



‘The interior is designed to create a welcoming haven.’

# CARBON NEUTRAL PRACTICE

## *Dentistry for well-being and nurturing*

**Joanna Lyall** spoke to the dental team behind the greenest practice in the country.

**T**he practice is situated in Eden Street, its name means soul in Sanskrit and the interior is designed to create, if not heaven, certainly a welcoming haven.

The waiting area includes the Dalai Lama's *Book of Wisdom* and the walls carry the pledge that 'cares will have fallen like autumn leaves and you'll not only be smiling brightly but glowing inside.'

Opened in May last year in Kingston, Surrey, Jivadental, the UK's first carbon neutral dental practice, has been created from the shell of a former bookie's shop by a dentist who survived the 2004 tsunami and is passionate about doing his bit for the environment. 'The world is so fragile I feel we all have to preserve resources, and think about our everyday activities,' says Bob Bhamra, who invested £500,000 in the development.

Dental nurse and receptionist, Nicola Milnes, who worked with Bob Bhamra at a previous practice and has been at Jivadental since February says: 'This practice really is unique, and a very pleasant place to work. Not only is it truly "green" – the UK's only carbon neutral dental practice – but we aimed to create a little sanctuary – somewhere where patients feel immediately at ease.

'There's no smell of anything clinical and we want patients to chill out,' she adds.

Her desk is clear, a reflection of the practice's determination to become almost paperless. She says she is struck by how relaxed visitors look as soon as they come in. There are clear, uncluttered lines, low sofas, neutral colours and Fairtrade drinks.





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with a glass-top table and four armchairs, plus a computer to display x-rays and treatment possibilities. ‘The idea is to bring patients here to discuss treatment options. We can sit face to face, on the same level, and consider treatment in a relaxed way,’ explains Bob. ‘It’s so important that the patient feels involved, and treated as a whole person.’

‘How can you make decisions when you are lying down and the dentist is leaning over you?’ This meeting room is off the reception area, far away from the treatment suites. It is decorated by photographs from Angkor Wat, Easter Island and other images taken by Bob on his 2004 world trip to Peru, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, New Zealand, India, Nepal, China, Vietnam and Thailand. ‘Travelling brought home to me just how small and sensitive our planet is,’ he says.

It was on the last leg of this trip that Bob and his wife, Sukhi found themselves in the beach resort of Ko Phi-Phi Don, Thailand, in December 2004.

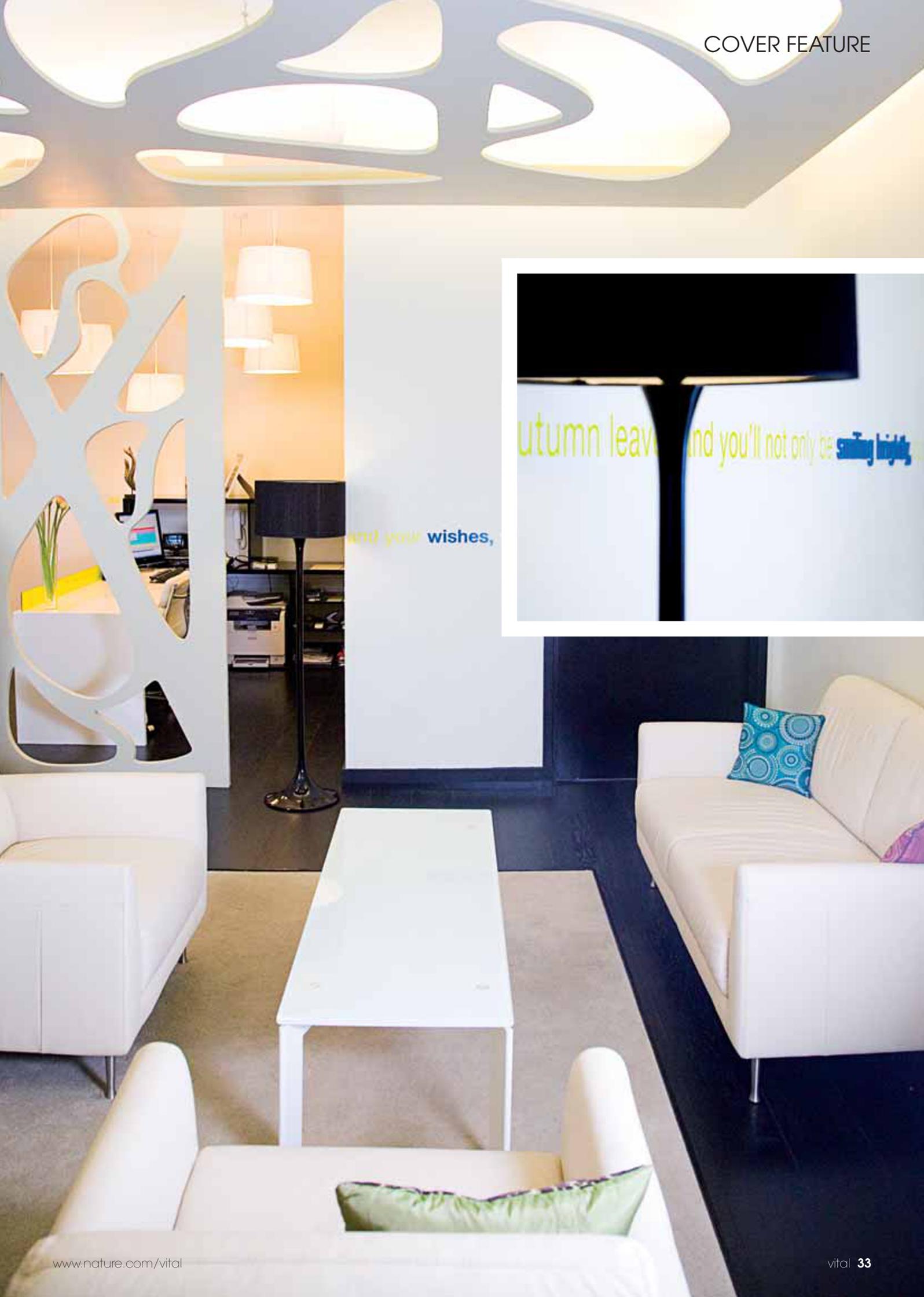
They witnessed the results of the tsunami on 26 December and Bob helped treat some of the wounded before returning home. A full account of their experiences was published in the *BDJ* (2006; 200: 56-58).

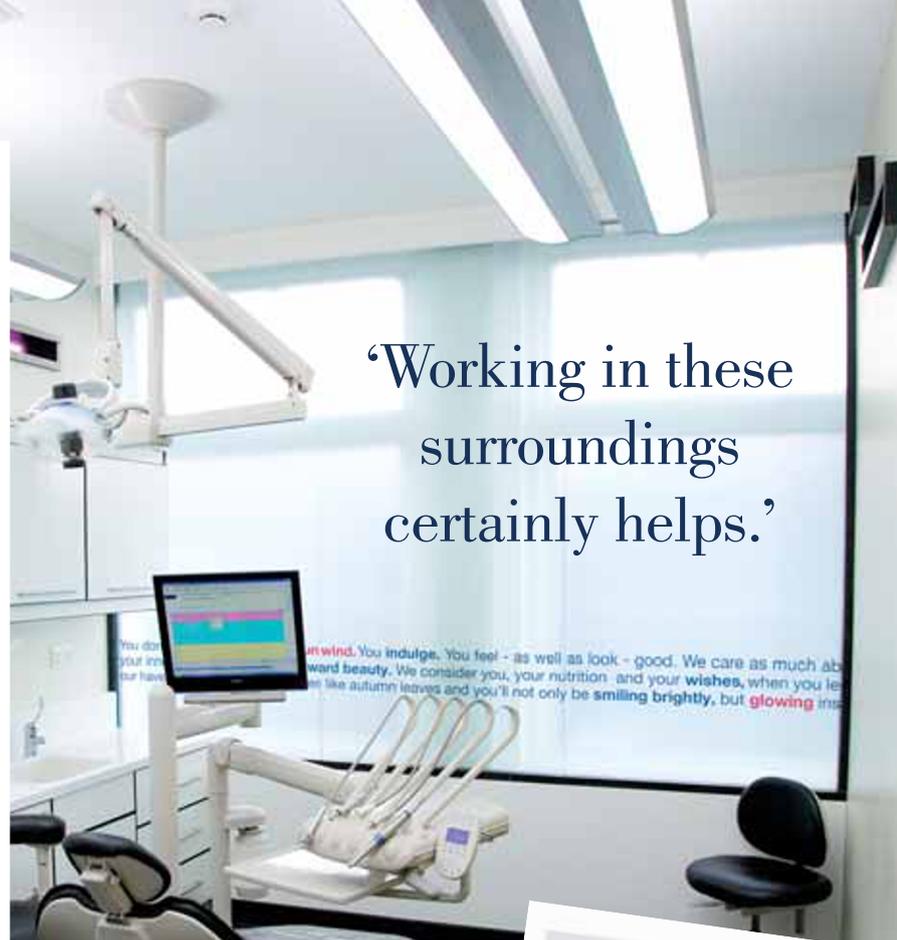
Nicola went into dentistry straight from school and spent seven years as a dental nurse in the Lake District before moving to London and a job in advertising sales at the *Daily Mirror*. The pace ‘and too many liquid lunches’ prompted a return to dentistry and she worked in a practice in East Sheen, where she met Bob. ‘He’s a fantastic dentist – he does my teeth – and a real enthusiast,’ she says. ‘I recommend him to everyone I meet.’

She is excited to have become part of the team at Jivadental and is stimulated by the holistic approach to all aspects of the business. She has now been joined by Stella Jones, another dental nurse who also helps on reception.

As well as two treatment rooms, x-ray room, sterilisation room, and a large reception area, the practice includes a small light room fitted







‘Working in these surroundings certainly helps.’

Born in London’s East End, of Indian parents, Bob qualified at Birmingham in 1997 and says he always wanted to start his own practice and make it as holistic as possible. Sukhi, a dietitian, provided sessions at the practice before going on maternity leave. Indian head massage is also offered by Daksha Patel – whose goal is to ‘give heavenly bliss to all clients for 30 minutes’ – and in time Bob plans to take on an associate and expand the practice team.

He bought the Kingston premises in December 2006 and a team of designers and builders moved in the same month to transform the first floor shell that had housed a betting shop for ten years. The practice uses electricity from renewable resources, digital x-rays which reduce radiation exposure, and energy efficient lighting and air conditioning. It is insulated with material made from recycled glass, sand and limestone and the floors are covered with Marmoleum, which is manufactured from sustainable, natural resources.

The practice is also investing in carbon offsetting projects in India, Mexico and the US. It supports a company which replaces kerosene lamps in rural India with solar panels – which produce safe, renewable energy and reduce carbon emissions. A reforestation project in one of the poorest parts of southern Mexico is intended to provide employment, as well as preserving wildlife and helping to absorb carbon dioxide emissions. In the US it is involved with a project to reduce methane emissions from a disused coal mine in the Appalachians. Methane has 21 times the global warning potential of CO<sub>2</sub>.



Jivadental is accredited by the CarbonNeutral Company, a process which involves measurement of the organisation’s carbon emissions and investment in offsetting projects, to justify the description ‘carbon neutral’.

Now the practice’s eco-friendliness has been acknowledged with several awards, the emphasis is on getting new patients through the door. Promotion includes leaflets being distributed at Kingston station. A practice plan, costing £11.95 per month, is offered and Jivadental operates six days a week, staying open until 7pm on Tuesday and Thursday. The business may be well situated in one of the wealthiest areas of the country but take off has not been without problems. Bob admits to nervous moments about building a practice from scratch: ‘a cold private start-up with no patients when we opened’. But he is unwavering in his aim of ‘dentistry for well-being and nurturing – not just fixing your teeth but helping you feel good about yourself.’

Nicola echoes that. ‘We want to make the experience as pleasant as possible,’ she says. ‘And working in these surroundings certainly helps.’



[www.jivadental.co.uk](http://www.jivadental.co.uk)  
[www.carbonneutral.com](http://www.carbonneutral.com)