

Earth Hour sheds light on CLHG's sustainability journey

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When you take part in Earth Hour, you are joining likeminded people from around the world. Organised by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), this initiative encourages individuals, communities, corporates and households to turn off their lights for one hour from 8:30pm to 9:30pm on the last Saturday of March, in support of and to raise awareness for the need to protect nature and tackle the climate crisis.



City Lodge Hotel at Ortia, Earth Hour 2022

City Lodge Hotel Group once again came out in support of this global movement and hoteliers across the group found innovative ways to deliver hospitality by candlelight during this hour. From traditional candles and tea lights to lanterns and fairy lights, all off-grid illuminations helped create a festive atmosphere as staff invited guests for snacks and conversation in the hotels' restaurant. Some examples:

- Road Lodge Randburg had a group of soccer players from KwaZulu-Natal in house, and put out a delicious buffet of its newly launched Eat-in menu offering. The scrumptious food combined with twinkly candlelight was a huge success and the guests loved it.
- Road Lodge Richards Bay invited guests for "snacks and conversation" in its spacious reception area and was able to switch off electricity completely for Earth Hour. Guests loved the concept and understood and appreciated what it meant for the planet.
- Road Lodge N1 City invited guests to tap into their playful nature as they toasted marshmallows over candles, with glow sticks turned into spectacles and signs to celebrate the occasion.

Sustainability journey

This year's Earth Hour theme was 'Shape our Future', which dovetails with CLHG's ongoing journey to greater sustainability integrated into its operations, across various environmentally-friendly fronts.



Hot chocolate at City Lodge Hotel at Ortia, Earth Hour 2022



City Lodge Hotel, Barbara Road, Johannesburg, Earth hour 2022

CLHG installed the first 4,250 solar panels at 25 of its hotels at a cost of R20m when it launched its solar programme in 2019. Lockdowns associated with the pandemic has put expansion on hold for the last two years. These solar plants generate in excess of 2 million kWh (kilowatt hours) per year, nearly 10% of the group's total energy usage. The group is in the process of planning the next stage of its solar panel journey, which will include a further 10 to 15 hotels and will add another one million kWh/year to its generation capacity.

Another exciting project the group is looking into is to increase its utilisation of borehole water. This involves the installation of filtration plants to ensure the water is fit for human consumption. The first plant is being trialled in Port Elizabeth, and thereafter focus will shift to Gauteng. This adds to CLHG's environmental sustainability, provides an alternative to traditional infrastructure and enhances business continuity.

Other initiatives in the group's "sustainabili-tree" of ongoing conservation strategy include:

- Waste reduction
- Water and energy conservation
- Amenities with no single-use plastics
- Community upliftment projects to help those in need
- Animal anti-cruelty with commitment to cage-free eggs
- Technology to reduce paper while offering safe, contactless operations
- Hydration Stations providing free, magnesium-enriched filtered water at all hotels, reducing plastic water bottles consumed
- Courtyard Hotel Waterfall City awarded four-star rating for hotel design from the Green Building Council of SA.

Andrew Widegger, chief executive officer, says, "Earth Hour is a wonderful way to remind our guests and staff of the many things we can do – big and small – that make a difference to the environment. Our guests love being a part of our sustainability journey and participate enthusiastically. Our bathroom amenities free from single-use plastics and Hydration Stations offering complimentary magnesium-enriched filtered water are two of our more customer-facing initiatives, but we have much more going on behind the scenes."

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