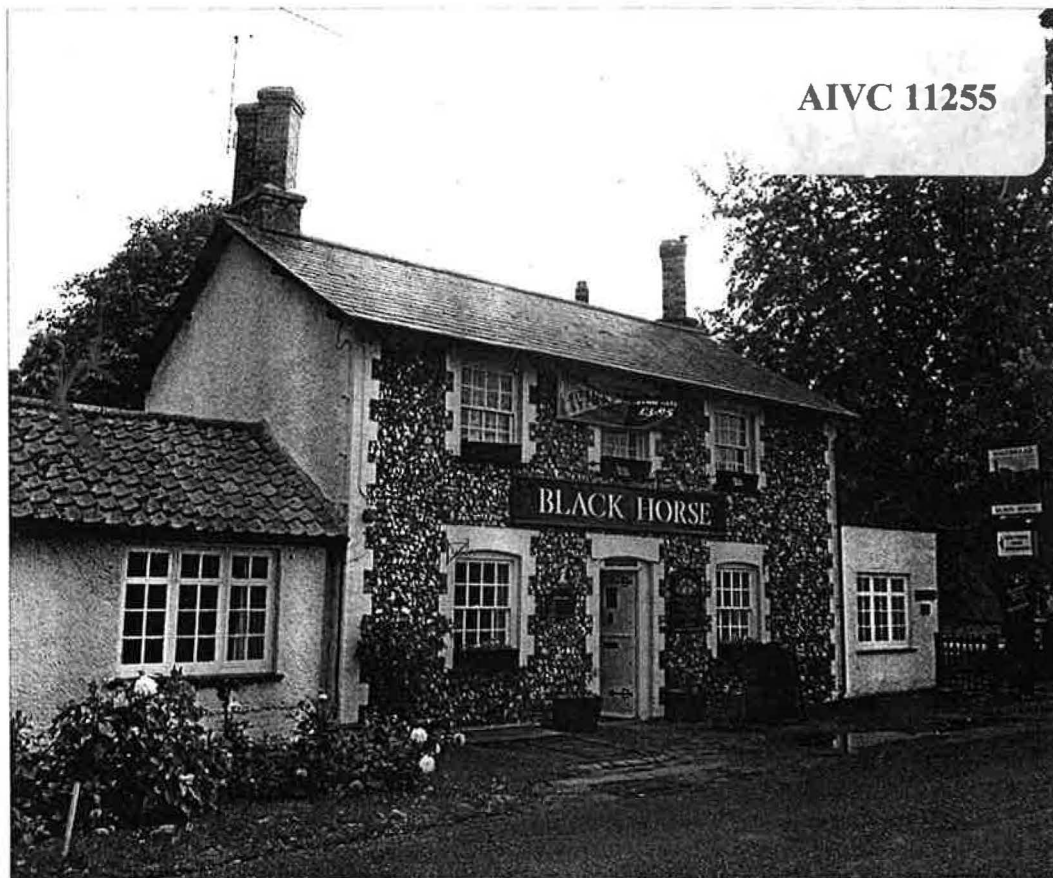


The air we breathe

How increased ventilation is making pubs and clubs happy places for both smokers and non-smokers



AIVC 11255

“We all acknowledge the health benefits of a well-ventilated environment, but putting a hard commercial value on clean air can be an elusive business,” comments Richard Hammond, product manager of Vent-Axia.

“That is why it is so useful to have a well documented account of the business benefits too, especially in the case of licensed premises, where the AIR (Atmosphere Improves Results) campaign is working hard to preempt any need for Government anti-smoking legislation.”

Business

The Black Horse at Melbourn, Cambridgeshire is typical of thousands of pubs throughout the country, attracting a wide cross-section of local people and passing trade. Leased from Whitbread by Oak Taverns, and managed by Tom and Doreen Donaldson, the 1,300 sq. ft. two-bar pub is now selling food as a significant part of the business. But as Tom Donaldson observed “Some of the regulars wouldn’t bring their wives to the pub because they felt it was far too smoky...”

Anxious not to lose business because of this, the Donaldsons

set about making improvements to air quality. But they were equally anxious to protect their hard-won margins, so cost-effectiveness was an essential consideration.

It was not difficult to pinpoint the problem because a single 4”

bathroom fan was serving the main bar along with a 30-year-old window fan and an air cleaner that had seen better days.

The latter was fitted in the centre of the second bar area, but the landlord rarely turned it on because customers complained about the down-draft!

Smoking was allowed throughout the premises and the poor airflow meant that smoke would build up around the main bar and then spread over diners and barstaff.

“I don’t know why barstaff can’t smoke behind the bar because they might as well with

the amount that’s blown into their faces,” said Mr Donaldson, prior to refurbishment.

Energy wastage was also an issue because staff were constantly opening and shutting doors and windows.

“When even the smokers started complaining about the air quality, we would open the doors and windows. Then it would get too cold and we would shut them again. Open, shut, open, shut, it just goes on...”

Ventilation equipment installers from The Fan Centre surveyed the premises and fitted a carefully laid out system of three T-Series reversible extract fans and two ceiling mounted Focus Air 5000 air cleaning units to replace the obsolete cleaner, inadequate window fan and 4” bathroom fan.

A flexible system of non-smoking areas during meal times

was also introduced and the Donaldsons watched food sales start to rise.

The new installation provides a total extract capacity of 3,845m³/h, backed-up by 230m³/h of air cleaning capacity, and has produced dramatic improvements, not only for the bar staff who previously went outside to give their eyes (and lungs) some relief, but for customers as well.

Comments

“Not one person has complained about the air quality since the equipment was installed. In fact we’ve had a lot of comments about how much things have improved”, says Tom Donaldson.

Business has improved too. Food sales are up by 24%, and drink sales by 9% - a combined turnover improvement of around £1,000 per month. The cost of the fans and air cleaners was £1,949 - this excludes installation costs. The option to rent the air cleaners was considered at a cost of £6.50 a week per unit, including call out repairs and servicing, but not filter changes.

The pub is listed so only the rear extended section of the pub

Published statistics on the health risks associated with secondary smoking are creating media pressure for legislation



Replacing the extract fans proved relatively straightforward despite the fact that the pub is a Listed building.

could be knocked through to allow for the housing of the 12" wall fan, but this turned out only to be a three hour job for the installers.

The 7" window fan fitted fairly easily where the original 4" unit was sited and cables were matched with the ceiling rafters wherever possible.

Work was restricted to one half of the building at a time, so that the pub could remain open for business throughout.

Full service contracts for the fans were signed with Vent-Axia at an annual cost of £59.21 per unit. This includes two service visits per annum and faulty motor replacement without call-out charge.

Filters

As for the air cleaners, media filters need to be replaced every three to four months at an annual cost of £59.

"All of this must be good news for publicans and leisure business managers who might otherwise be very anxious about the cost of such improvements," said Mr Hammond.

"The latest published statistics on the health risks associated with secondary smoking are creating media pressure for legislation, but action by proprietors now to improve air quality will not only pre-empt any need for such intrusive law-making - it's very likely to generate improved profits throughout the leisure industry."

Some concerns over the noise of the equipment has been voiced with some customers asking for it to be turned down, and Mr Donaldson criticised the design of the holster holding the air cleaner controls as it fell off the wall after a week.

However, overall the benefits have been marked and the landlord was delighted to see regulars bringing their wives in for meals, "They wouldn't come near the place before."

Enquiry N° 202



CONFERENCE DETAILS

● A conference designed to address all the issues relating to smoking policies in licensed premises has been organised to take place on March 31 at the Royal United Services Institute, Whitehall, London.

Entitled 'A Breath of Fresh Air - Managing Smoking in the Licensed Trade', the object is to identify and drive practical self-regulatory solutions to the environmental smoking issue and remove the need for legislation.

● For more details contact Daniel Davies on 0171 209 5089.

