



ETHICAL  
SCHOOL  
ADVENTURES  
SINCE 2006

# Sustainability Policy

Updated 10 January 2024



## Introduction

As a responsible travel company and ethical employer, STC Expeditions has, since its inception in 2006, strived to ensure that engagement with our clients, suppliers, staff and environment is sustainable for the long term. We are committed to promoting sustainability at every opportunity and putting in place policies that deliver measurable improvement in our sustainability.

We aim to follow, implement and promote good sustainability practices to maximise positive impacts and minimise negative impacts of our business – both with our operations in the UK and in working with our partners overseas to deliver our tours and expeditions.

## Overall Sustainability Management

We commit to sustainability through active policies and procedures. These include:

- To appoint a sustainability manager who has overall responsibility for sustainability within the company. Our sustainability manager is Operations Manager, Megan Freese.
- To have a responsible tourism policy that governs our operations overseas and aims for a reduction of the negative social, cultural, economic and environmental impacts of our tours and expeditions.
- To have an ethical employment policy. (Part of action plan 2024).
- To be actively involved in external organisations and working groups which are supportive to sustainability in tourism.
- To undertake baseline assessment of the company's performance on sustainable practices. (Our 2023 emissions will be published in March 2024 acting as a baseline assessment.
- To have a Carbon Action Plan
- To have a sustainability action plan with clear targets, actions, measures, responsibilities and time planning.
- To develop documented procedures that monitor and evaluate the implementation of the sustainability policy, objectives and targets, whilst enabling transparency in sustainability by public reporting.
- To ensure that all staff, partners and stakeholders are aware of our Sustainability Policy and are committed to implementing and improving it.
- To comply with all national legislation, regulations and codes of practice, but strive to go much further than the minimum requirement.

## Social sustainability, employment and human rights

A good working environment for staff is important for long term sustainability of the company. We commit to fair management of staff and individuals involved with the business by having clear employment contracts and policies that include the following:

- To provide a safe work environment, free of discrimination and harassment.
- To grant employees the freedom of employment and contract termination with notice, without penalty and to have a clear disciplinary procedure that is effectively communicated with employees.
- To provide sick leave and at least 25 days of annual leave.
- To provide pension provision and a safe working environment as required by UK law.
- We instigated a 4 day working week (whilst maintaining full pay) once probation has been completed.

- To create opportunities for students to participate in work experience and/or research related projects.
- We commit to protecting and enhancing human rights by:
  - Not hindering trade union membership, collective labour negotiations and representation of members by trade unions.
  - Ensuring all employment decisions are based on business needs, job requirements and individual merit, without regard to disability, age, ethnic or national origin, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, family or parental status. We will not tolerate discrimination or harassment based on any of these characteristics and encourage applicants of all ages.
  - Ensuring all employees have an equal chance and access to resources and opportunities for personal development through regular training and education whether provided in house or externally.

## Transport

Our sustainable transport policy covers UK operations, transport to destination and in-country overseas operations. Which transport option is most suitable will be based on an analysis of three areas:

- 1. Reduce travel where possible.** (e.g. Working partly from home or walking/cycling to the office and undertaking video-calls with clients instead of visiting them in person).
- 2. Select appropriate means of transport for each journey** in order to minimise cost/impact and maximise the time spent at the destination and the efficiency of travel to/from the destination.
- 3. Choose the most sustainable option.** By using the option with the lowest GHG emissions where possible.

### UK Operations:

Travel by STC staff within the UK is occasionally required to visit conferences, courses and client premises for the delivery of presentations and seminars.

In order to reduce GHG emissions, where possible, meetings and presentations will be attended/conducted via video call. Where this is not possible, our preferred method of transport within the UK (in order of preference) is as follows:

1. Train
2. Electric or Hybrid hire car
3. Private vehicle (if not hybrid or electric).

GHG emissions for each method of transport has been assessed using the EU green public procurement criteria for road transport available at:

<https://ec.europa.eu/environment/gpp/pdf/criteria/transport.pdf>

It is noted that not all clients or destinations within the UK are located close to the train network, and some locations and timings of presentations may mean that trains are not possible due to late finish times. An individual decision on each journey is therefore required, but it is noted that trains

offer greater comfort, the opportunity for relaxation and/or work whilst travelling and significantly lower GHG emissions than driving, so this is our preferred choice wherever possible.

It is our company policy not to use flights within the UK for staff travel.

### **Transport to Destination**

Transport to destination for both clients and STC Staff (for recce / operational trips) is currently by air travel. With the exception of Finland, all STC destinations are beyond Europe. Train and boat travel is, therefore, generally impractical for school groups, although we do offer train options for clients travelling to Finland.

For all medium and long-haul destinations, our Transport to Destination policy is:

- Use direct flights where possible.
- Where direct flights are not possible
  - Use in-direct flights with only one stop.
  - Use airlines that take the most direct route.

Flight routes and associated GHG emissions will be calculated based on the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) Carbon calculator which can be found at:

<https://www.icao.int/environmental-protection/Carbonoffset/Pages/default.aspx>

From Jan 2024, it is our aim to carbon label all quotes and itineraries, so clients can see the difference between itineraries and also compare the GHG emissions between flying direct and in-direct.

### **Overseas Operations**

For our overseas operations, our transport policy covers all transport included as part of an itinerary confirmed by STC Expeditions. As a school group tour operator, we do not allow our clients to book their own transport locally.

All overseas transport is subcontracted to our in-country partners. The contract covers areas such as:

- Transport services must meet minimum legal, quality, safety and emissions requirements.
- Driver code of conducts stipulate maximum daily and weekly driving hours and include a no driving whilst using a mobile phone rule or under the influence or drink or drugs.

We will work with our in-country suppliers to actively develop itineraries that:

- Reduce road miles to a minimum
- Increase the amount of human-powered transport in our itineraries
- Make sensible use of time, direction and the itinerary so as to avoid unnecessary journeys.
- Avoid internal flights wherever possible. The decision as to whether to use internal flights will be based on the following parameters:
  - Time available for the journey
  - Suitable alternative options by road, rail or boat

An individual decision on each potential internal flight is therefore required, but it is noted that trains, boats and coaches generally offer greater comfort and the opportunity to make the journey

itself part of the experience, whilst also significantly lowering GHG emissions compared with air travel. Therefore, wherever possible, our preferred choice is to avoid internal flights.

## UK Operations

We commit to practice environmental protection and enhance community and social relations through the following practices:

- Actively reduce the company's use of disposable and consumer goods
- Favour the purchase of sustainable goods and services, office and catering supply, giveaways and merchandise. We will do this by:
  - Purchase products in bulk, to reduce the amount of packaging and transport required;
  - Provide only Fairtrade tea and coffee for the office
  - Provide only Fairtrade STC branded t-shirts for our students, teachers and staff that are printed using water based inks.
  - Buying sustainable gifts for clients (e.g. Fairtrade chocolate, locally hand-made soap or similar).
- Cleaning materials will be non-hazardous, biodegradable and certified with an eco-label.
- In-house printing will:
  - use 100% FSC certified recycled paper.
  - be done double-sided
  - have toner cartridges recycled.
- Externally sourced printing will:
  - Be done on 100% FSC certified recycled paper
  - Be printed by companies with ISO 14001 Certification
- Actively print less and send fewer brochures, using pdf versions via email where possible;
- Have an active commitment to measure, monitor and reduce energy consumption;
- Calculate and compensate CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and compare different periods
- Use only renewable energy and energy efficient lighting for our office
- Switch off lights and equipment when not in use
- Prefer low energy equipment when buying new items, including considerations of cost and quality;
- Have an active policy to reduce water consumption, implemented and monitored on a monthly or yearly basis for benchmark purposes.
- Install water saving equipment in toilets, re-use waste water and/or collected rainwater (where possible given rented office space)
- Comply with the national legislation concerning waste disposal;
- Encourage all staff to actively reduce single use plastic;
- Separate all materials which can be recycled and organise proper disposal of recyclable and non-recyclable waste;
- Measure and reduce staff related travel and use more sustainable modes of transport. Calculate transport emissions, with the aim to reduce by remote working, video meetings, work-at-home policies or other means;
- Provide guidance, training and/or information to all staff, about their roles and responsibilities with respect to these policies.

Also refer to the following separate policies for additional details:

- [Carbon Action Plan](#)

## Overseas Operations

At the very heart of STC Expeditions is a belief that travel can be a positive force for good – both culturally and economically. We strive to connect our clients with the people they meet, nurture the cultures they experience and protect the beautiful environments they are lucky enough to explore.

The sustainable operation and delivery of our overseas tour and expedition programme is critical for the reputation, longevity and success of the company. We are committed to consistently improving our operations and reducing the negative impacts of our business.

Please refer to the following separate policies for more details:

- [Responsible Tourism Policy](#) – this governs how we work with our in-country partners and how we aim to make our tours and expeditions more sustainable and ethical.
- [Carbon Action Plan](#)

## Contact

We don't pretend to get everything right, or know all the answers, so if you can help us in our journey, then please get in touch. We are committed to doing all we can to improve our sustainability.



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# Responsible Tourism: Our Journey

Sustainable and ethical travel doesn't just happen. It requires vision and commitment. We're pleased with our achievements so far, including many industry 'firsts', but there is still so much more to do.



## START HERE

2006

### 50:50 Carbon Offset Scheme

- To encourage our clients to offset their emissions, we offer to pay 50% of the offset cost, if the client pays the other 50%

2013

### 100% Local Leaders

- All STC tours and expeditions from this point on to be led by an in-country expedition/tour leader. There's nothing quite like being led by a local

2014

### Fairtrade Tours to Ghana

- Launch first tours visiting Fairtrade initiatives in Ghana, including the Kuapa Kokoo Chocolate co-operatives
- Launch 'A Woman's Perspective' tours, aimed at the girls' school market
- Introduce 'No Orphanage Visits' policy



2017

### Stop selling Iceland

- Stop selling Iceland due to concerns regarding overtourism
- No elephant riding pledge
- Join World Animal Protection and introduce animal welfare policy



2016

### Travelife - begin external verification of sustainability policies

- Travelife Partner status achieved
- Join Tourism Concern's 'Ethical Tour Operators Group'
- Partner with Days for Girls - a charity advancing menstrual equity, health, dignity and opportunity for girls and women around the world
- Take TAP (Travellers Against Plastic) Pledge to reduce plastic on our trips
- All office printing and marketing materials now printed on 100% recycled paper



2015

### 100% Carbon Offset

- 100% Carbon Offset of all flights through the charity Friends of Conservation, investing in carbon positive schemes in India, Kenya and Peru
- Introduce Responsible Tourism workshops for our in-country partners, leaders & schools



2018

### Travelife Certified, 100% renewable energy, hybrid cars and more

- Become Travelife Certified, the first company in the UK to do so, fulfilling more than 200 sustainability criteria and best practices across operations, office, supply chain management and more. Certification includes achieving ISO14001, ISO26000 and Global Sustainable Tourism Council Criteria
- Join Exeter's 'Co-Cars' so all business journeys are now done by either train or hybrid car
- Only Fairtrade tea and coffee used in the office. All client t-shirts are now produced with Fairtrade cotton and printed using environmentally sustainable water based inks



2019

### Trees for Life and beach cleans

- Enter Corporate Partnership with Trees for Life, committing to plant 1 tree for each passenger who travels with us
- First annual company beach clean
- Fairtrade trip portfolio expanded to include India, Peru and Ghana
- Introduce minimum 6 day trip length to 'maximise' the educational value for the carbon emitted by the flights



2020

### 4 day working week, declare a climate emergency

- Introduce 4 day working week - asking STC Staff to volunteer one day a month for a cause of their choosing
- Become members of Scottish Fairtrade Forum
- Declare Climate Emergency as part of 'Tourism Declares'
- Publish Carbon Action Plan
- Launch ultra-low carbon UK expeditions: "The Bioasis"

