

# Policy and Sustainability Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 12 March 2024

## Carbon impact of international travel

Executive/routine

Wards

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### 1. Recommendations

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It is recommended that the Policy and Sustainability Committee:

- 1.1 Note the emissions associated with flights and trains booked by the Council, as well as current measures to limit flights.
- 1.2 Note that overall emissions from rail and air travel in 2022/23 are 76% lower than pre-pandemic (2019/20) levels, but have more than doubled compared to the previous year (2021/22)

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## Carbon impact of international travel

### 2. Executive Summary

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- 2.1 This report presents the emissions associated with flights and trains booked by the Council for the financial year 2022/23.

### 3. Background

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- 3.1 Previously it was agreed that officers would report annually to Policy & Sustainability Committee on the overall carbon impact of the Council's international travel. This is the second year this report has been developed.

### 4. Main report

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#### Business travel emissions monitoring

- 4.1 Emissions from air and rail travel have been monitored since 2020 and are included in the Council's public bodies climate change duty report (PBCCD) which was considered by the October 2023 Policy and Sustainability Committee.
- 4.2 This report covers analysis between 2018/19 and 2022/23. Travel data is provided by TravelCTM, the Council's travel provider. It is possible flights have been booked via other means and are therefore not reflected in the figures. Trips by the Lord Provost Office are monitored separately as they are generally booked via externally funded partners but have been included in the totals.
- 4.3 Business travel accounted for around 3% of the Council's carbon footprint before the pandemic (2019/20). This reduced to around 1% for the past three financial years (2020/21 to 2022/23), due to an increase in virtual meetings. Business travel includes grey fleet mileage, taxi use, trains and flights. However, it does not include emissions from employees' commuting to work due to the difficulty in collecting data<sup>1</sup>.

#### Importance of reducing travel emissions

- 4.4 Business travel represents a relatively small share of the Council's total footprint as explained in paragraph 4.3; however, flights can be significant when related to the employee's individual carbon footprint. By way of illustration, a flight from Edinburgh to New York emits about 2 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e, which is also the target carbon footprint

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<sup>1</sup> Emissions from commuting are captured under the city-wide transport emissions.

individuals would need to achieve by 2050 to limit global temperature rise to 2 °C. In other words, a single flight can use up an individual’s entire annual carbon budget.

4.5 It is estimated that globally, one in four trips are for business (the rest being leisure trips). Therefore, taking measures to limit business flights helps shaping a culture of virtual meetings. Not only does it contribute to reduce business flights, but it might also influence employees in their personal choices and reduce leisure flights too.

### Business travel figures

4.6 Figure 1 shows the evolution of rail and air travel emissions between 2018/19 and 2022/23. The pandemic has led to a sharp drop in business travel emissions, with a 98% cut between 2019/20 and 2020/21.

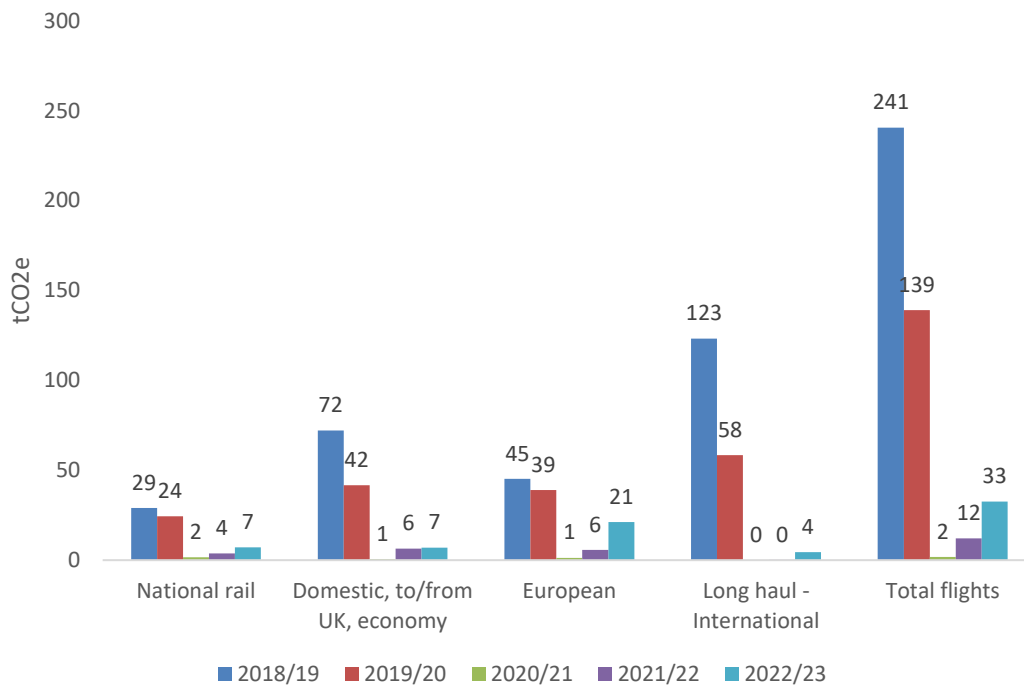


Figure 1: Evolution of business travel emissions

4.7 As it can be seen on Figure 1, total air travel related emissions amounted to 33<sup>2</sup> tonnes of CO<sub>2e</sub> in 2022/23, with about a fifth coming from domestic flights. 2022/23 emissions have more than doubled compared to the previous financial year (12 tonnes of CO<sub>2e</sub>, with the first long haul flights recorded since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic. They are still well below 2018/19 levels (241 tonnes of CO<sub>2e</sub>).

4.8 In 2018/19, more than 500 bookings were made, which reduced to 312 in 2019/20 for about 150 unique passengers. One third of the air travel bookings in 2019/20 were to London as an end destination (from Edinburgh or Glasgow).

<sup>2</sup> Note – it was previously reported that air travel emissions amounted to 29 tonnes of CO<sub>2e</sub>. This figure was edited due to an error in the number of passengers on one trip. The number of passengers has been corrected, which has increased total emissions associated with this journey. This will be updated in the future Public Bodies Climate Change Duties Report and Council Emissions Reduction Plan.

- 4.9 In 2022/23, 106 bookings were made for 175 flights (if there is a connection, one single booking can correspond to multiple flights). That's three times the number of passengers compared to the previous year.
- 4.10 Of the 175 flights, 60 flights - corresponding to 38 trips - were booked for domestic travel<sup>3</sup>. Of these 38 trips, 25 were trips to London or Birmingham as an end destination. The purpose of these trips were:
- 4.10.1 Conference attendance (11 trips)
  - 4.10.2 Operational activity or site visit (8 trips)
  - 4.10.3 Meeting with external bodies (5 trips)
  - 4.10.4 Internal meeting (1 trip)
- 4.11 London and Birmingham are both accessible by train from Edinburgh in under 4 hours and 30 minutes with a direct connection. Therefore these 25 trips do not comply with the revised Council business travel guidance, approved in September 2022, which does not allow air travel when a direct rail connection is available. Officers who have made these trips have now been reminded of the policy to avoid this from happening in the future.
- 4.12 However, it should be noted that the majority of trips to London or Birmingham were still made by train (91 trips). 41% of these trips were related to conferences, 21% to a special project, 14 % to meetings with external bodies, 10% to operational activity, 8% to trainings, 5% to interviews/assessments, and 1% to emergency/disaster support.
- 4.13 Another 41 flights were European flights, and the rest were international flights (10 international flights for 2 trips, one from Seattle, USA, and one to Yerevan, Armenia).
- 4.14 The business travel guidance states that all flight tickets must be Economy class or equivalent. In 2022/23, all international flights booked were economy class.
- 4.15 Figure 1 also shows that although train trips are increasing, they are still well below pre-pandemic levels. All train trips in 2022/23 were domestic trips.
- 4.16 In summary, international trips in 2022/23 represented:
- 39,942 miles travelled
  - 22 tonnes of CO<sub>2e</sub>
  - £20k

### **International travel form**

- 4.17 The revised business travel guidance states that travel outside the UK is only allowed in exceptional circumstances and pre-approval is required from the Policy & Sustainability Committee. All requests should be submitted through Committee Services outlining the costs, the benefits to the Council of the travel and, where air travel is being requested, confirmation that other more sustainable forms of transport have been considered. This should be done by completing the international travel form

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<sup>3</sup> Domestic flights are flights where the departure and the arrival take place within the UK's boundary.

which has been updated following feedback from Policy & Sustainability Committee in August 2023.

- 4.18 Examples of completed travel approval forms approved by Committee can be found in section 10.
- 4.19 This report only presents data for year 2022/23, therefore all trips shown in Table 1 were prior to the implementation of the new approval form.

#### **Data limitations**

- 4.20 The data presented was provided by TravelCTM and the Lord Provost office. It is possible flights have been booked via other means and are therefore not reflected in the figures.
- 4.21 Several errors have been found in the raw dataset (e.g. flights recorded as first class instead of economy, incorrect number of passengers or inaccurate distance travelled). These errors have been corrected manually, but some may have gone undetected, due to the high volume of bookings. In 2024, TravelCTM have launched a new MI reporting<sup>4</sup> platform, Data Hub, which should improve data quality in the future.

### **5. Next Steps**

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- 5.1 Emission from international travel will continue to be reported annually as part of the statutory Public Bodies Climate Change Duties Report.

### **6. Financial impact**

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- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications as this report is only for noting.

### **7. Equality and Poverty Impact**

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- 7.1 There are no equality and poverty impacts arising from this report.

### **8. Climate and Nature Emergency Implications**

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- 8.1 Limiting flights is in line with the Council's net zero ambition.

### **9. Risk, policy, compliance, governance and community impact**

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- 9.1 There are no risk, policy, compliance, governance and community impacts arising from this report.

### **10. Background reading/external references**

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- 10.1 [Council business travel guidance](#)
- 10.2 [International Travel 2023/24 - Place \(prior to implementation of new form\)](#)
- 10.3 [International Travel and Member Guidance \(Appendix 4 includes completed forms\)](#)

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<sup>4</sup> A management information (MI) reporting platform is a tool that allows to tidy up and analyse vast amounts of data in real time to support improved decision making.

## 11. Appendices

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### 11.1 International travel bookings 2022-23 (Table 1)

Table 1: International travel bookings 2022-23. Note this only include flights as there were no international train bookings

Travel Date	Itinerary Details	Class	Fare Paid + Tax	Passengers	Mileage	kgCO2e	Travel reason	Department	Flight Type
12/06/2022	Edinburgh - Copenhagen	Business	£359	2	622	453	INTERNAL MEETING	Place (Development & Regeneration)	European
10/09/2022	Glasgow - Amsterdam - Paris - Yerevan - Paris - Amsterdam - Glasgow	Economy	£870	1	5,624	1,933	MEETING WITH EXTERNAL BODIES	Place (Culture & Wellbeing)	International
27/09/2022	Glasgow - Paris	Economy	£67	1	561	136	CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE	Place (Culture & Wellbeing)	European
28/09/2022	Glasgow - Amsterdam - Paris - Amsterdam - Glasgow	Economy	£286	1	1,390	330	MEETING	Place (Culture & Wellbeing)	European
03/10/2022	Edinburgh - Helsinki	Economy	£252	1	1,067	259	CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE	Place (Culture & Wellbeing)	European
04/10/2022	Edinburgh - Amsterdam - Helsinki - Paris - Edinburgh	Economy	£410	1	3,079	1,005	CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE	Place (Placemaking & Mobility)	European
07/10/2022	Helsinki - Paris - Edinburgh	Economy	£318	1	1,719	1,199	CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE	Place (Culture & Wellbeing)	European
09/10/2022	Edinburgh - Paris - Edinburgh	Economy	£3,887	14	15,316	3,722	SITE VISIT (School trip)	Children, Education & Justice Services (Castlebrae High)	European
09/10/2022	Edinburgh - Copenhagen - Edinburgh	Economy	£142	1	1,244	302	REMOTE WORKER	Children, Education & Justice Services (Children & Justice Services)	European

10/10/2022	Glasgow - Amsterdam - London Heathrow - Glasgow	Economy	£528	2	1,007	407	MEETING WITH EXTERNAL BODIES	Place (Culture & Wellbeing)	European
11/10/2022	Glasgow - Amsterdam - Glasgow	Economy	£154	1	896	218	MEETING WITH EXTERNAL BODIES	Place (Culture & Wellbeing)	European
15/10/2022	Edinburgh - Nice - Edinburgh	Economy	£6,557	12	1,938	5,652	ATTENDING TRAINING	Children, Education & Justice Services (Castleview Primary)	European
03/12/2022	Edinburgh - Charleroi - Edinburgh	Economy	£106	1	1,000	243	MEETING WITH EXTERNAL BODIES	Children, Education & Justice Services (Flora Stevenson Primary)	European
05/12/2022	Glasgow - Charleroi	Economy	£35	1	527	128	MEETING WITH EXTERNAL BODIES	Place (Culture & Wellbeing)	European
05/12/2022	Edinburgh - Charleroi - Edinburgh	Economy	£124	1	1,000	243	MEETING WITH EXTERNAL BODIES	Children, Education & Justice Services (Children, Education & Justice Services)	European
09/02/2023	Edinburgh - Frankfurt - Hanover - Frankfurt - Edinburgh	Economy	£2,963	5	1,634	1,956	TRAVEL FOR FAMILIES – Respite care within the extended family	Children, Education & Justice Services (Children's Disability Team)	European
27/02/2023	Seattle - London Heathrow - Edinburgh - London Heathrow - Seattle	Economy	£781	1	10,250	2,544	CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE	Children, Education & Justice Services (Libraries)	International



01/03/2023	Dublin - Edinburgh - Dublin	Economy	£278	2	418	203	MEETING	Children, Education & Justice Services (Libraries)	European
01/03/2023	Frankfurt - Edinburgh - Frankfurt	Economy	£313	1	1,284	312	CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE	Children, Education & Justice Services (Libraries)	European
18/03/2023	Verona - Edinburgh	Economy	£478	12	954	2,782	School Trip	Children, Education & Justice Services (Castlebrae High)	European
22/04/2023*	Edinburgh - Barcelona - Edinburgh	Economy	£138	1	2,082	506	CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE	Place (Culture & Wellbeing)	European
21/05/2023*	Glasgow - Dublin	Economy	£345	5	184	224	OPERATIONAL ACTIVITY	Children, Education & Justice Services (St Ninians Primary)	European
21/05/2023*	Glasgow - Dublin - Glasgow	Economy	£790	10	368	894	OPERATIONAL ACTIVITY	Children, Education & Justice Services (St Ninians Primary)	European
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>£20,180</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>54,164</b>	<b>25,652</b>			

\*These trips were taken in 2023/24 however the invoice date was in 2022/23.