Climate Conscious Travel at the University of Edinburgh

Improving data reporting and stakeholder engagement to support organisational change.

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UoE Climate Strategy

ZERO BY 2040

UoE Strategy to 2030
Results

University carbon emissions are reducing – on track to reach intermediate target by 2025

This is mainly due to initiatives focused on reducing energy consumption (& decarbonisation of the grid...)

BUT ... emissions from business travel are increasing!
Project overview

Stage 1: Understanding our travel
Stage 2: Understanding traveler behaviours
Stage 3: Attempting behavior change
Stage 4: Evaluation & next steps
Stage 5: Working group to develop recommendations
Stage 6?: Recommendations put into practice

Current State

2016
2017 - 19
2018
2019
2019 - 20
2020 - ....
Addressing Business Travel in Higher Education feels like....
Stage 1: Understanding our travel

In 2018-19 we...

- recorded over 110,000 journeys
- travelled over 66,000,000 miles
- Spent over £11m on travel alone
- emitted over 18,500 tonnes CO₂e
- Spent an estimated 199,200 hours travelling by air & rail

edin.ac/business-travel-report
Stage 2: Understanding traveler behaviours

2017: SRS workshop to develop ISM model to understand barriers to travel
2017-18: Interviewed 5 senior managers & conducted focus groups with around 40 academic and professional staff
2019: We collected survey data from over 400 staff & PhD Students at a number of University Schools
Opposing Viewpoints

Academia necessitates travel

“…we don’t travel for the fun of it. It’s part of the job…”

Senior Academic Staff, responding to business travel survey, 2019

Vs

Staff like to travel

“The opportunity to go to places around the world as part of my job is a huge plus point. [A] selfish imperative as well I realise.”

Senior Professional Staff, noted in focus group, 2018
Stage 3: Instigating behavior change

We proposed a range of pilots aimed at reducing business travel emissions, without reducing research impact.

- Mandatory online training
- Mandatory train to London
- Automatic carbon compensation on flights
- Adaptation of Internal Grant Criteria

Unfortunately it was not possible to initiate these as pilots on this occasion.
Stage 4: Evaluation & next steps

- Developing Climate Conscious Travel model
- Initiating University-wide Travel and Aviation working group (stage 5) & supporting school /department level working groups
- Proposal to update the business travel report & share reporting tool with other institutions
- Trialling range of virtual tools & initiating review of Virtual Collaboration Tools
- Building an international network of institutions addressing business travel
The Roundtable of Sustainable Academic Travel

• Method of increasing communication on this topic across FHE

• Opportunity to share knowledge, ideas, & data

• Open to all FHE institutions, & associated organisations

• To date: Over 85 institutions signed up from 20 different countries

• Biggest challenge now? Increasing collaboration and communication within the network

businesstravelroundtable.ac
Lessons learned

• When discussing business travel, providing accurate data is important

• The barriers to reducing travel are complex

• Addressing business travel should not be focused on reducing carbon emissions alone

• When introducing change, engagement with all stakeholders is key

• Business travel emissions are a concern across the higher education sector
Any questions?

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