



ETHICAL
SCHOOL
ADVENTURES
SINCE 2006

Carbon Action Plan

29 April 2020



Introduction

On 16th January 2020, STC Expeditions joined the Tourism Declares movement <https://www.tourismdeclares.com> and declared a Climate Emergency.

You can read our Declaration statement here: <https://www.thestc.co.uk/travel/tourism-declares/>

Since then, we have been working on this, our **Carbon Action Plan**. This plan will look at our whole business; identifying both our current carbon usage and ways and means to implement meaningful carbon reductions across our operations.

Transparency

Each year, we will publicly report on the progress of our Carbon Action Plan and the successes and failures in our approach. This is important so we, and others in the industry, can learn from our mistakes.

Timescale

Before the end of 2020, we will have completed the measurement of our current carbon emissions, along with a wholesale analysis of our UK and overseas itineraries/operations. We also hope to be making good progress on constructive ways to redesign our itineraries and implement carbon reductions into our business.

We have already started some of this work, for example:

- Conducting initial analysis into quantifying our UK operational emissions.
- Engaging our In-Country Partners in our Carbon Action Plan (see below)
- Making conscious choices on itinerary design where easily implementable - e.g. replacing internal flights in new itineraries with train/bus travel where possible.

Engagement, debate and discussion

We welcome engagement, debate and discussion from inside and outside our industry on our Carbon Action Plan. We are very conscious we are in an industry which has a significant carbon footprint. But we are also in an industry which has the potential to make significant positive contributions to hard to reach, remote areas of the world, where local communities and environments can benefit greatly from positive, responsible tourism that brings investment and economic independence.

STC Expeditions is a small, specialist educational travel company. We currently take away between 600 and 700 passengers a year. Responsible and ethical travel is a cornerstone of our business, but whilst we try really hard to make good decisions, we are also limited by our resources – both time and economic.

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 reduce our carbon footprint and making our small corner of the travel industry a better place.



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Measuring

Following consultation with STC Expeditions' UK staff, we have identified areas where the company currently emits carbon. We have split emissions into two areas – our UK Office & Operations, and our Overseas Operations.

Sources of Carbon Emissions from UK Operations

To calculate our carbon emissions from travel within the UK, we have used this calculator:

<https://calculator.carbonfootprint.com>

-) **Travelling to/from home/work.** All but one of our employees either walk or cycle to work. The remaining staff member travels on average 64 miles a day by car (sole use). The feasibility of using public transport and/or working from home for this person is currently limited.

Car Type	Miles	CO ₂ rate g/km	Total CO ₂
Petrol (small, own car)	16,256	125.07	4.02 tonnes

-) **UK travel for STC Staff visiting clients**

- **Trains** – used wherever possible, depending on location of schools and time of meetings. In 9 months in 2019 (only data available) STC staff averaged a total of 500 miles travelled by train each month. Annual extrapolated total is 6,000 miles.

Travel Type	Miles	CO ₂ rate g/km	Total CO ₂
Train	6,000	46.00	0.4 tonnes

- **Car use** – STC staff drove 18,745 miles in the UK in the course of work from 1st February 2019 to 31st January 2020. We are members of Exeter Co-Cars and predominantly use hybrid cars if driving to visit clients, but not exclusively.
- **Taxis** – very limited use. Perhaps 20 journeys a year of less than 5 miles each time.

Car Type	Miles	CO ₂ rate g/km	Total CO ₂
Hybrid (Medium, Co-Cars)	4671	88.65	0.82 tonnes
Hybrid (Large, Co-Cars)	3503	107.22	0.74 tonnes
Hybrid (Large, Own Car)	3413	107.22	0.72 tonnes
Petrol (Co-Cars)	784	147.12	0.23 tonnes
Diesel (Own Car)	6274	138.82	1.72 tonnes
Taxi (average car CO ₂ used)	100	144.00	0.03 tonnes
Total	18,745	-	4.26 tonnes

-) **Office consumables**, including the transport of and production of items such as toner, coffee, paper for printing, etc.
- All printer paper is currently 100% recycled FSC certified.
 - Used paper is recycled
 - Coffee and Tea is Fairtrade, bought in bulk. Cups/mugs are reusable.
-) **Energy:** STC Expeditions has been using 100% renewable electricity in our office since summer 2018, so everyday computer usage, lighting, heating is effectively carbon zero.

Sources of Carbon Emissions from Overseas Operations:

STC Expeditions run adventurous educational tours and expeditions in over 25 destinations around the world, ranging from 6 day religious studies tours in Israel to multiday trekking expeditions in the Himalaya of up to 28 days.

-) **Consumables** provided by STC Expeditions:
 - o Includes the production and transport of items such as Medicine packs, Travel Survival Guides, client t-shirts, plastic luggage labels, Student Emergency Cards, Teacher Travel Packs.
-) **International Flights from the UK** to get our groups to their destination.
-) **Transport**
 - o Of clients to UK airport (although this is arranged by the client themselves)
 - o Within destination, including internal flight, bus, 4x4, boat, train, and human powered options depending on itinerary.
-) **Food consumption:** production and cooking
-) **Accommodation:** Heating, lighting, device charging
-) **Project / Volunteer work**– many groups get involved in some form of project work. These often involve building and / or renovation work that uses concrete or paint.
-) **STC Staff trips:** On average we conduct between three to six destination & trip recces each year, typically involving international flights and around a week in the destination delivering STC Leader training courses and assessing accommodation, activities and developing new itineraries.

For our overseas operations, we plan to use the **Travelife CARMACAL system** to analyse the carbon emissions for each trip. CARMACAL allows tour operators and other businesses to measure the complete and detailed carbon footprint of their tour packages, enabling the integration of carbon management into their daily operations.

The majority of our tours and expeditions are bespoke and the number of trips and the spread of destinations we operate in varies from year to year. Therefore, measuring one year's emissions against another will not be an exact science. However, by looking at comparisons of our previous approach and new adjusted itineraries, as well as revised standard operating procedures, we hope to gain, at least, some insight into the impact of our Carbon Plan.



Carbon Reduction and Implementation of Change

Following identification of the sources of our carbon emissions above, the team at STC Expeditions has made initial progress on analysing each of the above areas to find ways in which we can potentially reduce carbon emissions.

Reducing emissions from UK operations

- J **Travelling to/from home/work.** In January 2020 STC Expeditions introduced a 4 day working week trial. This is currently on hold due to the Coronavirus pandemic, but it is hoped to be able to re-institute this later in the year. For the one staff member who drives to work, driving 4 rather than 5 days a week will reduce carbon produced from travelling to/from home/work by 20%. **CO₂ Saving approximately: 0.8 tonnes per year.**
- J **UK travel for STC Staff visiting clients:** Working exclusively with schools, the majority of our UK Operation emissions come from visiting teachers, students and parents at school premises around the country. Changing some of these meetings and training sessions to web meetings and moving to on-line courses instead of workshops, will help to reduce our need for travel around the UK. There is a careful balance to be struck here between potential reduced engagement in on-line courses and the need to maintain the delivery of important safety information. Where we cannot reduce our need to travel, the following are ways to reduce our carbon emissions.
 - o **Train use** – no changes possible within our control.
 - o **Car use** – Switch non hybrid own-car use to hybrid Co-Car (average size @ 93.35 g/km rate) **CO₂ Saving approximately: 0.56 tonnes per year.**
 - o **Replacing Car journeys with Rail:** Replacing 10% of our car journeys with rail would result in:
 - saving on car related carbon of approximate 0.426 tonnes
 - increase in train related carbon of approximately 0.12 tonnes
 - **Total CO₂ Saving approximately: 0.306 tonnes per year.**
 - o **Taxis** – no changes possible within our control. Increased use of trains for long journeys instead of car may result in more taxis being used to complete the final few miles of a journey.
- J **Office consumables:**
 - o Introduce used paper sorting system in office to distinguish between paper suitable for notes & printing 'in-house' documents such as invoices or memos.
 - o Order coffee more locally – perhaps from the Devon Coffee Company.
- J **Energy:** No change identified



Reducing emissions from Overseas Operations:

Emissions from individual trips varies enormously depending on the group size involved, the destination and the nature of the trip (e.g. short haul destination vs long haul, educational tour vs trekking itinerary).

In-Country Partnerships (ICPs)

In every destination where we operate, STC Expeditions use a full time In-Country Partner to assist in the delivery of all travel arrangements. In many cases, we have been working with the same companies for 10 years or more.

Engagement

Critical to the overall success of our Carbon Action Plan is to engage with and encouraging our overseas partners to support us in our vision for lower carbon operations.

To do this, we will be using the initial ideas generated from STC UK staff to create a carbon engagement questionnaire that will be sent to our in-country partners in more than 25 destinations around the world.

This questionnaire will aim to:

-) Encourage our In-country Partners to sign up to the Tourism Declares campaign
-) Get them to analyse and reduce their own emissions
-) Identify the scope of current STC operations and carbon emissions and the ability of our partners to make meaningful changes in order to reduce the carbon emissions from our trips.
-) Opportunities to redesign itineraries to be inherently lower carbon by nature.

STC Expeditions do not have exclusive partnerships with these companies. A hopeful by-product of this engagement and questionnaire will mean other UK and foreign tour companies which use the same in-country partner may also benefit from this analysis.

Carbon reduction - Initial ideas

STC UK Staff have identified the following ways in which carbon reductions can be made. We anticipate some of these being easy to implement, some more difficult. Some may not be practical to implement at all and some may not be feasible now, but maybe feasible in the future (and vice versa).

-) **Limit the destinations we travel to.** This has various advantages, including:
 - o We don't need to do so many ICP visits and leader training courses.
 - o We can focus on helping those ICPs we do work with to lower their/our carbon emissions.
 - o We focus on a smaller number of well designed, low carbon, compact itineraries
 - o Analyse our spread of destinations and stop-sell those that tick multiple boxes that:
 - we don't sell very often
 - and are long haul
 - and you can get a similar destination experience in another place that is closer to the UK.
-) **Increase low carbon choices** to clients by:
 - o Increasing breadth of European trips by train.
 - o Increase our UK/Ireland adventure programme by establishing new innovative products.
-) **Consumables** provided by STC Expeditions:
 - o Increase the re-use and recycling of some items (e.g. manuals and other elements of our teacher travel packs)



) **International Flights:**

- **Fly direct** rather than indirect where there is a choice.
- **Offer two quote comparisons:** One based on indirect, one on direct flights and show the cost & carbon differences between the two.
- **Restrict our destinations** to only those serviced by direct flights.
- **Choose international airlines** with modern aircraft and good fuel efficiency
- **Increase the minimum length of trips.** In 2019, we removed all 5 day international trips from our programme and implemented a minimum 6 day trip length. Although this doesn't reduce the carbon produced from the international flight, it does increase the educational possibilities and value for money from the carbon produced from those same flights.
- **Limit hold luggage** to 15kg on all our trips, no matter what the allowance from the airline. (On a group of 24 pax, the difference between everyone taking 23kg and everyone 15 kg is 168kg, or equivalent of between two and three average people). Saving weight saves airline fuel usage.

) **Transport**

- **Of clients to UK airport:**
 - Provide a voucher for groups travelling to UK airport by public transport.
 - Arrange group discounts with Trainline / Megabus / Train Company for schools to use.
 - Signpost teachers to car share schemes for airport collection & drop off.
- **Within destination:** transport used on our itineraries varies widely and includes private buses, mini-buses, 4x4s, rickshaws, trains, bikes, boats, ferries and internal flights.
 - **Redesign itineraries** so we:
 -) travel less distance when in country i.e. create more compact itineraries.
 -) maximise human (or renewable) powered transport options such as sailing, trekking, cycling, rafting and kayaking.
 - Use **electric vehicles** if/where possible.
 - **Increase train travel.**
 - **Remove internal flights** from all itineraries (e.g. in Vietnam or China, increase the length of the trip and use trains instead.)
 - **Stop-sell certain destinations** which are inherently high carbon in nature (e.g. Namibia where we can't fly direct, it is long haul and itineraries naturally include high road mileage)

) **Food consumption:**

- Encourage use of and investment in sustainable/fuel efficient cooking systems.
- Provide more vegetarian food by reducing frequency of meat-based meals on our itineraries.
- Encourage ICPs to source food local to the accommodation / camp.
- Reduce food waste
- Choose group meal locations in restaurants that use renewable electricity

) **Accommodation:**

- Encourage accommodation providers to sign up to the Travelife accommodation certification programme.
- Choose accommodation based on the ability to provide heating, lighting, device charging from renewable electricity

) **Project / volunteer work:** update our project guidelines so that our student volunteer projects:

- Avoid high carbon emission activities (e.g. concreting, painting etc)
- Promote alternative building technologies (e.g. hessian sandbag building technology)
- Use local resources rather than shipping in supplies from a long way away
- Have a positive carbon impact (e.g. reforestation, change of land usage practices, establish vegetable gardens for local schools, development of carbon sinks)

- Accommodation for the time at a project is on site, so we don't have to transport groups to/from site by bus.
- Educate local people into ways to reduce their carbon emissions
- Put project costs towards established programmes (e.g. Friends of Conservation Solar Light Project in the Maasai Mara). The project then becomes more about learning about the issues and impact the project has rather than students getting involved in a potentially short term 'feel good fix'.

) **STC Staff trips:** Operational safety management is a top priority for STC Expeditions and so some overseas staff visits are essential. However, there is scope for:

- **Developing on-line courses and assessment** for our leaders and in-country operations staff.
- **Increased use of top-up training** by zoom/web meetings.



Education

Educating teachers and students on to how to reduce their carbon emissions whilst travelling is a natural extension to our existing Responsible Tourism policy.

-) **Encouraging our clients to fly less.**
 - o Since September 2019, we have been including a section in our student/parents' information evenings about the need for us all to fly less. We do this by discussing the choices we all have, ways to reduce the number of flights we take and the need to get more 'value' for our carbon that we do emit.
 - o We will continue to look for new ways to expand this message.
-) **Expand our 'Travel Survival and Responsible Tourism Guide'** to include tips for teachers and students on how to reduce their carbon emissions whilst travelling. Examples include:
 - o Shorter hot showers
 - o Turning lights off
 - o Reducing meat intake
 - o Travelling light
 - o Limit use of phones so avoiding the need for constant recharging
-) **Develop an e-learning course** focused on responsible and sustainable travel for school groups.
-) **Top Tip** in every newsletter about ways to reduce your carbon emissions (at home and abroad)
-) **Kit lists:** Encourage groups to buy recycled clothing or from charity shops rather than 'fast fashion'.
-) **Introduce a carbon rating system** for our itineraries based on the trip's emissions. This would probably have to be based on an average group size, at least initially. This could be similar to the food 'traffic light' labelling system, or a specific carbon emission figure.

Supporting conservation & carbon reduction projects

STC Expeditions currently includes compulsory donations to two Re-Wilding and Carbon/Conservation orientated charities. The donation amounts are built into the cost of our trips and so are passed on to our clients. These are:

-) **Friends of Conservation:** <https://www.foc-uk.com> – donation amount is based on a length of flight 'zoning' system. Details available on their website. For information on the carbon reduction projects we have supported through FoC please see this blog post: <https://www.thestc.co.uk/blog/offsetting-mitigation-and-sustainable-travel/>
-) **Trees for Life:** <https://treesforlife.org.uk> – donation is a flat fee per person based on the cost to plant one tree for each traveller.

Since 2016, we have donated £19,141 to Friends of Conservation.

Since 2019, we have donated £4,250 (750 trees for clients + Corporate donation) to Trees for Life.

We will continue to monitor these programmes and ensure they are delivering value for money for our clients in relation to our carbon reduction goals.

Campaigning

Since 2006 STC Expeditions has been a vocal campaigner on a range of ethical travel issues including using local in-country tour leaders, orphanage tourism, elephant tourism, fair treatment of porters and meaningful volunteer project work.

As part of our Carbon Action Plan, we commit to continuing our campaigning record to encourage change in the industry through:

-) Campaigning for frequent flyer taxes
-) Campaigning for aviation fuel tax
-) Campaigning for investing in and training of local tour and expedition leaders, preventing the need for UK based leaders to fly out with the group.

Contact

If you would like further information about this Carbon Action Plan, or our wider approach to responsible and sustainable tourism, please don't hesitate to contact us.

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