



IoH Broadsheet

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Strategic Building Refurbishment in Hospitality: Reframing Legacy as Competitive Advantage

Hosna Hassanzadeh MIH joined the Institute in 2022 and is Sustainability Lead at Nottingham Venues. Her career has spanned multiple sectors, from architecture and construction to hospitality and business management, giving her a distinctive perspective on how sustainable strategies can be embedded across organisations.

Holding two master's degrees in construction project management from Shahid Beheshti University, Iran and International Hospitality Management

from University of Derby, UK, Hosna now focuses on helping hospitality businesses strengthen their environmental performance while maintaining commercial competitiveness.

In this month's IoH Broadsheet, Hosna examines the opportunities and challenges of: **"Strategic Building Refurbishment in Hospitality: Reframing Legacy as Competitive Advantage."**

The challenge

The global hospitality sector faces a real challenge with sustainability. Many historic and characterful buildings, while central to a brand's identity, are also among the least efficient. Older properties often consume more energy, fall short of modern regulations, and fail to meet rising guest expectations.

With over two-thirds of the buildings that will exist in 2040 already standing today, refurbishment is no longer optional, it is the main route forward.



Refurbishment strategy

Cosmetic updates are quick to make, but the bigger issues run deeper. Refurbishment decisions influence long-term energy use, guest comfort, maintenance costs, and environmental impact. Too often, projects are approached as short-term fixes, changing finishes or lighting, without addressing design choices that affect long-term performance.

Effective refurbishment starts with data. Energy consumption, insulation levels, maintenance history, and material lifespan reveal where to invest, what to upgrade, and what to preserve. When air quality, temperature control, soundproofing, and lighting are properly designed into the building, the guest experience improves in ways that last, building loyalty and reputation.

Standards such as LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design), BREEAM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method), and WELL provide useful frameworks. Their real value lies in helping teams prioritise, compare options, and measure results, not simply in earning certifications.

Circular design

Reducing waste is another key priority. Reusing existing materials, designing for disassembly, and choosing modular or recycled products can all reduce environmental impact and costs. Circular design is no longer a trend but a growing industry standard.

Practical knowledge also matters. Engineers, cleaners, and front-of-house teams know where the building struggles, poor airflow, awkward layouts, or recurring guest complaints. Involving them early in refurbishment planning leads to smarter, more workable solutions. When staff insights shape projects, results are both more effective and more widely accepted.

Refurbishment is also a leadership responsibility. It impacts net zero goals, environmental reporting, capital planning, property value, and legal compliance.

Managed strategically, refurbishment can increase asset value, particularly when upgrades improve efficiency, reduce running costs, and extend the life of the building. These improvements also build investor confidence and strengthen the brand's long-term competitiveness.

Conclusion

Refurbishment is more than fixing what is broken. It is an opportunity to improve sustainability, reduce risk, and enhance long-term value. Guided by data, informed by lived experience, and aligned with strategic goals, refurbishment can turn existing buildings into high-performing, future-ready assets.

Managing building assets is an ongoing responsibility. Enabling those assets to become sustainable assets must be a priority based on clear planning, collaboration, and above all, a mindset shift: 'moving from short-term fixes to long-term investment'.

By rethinking refurbishment today, hospitality leaders can turn legacy buildings into tomorrow's most valuable assets



About the author

Hosna Hassanzadeh MIH is the Sustainability Lead at Nottingham Venues, with over 15 years' experience across sales, business management, architecture, construction, and hospitality.

She holds a Master of Science in Construction Project Management from Shahid Beheshti University, Iran, and a Master of Science in International Hospitality Management from the University of Derby, UK. Her multidisciplinary expertise enables her to embed sustainable practices into business operations, ensuring environmental responsibility goes hand in hand with commercial performance.

Drawing on a career that bridges construction project management and hospitality operations, Hosna focuses on aligning environmental strategy with guest experience and organisational priorities. She is committed to driving efficiency, reducing environmental impact, and creating long-term value within the sector.



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Further Reading

IoH Webinar

IoH Library (member's only)

Arup: Transforming Existing Hotels to Net Zero Carbon

UK Green Building Council: Whole Life Carbon Roadmap

LETI: Embodied Carbon Primer

WELL Building Standard

BREEAM: Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method

UK Government: Energy Performance Certificates for Commercial Buildings