

Case study Comfort Inn - Ramsgate

Just few minutes walk from Ramsgate beach, harbour and town centre, the Comfort Inn occupies a commanding position on the town's east cliff, with sea views stretching as far as France.

This magnificent Victorian building with its high ceilings and enclosed balconies is owned by Kishore Kanani, who purchased the business in 1989, and who now operates it under the Choice Hotels umbrella. The hotel's history however dates back to 1881.

Challenges

With a building of this age, maintenance and refurbishment are rarely absent from the to-do list, but making modern adaptations which are both low maintenance and in keeping with the hotel's wonderful period features can be a challenge.

Mr Kanani, however, believes his refurbishment programme, which includes upgrading 45 bathrooms; two public washrooms and 8 balcony interiors, achieves the perfect blend of old and new. Additional amenities such as sauna, gym and air conditioning, have already been introduced.

"For any refurbishment in the hotel, I choose and buy the products I want installed and pay the contractor only for his labour," he said. That way I get the job done to my exact specifications. When Kevin Maynard at MKM Building Services suggested Spapanel wall panels, I liked the sound of them – a completely waterproof solution without the problem of grout discolouration because there isn't any grout."

"They looked fantastic, so we decided to install them in all our bathrooms" – Kishore Kanani, Hotel Owner



Kew Gloss used in en suite bathroom, Comfort Inn Ramsgate

Initially the panels were tried out in just one bathroom. "They looked fantastic," said Mr Kanani. "so we decided to install them in all our bathrooms. So far we have refurbished 14 of them: in shower cubicles and behind baths and wash basins. Furthermore, we have been able to get a perfectly co-ordinated look by also cutting the boards to use as bath panels and the result is just beautiful."

Ease and speed of installation

Getting the job done quickly to reduce costs was certainly a consideration in deciding on using Spapanel products. Mr Kanani commented, "I was impressed at just how quickly my contractor was able to install and click adjoining boards into place – the work was done fast which meant lower labour costs for me. Tiling would have been way more expensive".

It is often the small details that count in the hospitality industry and here, a less obvious benefit of Spapanel for Mr Kanani was that soap dispensers could be attached to the wall panels without any fuss or mess.

A rather more novel use of Spapanel wall panels has been to clad the walls of the hotel's interior balconies. "We have already installed the panels in some of our sea facing balconies. They look fabulous." Says Mr Kanani.

Scrupulously clean in no time

With regard to cleaning, Mr Kanani believes that Spapanel is already paying dividends. "Our housekeeper and chambermaids love the bathroom panels," he says. "Cleaning just one bathroom isn't a huge undertaking, but when you multiply that by 45, the time and cost soon stack up. With Spapanel, there is no ugly grout to contend with and cleaning of our bathroom walls and shower cubicles now takes only a fraction of the time it used to."

Durability

Mr Kanani says that he isn't one for switching suppliers: when he finds a product that works, he tends to stick with it. "Refurbishing hotel bathrooms is no small undertaking and you don't want to be doing it too often," he says. In an old listed building like this, the panels are absolutely ideal as they provide a completely waterproof solution and are easy and quick to install. We will be installing Spapanel in the public area washrooms and I intend using the panels in two other hotels I am in the process of acquiring."



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Kew Gloss & Umber Brocade used in en suite bathroom, Comfort Inn Ramsgate