important marine eco-system at the southern tip of Africa. The area is important for the conservation of the endangered African Penguin, it provides breeding and calving grounds for the Southern Right Whale and the world’s densest populations of the vulnerable Great White Shark. In 2015 Marine Dynamics opened a rehabilitation facility, the African Penguin and Seabird Sanctuary (APSS), which has an over 80 % release rate. The judges were impressed by this, its enterprise development programme and by the data which Marine Dynamics presents on its work with universities around the world and the scientific papers and student case studies which have been produced in recent years.

TUI Cruises, Germany

www.tuicruises.com


TUI Cruises GmbH is a joint venture of TUI AG and Royal Caribbean Cruises based in Germany. The judges were impressed by the range of initiatives being across the fleet to reduce the negative impacts of their operations reducing their carbon emissions, their food waste discharge, water consumption and waste water discharge with their comprehensive waste water treatment. Through the wide range of initiatives which TUI Cruises are taking they are demonstrating how much more sustainable cruising can be when compared with other operations.
The 2018 Awards

If you are reading this and you know of better organisations and businesses that you think should have won, remember that the judges can only Award from amongst those that apply. The application takes time and effort, to ensure that the achievement(s) and the evidence are clearly presented to the judges-and we do take up the references and make our own enquiries. These are tough Awards to win; the competition is stiff. Many applicants, including many unsuccessful applicants, tell us that the exercise of making the application was worthwhile in clarifying their thinking, assembling the evidence and setting new goals. Think too about how the evidence can be shared with holidaymakers, travellers and business partners to differentiate your business, destination or tourism organisation. Encourage people to apply. If you do not enter, you cannot win.

The 2018 Awards will launch at the end of March 2018, and there will be full details of the categories then. We are planning on six categories: (i) wildlife conservation, (ii) decent work, (iii) local economic benefit, (iv) communications, (v) coping with success and (vi) the place-or destination-taking the most significant responsibility for making tourism more sustainable. Consider applying and encourage others.

2 Goodfellow. The reports are all available on http://haroldgoodwin.info/publications/
5 ibid.