FROM AMBITION TO EVIDENCE

HOSPITALITY SPOTLIGHT 2026

What sustainability data tells us about performance, investment and progress in hospitality.

FUTUREPLUS & Horwath HTL

INTRODUCTION

HOSPITALITY BUSINESSES ARE MAKING GOOD PROGRESS ON SUSTAINABILITY.

Across the FuturePlus hospitality dataset, 70.2% of ambitions are completed within their target timeframe, with particularly strong performance across Economic, Social, and Diversity & Inclusion.

But progress isn't even.

Environment and Climate remain the lowest-performing areas, and some of the ambitions hospitality businesses most frequently set, including food waste management, waste reduction, and carbon measurement, are also among the longest to implement.

The interesting question is why.
The physical and operational nature of hospitality is clearly part of the picture. Data and responsibility can be split between properties, owners, operators, landlords, and suppliers. Some improvements can be made through operational changes; others depend on refurbishment cycles or capital investment.

But complexity alone doesn't explain the difference. Some of the strongest performers in the wider FuturePlus dataset are hospitality businesses managing complex physical estates.

So what helps some businesses progress faster than others?
This report brings together primary sustainability data from hospitality businesses and portfolios using the FutureImpact platform, with Horwath HTL's experience across hospitality operations, ownership, investment, and asset strategy. We look at where businesses are making progress, where implementation is taking longer, and what we can learn from those performing particularly well.

FROM SUSTAINABILITY DATA TO BUSINESS PERFORMANCE

Sustainability is about business performance. Energy and water costs, waste, supply chains, regulation, investor expectations, and the long-term performance of physical assets all influence operational and investment decisions. So how is the industry doing?

Our report shows a sector making progress, but also where change is harder to deliver. Social, Economic, and Diversity & Inclusion improvements can often be advanced more quickly, while Environment and Climate action can be harder to deliver. Why is that?

That distinction matters. The opportunity is not simply to set more ambitious targets, but to understand where action can improve efficiency, reduce risk, strengthen asset performance, and support long-term value.

Better sustainability data plays an important role. It can help inform where to invest, when to intervene, and where to focus. It can provide greater visibility of resilience, future capital requirements, and exposure to changing market and regulatory expectations.

The numbers also show that strong performance is possible within complex hospitality operations. Understanding what the businesses making the greatest progress are doing differently can help the wider sector turn sustainability into practical action and build more resilient businesses.

The opportunity now is to use better data to make better decisions, identifying where action can reduce costs, strengthen assets, and create long-term value.

We hope this report provides a useful starting point for that conversation.

James Chappell, Global Business Director, Horwath HTL

Alex Smith, CEO at FuturePlus

ABOUT THE DATA

The findings in this report are drawn from sustainability data collected through FuturePlus's FutureImpact platform.

FutureImpact assesses organisations across five areas: Climate, Environment, Social, Economic, and Diversity & Inclusion, using approximately 300 indicators covering policies, practices, measurement, and evidence.

Performance is measured in two ways:

+ **Actual** reflects sustainability activity that has already been implemented and is supported by evidence reviewed by the FuturePlus sustainability team.

+ **Ambition** reflects the additional improvements and commitments an organisation has set through the platform.

This allows us to look at current performance alongside the areas businesses are choosing to improve, and to track whether those ambitions are subsequently completed.

THE HOSPITALITY DATASET

The hospitality analysis draws on primary sustainability data from 37 FutureImpact accounts, representing hospitality businesses of different sizes, geographies, and operating models. Several accounts cover substantial multi-site operations, including one portfolio of 58 sites, so the dataset represents a considerably larger number of individual hospitality locations.

Unless otherwise stated, findings are based on data analysed as at 13 August 2026.

Each of the five sustainability areas is scored out of 100, giving a maximum overall score of 500.

Where we draw comparisons with the wider FuturePlus dataset, these are identified separately. The data reflects organisations actively managing their sustainability through FutureImpact and should not be read as statistically representative of the hospitality sector as a whole.

This is not a survey of attitudes or intentions. It is an analysis of primary sustainability data generated through businesses' ongoing use of FutureImpact.

HOSPITALITY AT A GLANCE

287 out of 500
Average Actual score

298 out of 500
Average Ambition score

70.2%
Ambitions completed within their target timeframe

Hospitality businesses are making good progress. The average Actual score of 287/500 shows a relatively strong level of sustainability activity already in place, while 70.2% of ambitions are being completed within their target timeframe.

Looking across the five areas shows where that performance is strongest.

	ACTUAL	AMBITION	GAP
Economic	68	69	1
Social	67	69	2
Diversity & Inclusion	60	62	2
Environment	48	50	2
Climate	44	48	4

Economic and Social are the strongest-performing areas, followed by Diversity & Inclusion. Environment and Climate have further to go, with a 24-point difference between average Economic and Climate performance.

A similar pattern appears in the wider UK SME dataset, where Economic performance averages 66/100, compared with 38/100 for Environment and 37/100 for Climate.

Hospitality performs better overall, but the pattern is familiar: areas that tend to rely more heavily on operational data and physical change are progressing more slowly.

The Ambition scores also show that businesses are continuing to target improvement across all five areas, with the largest gap between current and intended performance in Climate.

FROM AMBITION TO IMPLEMENTATION

The overall completion rate is encouraging, but looking at individual ambitions reveals where progress is taking longer.

Food waste management is among the five most commonly set ambitions in the hospitality dataset. Measuring Scope 1 & 2 emissions is the third most commonly set ambition, and general waste reduction also features prominently.

This tells us something useful about priorities. Businesses are setting goals around areas closely connected to their operational footprint.

Some of these ambitions are also taking longer than planned.

+ 77% of food waste-related ambitions weren't completed within their original target timeframe.
+ 70% of general waste reduction ambitions weren't completed within their original target timeframe.

These figures sit in contrast to the 70.2% overall on-time completion rate and help identify where implementation is proving more difficult.

The data can show us where progress is taking longer, and understanding why requires a closer look at how hospitality businesses operate and invest.

HORWATH HTL VIEW

The gap is less a failure of commitment and more a problem of control, timing, and measurement. Economic, Social and What sustainability data tells us about performance, investment and progress in hospitality initiatives can often be advanced through policies, training, hiring, and procurement that management controls relatively directly. Environment and Climate ultimately have to be delivered inside physical assets and 24/7 operations, often by several parties.

That structural issue is particularly pronounced in the U.S., where 57% of hotels are franchised. The brand may set the ambition, the owner approves capital, a franchisee or third-party manager oversees daily execution, and utilities, suppliers, and waste hauliers hold much of the underlying data. Unless decision rights, accountability, and data access are clear, no single party fully controls delivery.

Capex timing matters as well. Major gains often depend on HVAC, controls, kitchens, laundry, plumbing, and building-envelope work. These investments are most efficient when coordinated with equipment replacement, renovation or a Property Improvement Plan (PIP). Replacing functioning systems mid-cycle can destroy remaining value and disrupt operations, so delay is not always the same as resistance. Across a portfolio, the appropriate solution also changes with asset age, climate, utility mix, regulation, and local recycling or composting infrastructure.

The data gap is especially visible in food waste: only about 6% of participating hotels provide food-waste data. The businesses moving fastest tend to connect a common goal to an asset-specific plan, one accountable lead, consistent property-level metrics, contractual access to data, and environmental projects embedded in annual budgets and long-term capital plans.

Put simply, progress accelerates when control, data, capital, and incentives are aligned. The differentiator is usually execution architecture, not ambition.

Bryan Younge
Managing Director, Horwath HTL US

DOES SCALE CHANGE THE CHALLENGE?

One pattern in the wider FuturePlus dataset is worth exploring rather than drawing firm conclusions from: sustainability performance does not improve consistently with organisational size.

AVERAGE PERFORMANCE BY ORGANISATIONAL SIZE	
ORGANISATION SIZE	**AVERAGE SCORE**
Large (2,501+ employees)	355/500
Super Micro (under 10)	280/500
Small (51–250)	271/500
Medium (251–2,500)	260/500
Micro (10–50)	248/500

Sorted by average score

In this analysis, Super Micro organisations outperform Micro, Small and Medium-sized businesses on average. There are limits to what we can conclude from this: the dataset covers different sectors and does not establish that organisational size causes performance to rise or fall.

But the pattern is particularly interesting in hospitality. As businesses grow, they add properties, suppliers, systems, and management structures, often alongside increasingly complex ownership and operating arrangements. Greater scale can bring more resources, specialist expertise, and dedicated sustainability capability, but it can also complicate implementation.

HORWATH HTL VIEW

Small is beautiful in this context, as decisions are made and implemented faster.

The complexity of the hospitality landscape compared to 20 years ago impedes larger enterprises. Previously, there was clear water between the various actors in the space; operators operated, owners owned, etc, but now there is a far more complicated patchwork of companies that no longer specialise but are happy to be involved in multiple facets of the business.

More complexity leads to more friction and inefficiencies, with complicated issues such as waste management not getting the focus they need.

Scale can bring greater resources and specialist capabilities, but converting those advantages into better sustainability performance still depends on how effectively decisions are made and implemented across the organisation.

HIGH PERFORMANCE IS POSSIBLE

Average performance only tells part of the story.

Some hospitality businesses in the FuturePlus dataset are achieving very high sustainability scores despite managing complex physical operations.

Hiddenwell is one example.

450 out of 500
Eden Hall Day Spa

449 out of 500
Hoar Cross Hall

IMPACT FUTURE PLUS CERTIFIED

The results are significant because they show that a complex physical operation does not necessarily limit overall sustainability performance. The challenges around energy, water, food, waste, people, and supply chains remain. What these scores demonstrate is that businesses can make substantial progress while managing them.

The more interesting question is what enables that performance.

HOSPITALITY IN PRACTICE: HIDDENWELL

HIDDENWELL

Hiddenwell operates Hoar Cross Hall in Staffordshire and Eden Hall in Nottinghamshire, two large spa estates that combine hospitality, food and beverage, leisure, and extensive grounds.

Both are among the strongest hospitality performers in the FuturePlus dataset, with **Eden Hall scoring 450/500 and Hoar Cross Hall 449/500.**

Their performance has been built through a combination of investment, measurement, and changes to how sustainability is managed across the business. Both properties have established a Sustainability Committee and Sustainability Champions to help drive change across the organisation, alongside systems to monitor energy, water and emissions at property level.

At Hoar Cross Hall, a £1.5 million biomass heating system replaced four kerosene boilers, while electricity monitoring, voltage optimisation, improved insulation and water monitoring have supported further reductions in consumption. The property reported a 16% reduction in electricity consumption, alongside reductions in heating energy and water use.

The approach goes beyond energy. Both properties have worked on waste, local sourcing, employee development, and Diversity & Inclusion, reflecting the breadth of issues involved in running a hospitality business. The group also uses local suppliers where possible, including sourcing woodchip for the Hoar Cross biomass boilers from just six miles away.

What makes Hiddenwell particularly relevant to this report is that it operates the kind of complex physical assets where our wider hospitality data shows progress can be harder. Its performance suggests that complexity itself doesn't have to be the limiting factor.

Clear responsibility, good property-level data, and sustained investment all appear to have played a part.

WHERE DOES THE NEXT INVESTMENT GO?

For owners and operators, knowing that there is room for improvement is only the start.

The more useful question is where to put the next pound of investment and the next hour of management time.

A relatively low score doesn't automatically mean an area should receive immediate investment. Businesses also need to consider materiality, operating costs, risk, regulatory exposure, stakeholder expectations, and the likely effect of an intervention.

This is where context becomes important.

Measurement establishes the baseline. Benchmarking shows how that performance compares with similar organisations.

A property knowing that its environmental performance has fallen year on year is useful. Knowing that it is also significantly behind comparable businesses provides a different basis for deciding whether and where to intervene.

The same applies at the portfolio level. Benchmarking can help identify outliers, find areas of stronger performance, and establish where experience from one property might be useful elsewhere.

For owners and operators, the purpose of better sustainability information should be better decision-making: identifying where intervention is needed, where investment can wait, and where the business is already performing strongly.

And increasingly, those decisions are not only about operational performance. Sustainability considerations are also entering decisions about financing, insurance, and long-term asset value.

HORWATH HTL VIEW

Sustainability is increasingly becoming a core consideration in underwriting. Lenders and investors are factoring ESG performance into valuation and financing decisions, while sustainability-linked finance can connect the cost of capital to efficiency and sustainability targets. Institutional buyers are also paying greater attention to environmental performance when assessing potential assets, while insurers are increasingly considering climate risk and resilience.

On longer-term asset considerations, the sharpest relationship is around climate resilience and obsolescence risk. Assets exposed to flooding, extreme heat or water scarcity can face rising insurance costs, capex requirements, and, in some markets, greater difficulty refinancing. Sustainability performance can therefore feed directly into terminal value and exit assumptions, not just annual operating budgets.

Owners are starting to treat decarbonisation capex the same way they treat brand-standard PIPs: a cost of staying investable, not an optional enhancement.

SUSTAINABILITY DATA AS BUSINESS DATA

Many of the metrics sitting within a sustainability programme are already measures of business performance.

Energy usage and food waste affect operating costs. Staff retention affects recruitment and training costs. Supply chain information can expose dependencies and risks.

The distinction between sustainability data and operational data is therefore becoming less useful. The wider FuturePlus dataset also shows the value of maintaining this information over time.

81% of committed sustainability actions are ultimately completed among SMEs tracking their ambitions against outcomes.

This includes ambitions completed later than their original target date. Improvement takes time. A baseline has to be established, action taken, and the result measured.

Recording that information as the work happens also creates a history of performance.

Instead of reconstructing evidence when a customer, investor, owner, or other stakeholder asks for it, the business already has it. For hospitality groups, where information can span multiple properties and teams, that record can also help identify what is working.

WHAT SUPPORTS PROGRESS

Across the FuturePlus data, a consistent approach to measurement, evidence, and implementation helps businesses understand where they are making progress and where further action is needed.

Shorter-term ambitions are more likely to be completed, while maintaining evidence as work progresses creates a record that can be used for reporting, benchmarking, and future decision-making.

For hospitality groups, consistency also matters at property level. A common framework can help businesses compare performance across assets, identify outliers, and understand where approaches that work in one property might be useful elsewhere.

HOSPITALITY IN PRACTICE: LORE GROUP

For a multi-property hospitality group, consistency matters, but so does understanding the differences between individual assets.

Lore Group uses FutureImpact across its properties to provide a common framework that still allows individual hotel teams to understand and manage their own sustainability performance.

A common framework provides a consistent view across the group while retaining property-level visibility.

That can help identify where individual hotels are performing particularly well, where there are gaps, and where an approach working successfully at one property could be useful elsewhere.

"Using the FutureImpact Dashboard across Lore Group has enabled our properties to have a best-practice ESG infrastructure, whilst also making this complex topic tangible for our hotel teams."

Jacqueline Kneebone, Head of Sustainability and Wellness at Lore Group

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR HOSPITALITY

The data doesn't suggest hospitality has an ambition problem. More than two-thirds of ambitions are completed on time, and performance is already relatively strong across Economic, Social and Diversity & Inclusion.

What the data does show is that progress isn't uniform.

Areas more closely connected to physical operations, property-level data, and investment tend to take longer. Yet some of the strongest hospitality businesses in the dataset demonstrate that those barriers can be overcome.

The question is what allows that to happen consistently.

For owners and operators, there is an opportunity to make sustainability information more useful to the business: to understand performance across individual assets, identify where investment is needed, benchmark against comparable businesses, and keep evidence of improvement over time.

That moves sustainability beyond a reporting exercise and makes it part of the information used to manage the business.

Understanding what separates the strongest performers from the rest is where we believe the next useful conversation for hospitality lies.

ABOUT FUTUREPLUS & HORWATH HTL

FUTUREPLUS

FuturePlus helps businesses understand, manage, and improve their sustainability performance.

FutureImpact assesses performance across Climate, Environment, Social, Economic, and Diversity & Inclusion, bringing data and evidence into one place and creating a practical roadmap for improvement.

Businesses use the platform to understand where they are, benchmark performance, decide where to focus, and maintain a verified record of progress over time.

Horwath HTL

At Horwath HTL, our focus is one hundred percent on hospitality, tourism and leisure consulting. Our services cover every aspect of hotel real estate, tourism, and leisure development.

Our clients choose us because we have earned a reputation for impartial advice that will often mean the difference between failure and success. Each project we help is different, so we need all of the experience we have gained over our 110+ year history.

We are a global brand with 55+ offices in over 40 countries, and we have successfully carried out over 50,000 assignments for private and public clients. We are part of the Crowe Global network, a top 10 accounting and financial services network.

We are the number one choice for companies and financial institutions looking to invest and develop in the industry. We are Horwath HTL, the global leader in hospitality, tourism, and leisure consulting.

GET IN TOUCH

To discuss the findings in this report, benchmarking your sustainability performance, or how sustainability data can support operational and investment decisions, contact:

FuturePlus

Alex Smith
CEO

info@future-plus.co.uk

Horwath HTL

James Chappell
Global Business Director

jchappell@horwathhtl.com

FUTUREPLUS & Horwath HTL