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#### Good advice, Northumberland

Dave and Harvest Harris-Jones of the Laverock Law Holiday Cottages offer helpful advice for any Northumberland-based tourism business:



- Reach out for support if you haven't before
- Promote your business online and via social media
- Focus on the things within your control
- Appreciate and be grateful for what you have
- Invest your time, energy and finances back into the business
- Don't treat customers purely as money
- Whatever skill you have, pass it on
- Reflect on your direction – both personally and professionally

Across the country, the COVID pandemic has adversely affected the tourism and hospitality sector. Visit Northumberland has championed real stories from businesses who have adapted, pivoted and triumphed to inspire others. Discover more Northumberland tourism businesses that have delivered a #goodjobnorthumberland.

Visit Northumberland is the official Destination Management Organisation for Northumberland. To find out how you can benefit from networking, promotion and business support, please email us at [partnership@visitnorthumberland.com](mailto:partnership@visitnorthumberland.com)



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# Good job Laverock Law Holiday Cottages & Glamping

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# When we got the news, I really did not know what to do.

**“We already had 60% of bookings for the year ahead, and we’d just completed the outside of a new building. We’d put nine years of hard work and energy into this place and felt in 2020 we would see some financial rewards at last. It was a huge blow. A year when we were going to feel the most financially stable, was now set to be our least financially stable.”**

Laverock Law Holiday Cottages is much more than a business for Dave and Harvest Harris-Jones – it’s their family home and entire livelihood. And financial instability wasn’t the only concern weighing heavy on Harvest as lockdown struck.

“When we got the news, that triggered my mental health. I really didn’t know what to do or how I would cope. How could I handle home-schooling? How could we survive financially? How could I look after everyone else when I felt so completely and utterly desperate?”

“I worry more about money than Harvest”, explains Dave. “Do we carry on doing the extension or do we stop? Do we carry on taking bookings or not? Can we afford for Harvest to train as a professional yoga teacher?”





### Keep going

With Harvest's wellbeing impacted and further plans for the cottages already in motion, the Harris-Jones' knew they had to act decisively.

"I went to a workshop and it reset me", says Harvest. "The emphasis was about appreciating what you have, so I started to live my life through gratitude. The really small things became important and that's when everything regards business got better."

### The response

Even with their daunting financial position and no income on the horizon, the couple decided to make downtime work for them, not against them. It was a chance to "up their game" says Dave.

"We actually focussed on stuff within our

control instead. We worked hard to finish our new building, where we hope to run courses in the future. We took down, repainted in bright red and replaced all the cast gutters, totally uplifting the outside of the cottages, and did loads of interior painting. We were proactive so that when we reopened everyone would notice the difference, and their holidays would be better.

"Reaching out for support is something we've never done before, but if you're prepared to put the effort in, it's worthwhile doing. We got support from the council, building society, from our parents, and recently we've had soft support – business mentoring, a new logo, rebranding, a Facebook campaign – we'd never commercially used social media before, but Business Northumberland helped us, and it helped with bookings."

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“Don’t treat customers as money. Having a business purely to make profit won’t give you or them fulfilment. Sometimes you don’t need to spend money – you just need to invest the time. Whatever skill you have, pass it on to the people visiting.”

#### **Good advice**

Lockdown presented Dave and Harvest an opportunity to innovate, invest, and to slow down and reflect on what direction to take both personally and professionally. Dave managed to fulfil a dream – completing his training to be fully operational with The Mountain Rescue Team – and reflection is an exercise Harvest insists can benefit any tourism business in the region.

“Start appreciating what you have. Start writing a gratitude journal – focus on one thing that made you smile that day. What is at the heart of your business? Why are you doing it? What message are you giving people?”

#### **Good job**

With their buildings and bookings both in better shape, Dave and Harvest set themselves a new goal of becoming the go-to place for sustainable and wellbeing holidays in Northumberland. Now offering bread and felt-making workshops, plus early-morning yoga sessions, they’re also the first local tourism business to support the global Terra Carta movement. And for them, explains Harvest, placing people before profit is the definition of doing a good job.

“You don’t ever realise what impact you can have on somebody. That little walk in the dark, the cave adventure. People get away from everything here. When they get out of the car on arrival, we see their shoulders drop – it’s like they can breathe, they’re home. Doing a good job is knowing that people are deciding to come back again, even before they leave.”