

## Campaign Strategy Survey of NGO Air Travel and Carbon Accounting

Chris Rose [mail@tochrisrose.idps.co.uk](mailto:mail@tochrisrose.idps.co.uk) [www.campaignstrategy.org](http://www.campaignstrategy.org)

### Introduction

25 organisations were surveyed of which twenty have provided responses:

Action Aid (UK)  
Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF)  
BUND (Bund für Umwelt und Naturschutz Deutschland) (Germany)  
Clean Air-Cool Planet (CA-CP)  
Christian Aid (UK)  
Conservation International (CI)  
David Suzuki Foundation (Canada)  
Friends of the Earth (FoE) (England and Wales)  
Greenpeace International (Netherlands)  
IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature) (Switzerland)  
National Trust (UK)  
Natural Resource Defense Council (NRDC) (US)  
Oxfam (UK)  
Rainforest Action Network (RAN) (US)  
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) (UK)  
Sierra Club (US)  
Swedish Nature Foundation (SNF)  
World Development Movement (WDM)  
World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) International  
WRI [World Resources Institute] (US)

I am very grateful for the time and trouble taken by all those who contributed to this survey. For commentary see *Campaign Strategy Newsletter* 30, and for full text of responses with contacts, see 'Responses To Campaign Strategy NGO Air Travel And Carbon Accounting Survey' at [www.campaignstrategy.org](http://www.campaignstrategy.org). I apologise for any inaccuracies in this summary. Organisations were selected simply on the basis that they were in some way prominent as advocates of action to cut greenhouse gas emissions.

Organisations were contacted, sometimes several times, between October and December 2006. Where responses were very short or notified as incomplete, organisations were reminded that they could add material. Two did not reply at all (UCS Union of Concerned Scientists (US) and NWF National Wildlife Federation (US)), while three others, the NFWI (National Federation of Women's Institutes, UK), EDF (Environmental Defense Fund, US) and UNEP (Kenya), indicated an intention to reply but no reply had been received at the time of going to press. I will try to publish any updates organisations submit, at the website.

## Summary of responses

### **Question one: Does [your organization] have a carbon accounting system (tracking its own greenhouse gas emissions)? If so do you publish the results?**

#### ***Carbon accounting system***

Eleven of the respondents currently run some form of accounting system (Action Aid, ACF, Conservation International, David Suzuki Foundation, FOE, Greenpeace International, IUCN, NRDC, RSPB, WRI and WWF).

Several of these have involved independent external service providers/auditors in the establishment of these systems.

NRDC and WRI report that they use established Protocols to account for their emissions: NRDC uses the California Climate Registry Protocol and WRI follows the GHG Protocol standards in developing its inventory.

#### ***Developing a policy, system and practices***

Several respondents also report that they are currently developing policies, systems and practices to improve/establish their accounting system and to assess their current carbon footprint:

**Action Aid** is contracting external expertise to develop a carbon policy, system and capacity; it expects to have the policy in place by mid-2007 and to implement it during the 2008 fiscal year.

**Christian Aid** is currently involved in an exercise to calculate its carbon footprint, which is nearing completion. Once the 'first cut' is ready, the methodology will be checked by an independent auditor. It will be published.

**National Trust** has a commitment in its strategy to 2010 and beyond to reduce our environmental footprint and are putting measures in place to achieve this. It already has a programme to reduce electricity consumption and will be extending this and looking at the opportunities to contribute through increased renewable energy generation on our properties, improved energy efficiency, management of its land and estate in way that manage its carbon content and addresses the impact of travel by both staff and visitors. It will be establishing management information systems to support this and setting clear targets.

**Oxfam** is working towards having a comprehensive carbon accounting regime.

**RSPB** is in the process of putting in place a more sophisticated CO<sub>2</sub> assessment system which will capture travel, light and heat related emissions across its whole

estate, with a view to setting a carbon budget with a year on year per capita target for reduction. Next year (April 2007 - April 2008) will be its base year – it will then use the budget to manage reductions from 2008

**WDM** is now undertaking an environmental audit of the way it runs our operations.

### ***Offsets***

ACF, Conservation International, CA-CP, IUCN and WWF report that they offset their emissions:

**ACF** offsets through a third party service provider "Climate Friendly" through a combination of accredited energy efficiency savings and renewable energy certificates for new wind and solar energy production.

**Conservation International:** began offsetting 100% of its DC office carbon emissions in FY06. Each year it selects an offset recipient and bills the cost out to CI departments based on their contribution to our overall emissions. The FY06 offset recipient is the Makira Forest Project in Madagascar, a "conservation carbon" project working to bring down the rate of deforestation in one of Madagascar's most biologically important forests

**CA-CP** purchases carbon offsets through Native Energy a for-profit company that is helping to drive construction of new sources of clean, affordable electricity.

**IUCN** 'invests in Kyoto-compliant and socially-responsible offsets in the forest sector'

**WWF** has recently introduced a Network-wide policy on tracking and offsetting greenhouse gas emissions. WWF is a worldwide Network of 55 decentralised offices, and many of these offices have been tracking and offsetting emissions on a local basis. This new policy is the first time that this becomes a requirement for all offices in the WWF Network. This financial year (FY), ending June 2007, is the first year that this policy comes into effect and should be fully implemented by year-end

### ***Publishing***

Currently ACF, WRI and NRDC publish the results.

Action Aid, Christian Aid, Conservation International, David Suzuki Foundation, FOE, and Greenpeace International all report that they intend to publish shortly – many will do so via their Annual Report. RSPB does intend to publish in the future, although has not yet decided the form. Oxfam and the National Trust also intend to publish the consumption and reductions it achieves once it has a carbon accounting system.

WRI has also developed 2 publications intended on how to develop a CO2 inventory and reduce emissions targeted at the NGO and service sectors.

**Question Two: What's [organization] policy on air travel (given the impact on climate) and do you have any targets in this respect?**

Eight respondents have policies and/or reduction targets for air travel and four are currently developing policy/targets. Most have management guidelines aimed at minimizing air travel (see also the responses to question three).

**Action Aid** expects to develop an air travel policy as a part of the carbon accounting policy to put in place by mid- 2007.

**ACF** does not have a formal policy or targets on air travel. However, management encourage all staff to carefully consider the need for air travel and where ever possible seek to group activities together to ensure trips have multiple outcomes

**BUND:** The BUND-assembly decided that its officials shouldn't fly within Germany and the travel habits of officials are checked. Its Board decided that BUND should take part in an eco-audit in 2007 which includes a documentation of environmental impacts of its travels.

**Christian Aid** is currently involved in a process of 'decentralisation' whereby programme staff are increasingly being based in the field rather than in the UK (this is in line with its objective to be close to its partner organizations and programmes, but it also expects a reduction in flights as a result). It notes that flying is an important part of its work and some of the flights its staff take – such as humanitarian flights to disasters – it would defend this and would want to make cuts in its emissions elsewhere in order to allow 'carbon budget' for this purpose. From May 2006 Christian Aid announced its intention to make annual 3 per cent cut in emissions against its baseline year of 2005/6. The actual policy is being negotiated internally. However one agreed principle is that of travel framework governed by the following hierarchy that I have adopted from the waste management hierarchy:

**STEREO:**

Stop

Think

Eliminate - just don't do it – use alternatives

Reduce - cut down your regular trips

Efficiency - make your travel more efficient – ie do more on your trips

when you travel regularly therefore reducing frequency travel. Also switch mode from air to train etc where feasible.

Offset – last resort

**Conservation International** notes that as a global organization with offices, partners, and potential partners all over the world, face-to-face interaction is a central part of CI's success as an organization. However, it is very aware of the environmental impacts of travel and asks staff to be mindful of these impacts.

**CA-CP** is a small regionally focused environmental group, and the geographic locations of its partner campuses, communities and corporations allow it to rely on ground transportation for the majority of its travel.

**David Suzuki Foundation** does not have a specific policy regarding air travel, except to use it as little as possible, and then offset the emissions it does generate (as per above). In the next few months, it will be creating further reduction targets in terms of CO2 from flights. It is currently working on a reduction plan for its electricity use.

**FOE** has a policy stating that staff should not fly if they can make the same journey on land-based public transport within 8 hours from their place of work. In practice some journeys that take longer than this are carried out on public transport. More generally it wants to minimize the use of flights but some business flights are essential to its work in an international arena (for example, attending and lobbying at international climate talks). FOE also has a stringent policy restricting the use of taxis and cars, considering it would be a mistake to ignore car use when considering environmental impacts of travel.

**Greenpeace International** only travels by air when absolutely necessary. It is coming to the end of its first year of detailed travel reporting and is using this data to come up with the most appropriate travel policy. Its target is to reduce greenhouse gas emission from all its activities, not just air travel but also its office and ships.

**National Trust** will be reducing its overall environmental footprint and addressing the role of air travel within this.

**NRDC:** Beginning in 2005, NRDC's senior management group approved a revised travel policy (air, rail, auto) requiring submission of miles traveled on expense reimbursement forms. The miles are tallied by its accounting department and a business travel related greenhouse gas inventory can be calculated. It will include NRDC's business related travel in its carbon offset program for calendar year 2006.

**Oxfam** discourages all non-essential trips and emphasizes the need find alternative means to meet the business need. This is backed up by a system of travel authorisation that needs to be signed off before any air travel is undertaken. Oxfam has set financial targets around the reduction in air travel but these are to be replaced by a carbon measure (to be agreed). It is also running an internal awareness campaign with regular electronic updates.

**RAN** notes that it is usually the "big" NGO by comparison to its grassroots partner groups, so it needs a low-cost widely available technological approach. (See question 3 for more details).

**RSPB** requires that all flights taken by staff are cleared with line management, and there is a strong presumption against internal flights as well as flights to Brussels or Paris; staff are expected to use alternative methods in the UK and the Eurostar to Brussels and Paris, unless there are compelling reasons not to.

Its international work, which involves a number of RSPB staff in capacity building and conservation activities with partners across the world, of necessity involves flying. In these circumstances, it tries to manage these journeys in an efficient way, but recognises in its business planning that face to face contact is sometimes the only way in which it can get the job done.

**Sierra Club** tries to limit its air travel, but since it is such a large, national organization, it is often necessary. (See question 3 for further details on mitigation measures)

**SNF** does not allow domestic air travel (trains are used). No targets have been set but everyone travels to work take by metro, bike or train.

**WDM** is currently developing its formal policy. In the meantime there is an expectation that staff will limit the number of flights in general and within Europe to travel by train if at all possible. As a small NGO it has a financial pressure to reduce travel anyway and most interactions take place by email and phone.

**WRI** staff travel all over the world to meet with partners. However, it is acutely aware of the impact that air travel has on climate change. WRI's overall CO2 reduction goal is to be "net zero" each year. The emission sources included in this goal include air travel.

**WWF International:** The WWF Network agreed in November 2005 to a set of targets concerning reducing air travel and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Using the FY2005 data as a baseline, travel budgets are reduced in FY2007 by 10%, and another 10% per annum over five years total. FY2007 will be the first year with complete emissions tracking. Each office is required to put in place an energy strategy and meet reduction targets.

WWF has guidelines in place recommending reducing the numbers of meetings, reducing the number of participants in meetings, selecting the best location in terms of air travel, using trains for transport wherever possible, and using electronic alternative wherever possible.

**Question Three: Have you found ways to do business while reducing air travel, and if so with what results? (If you'd like to share any successes for others to maybe learn from, please do)**

Almost all respondents have implemented ways to conduct their business while reducing air travel. In summary:

- Minimisation/efficiency monitoring of international meetings and workshops
- Multi-purpose trips
- Flying south-south routes rather than south-north-south routes
- Tele and video-conferencing
- Trains instead of planes whenever possible
- Energy efficient vehicles where cars are the only option
- Intranet, skype, virtual online meetings
- Multi-purpose trips
- Centralised payment of rail fares
- Subsidised public transport costs for staff
- Lift shares/bike parking
- Stream-lined decision making processes to avoid unnecessary meetings

**Action Aid** has been using telephone conferencing for several years and also uses video-conferencing though Action Aid has a system of monitoring international meetings

and workshops to minimise them and make travel and these face to face meetings efficient and effective. Increasingly, when flying, it takes south-south routes instead of south-north-south air travel routes thus cutting the travel time (and thus emission but not necessarily the cost of travel).

It notes this works well mainly in northern developed countries (although it is becoming increasingly reliable for connections in the south too). However, the technology in terms of poor connectivity (and to some extent the high cost of telephone communication) in the poorer southern countries have prevented the practice of video conferencing taking roots or reducing the travel.

**ACF** explains that this has been a real challenge for the organisation. It acknowledges the significant carbon footprint of air travel, but has struggled to find effective alternatives to face to face meetings for much of its work.

**BUND** uses the train and telephone conferencing – it flies very seldom

**CA-CP** relies predominantly on ground transportation. It strongly encourages staff to use public transportation, or the most energy efficient vehicles available and makes use of video/teleconference calls where possible.

**Christian Aid** uses intranet, skype and is looking at video-conferencing etc. Once it has progressed internally it will be able to disclose more information.

**Conservation International** encourages staff to book multi-purpose trips, fly direct, use alternative forms of transportation when available, and to use travel alternatives such as videoconferencing, web-meetings, etc. when feasible. CI's videoconferencing infrastructure is continuing to expand as has staff training in the use of videoconferencing technology. (See full responses for more details).

**Clean Air-Cool Planet** uses video conferencing extensively (including for the members of the Global Brands Working Group - see full responses for details).

**David Suzuki Foundation** has begun to avoid meetings/conferences when air travel is required and instead asking for minutes & conference proceedings instead. It also participates in most meetings via conference call and has recently ordered a new video conferencing system that will allow better interactions with out-of-town colleagues.

**FOE:** All meeting rooms are equipped with conference telephones and the use of these instead of travel is the norm (for example, discussions with international colleagues, and discussions internally with regionally-based staff). FOE is also installing video conferencing facilities.

**Greenpeace International:** GPI has observed a reduction in business travel since it implemented webcams in its meeting rooms to enable in house video conferencing; it analyses its travel figures quarterly and by putting cameras in various rooms from its largest meeting room to its small one-to-one spaces it has given staff the opportunity to have face to face meetings without traveling.

**IUCN** uses videoconferencing and has a staff group 'My Green IUCN' looking at ways to reduce emissions

**National Trust** is open to ideas and suggestions beyond greater use of teleconferencing which is already in place.

**NRDC:** In 2002, NRDC implemented video conferencing in its four main offices (New York, Washington D.C., San Francisco, and Southern California) allowing internal staff to have "face" to "face" communications without having to travel to attend routine meetings. It is expanding this capacity to two of its newest offices, Beijing and Chicago. See full responses for more details.

**Oxfam** has tried with - so far - rather limited success to use video and audio conferencing to alleviate the need to fly. Due to the historically high cost and difficulties in connectivity in many areas of the world in which it works, the implementation of these technologies has been limited. More recently the installation costs have been falling and advances in technology are allowing greater penetration to where Oxfam works around the world. So this is an area where it aims to expand in the near future.

**RAN:** With one exception, staff members work out of one office in San Francisco. One staff person (out of 37) now works remotely in Salt Lake City so RAN is considering options for simple webcam conferencing.

RAN needs to meet with other NGO allies, corporate targets and allies, actions, conferences, support and development of grassroots network groups etc. Some of these functions are more amenable to videoconferencing than others. RAN is already doing a lot of work in these areas through conference calls.

**RSPB:** Rail travel is paid for centrally (rather than through individual cost centres), whilst more polluting forms of travel (air and car) are paid for by individual teams. This innovation provides a good incentive for budget holders to promote rail travel and is having the effect of increasing the proportion of journeys taken by train, albeit by a small margin, each year.

RSPB installed and has been using video link technology in all its regional and country offices for a number of years, and many staff use this as a routine part of communicating with colleagues.

In addition to air travel, some of the journeys its staff make by car are essential to its conservation effort, particularly where research biologists and ecologists need to carry out field work in inaccessible places. In light of this, RSPB has made considerable efforts to reduce as far as possible, car travel - in part through the scheme incentivising rail travel, but also through investment in more fuel efficient fleet cars, and in encouraging more sustainable staff travel to work.

RSPB also provides subsidised bus travel to and from work for staff in the villages surrounding its headquarters, along with a shuttle service to and from the railway station. It supports lift-sharing through the provision of a lift-share database on its intranet system, and by the allocation of specific lift-sharing spaces in its headquarters car-park.

It is investigating more ways in which it can reduce the impact both of car use within the business, and travel to and from work.

**Sierra Club** does try to limit its air travel but since it is such a large, national organization, it is often necessary. On the other hand, employees often utilize tele-conferencing as a substitute for face-to-face meetings

**Swedish Nature Foundation (SNF)**: makes it possible for people to buy emission allowances from the ETS-system and allocate the ETS-allowances from the ETS-system. SNF make sure they are not emitted and the public get a certificate on the amount of allocated allowances.

**SNF** also make use of a video conference system, has bike parking but no parking space for cars (only two for visitors). It limits the number of people attending meetings etc., involving travel.

**WDM**: Still learning. WDM would be interested in sharing other groups' video conferencing facilities.

**WRI** has taken steps to reduce the amount of air travel its employees must undertake. The organization's Washington DC headquarters includes video-conferencing equipment and several staff utilize web-based conferencing also. The office itself is located near to public transport. Staff maximize travel time – eg by arranging multiple meetings to avoid frequent trips.

Despite these efforts, WRI's most significant source of emissions remains air travel. Air travel is a critical activity that WRI must undertake in order to carry out its mission. However, it also recognizes that with air travel there is a corresponding climate impact. WRI meets this responsibility each year by offsetting emissions it has not been able to reduce.

**WWF International** is increasingly using other means of conducting business to reduce air travel. In June 2006 the Network agreed a new streamlined decision-making structure, and closed all previous decision-making committees and bodies, thus eliminating the associated travel.

WWF has been testing several different on-line meeting services and is in the process of negotiating an agreement with an on-line meeting provider. It has conducted on-line meetings with specific expert groups, made up of staff in different countries. These "webinars" allow it to have regular meetings where we can share experiences and materials in a virtual environment, on topics usually discussed and distributed in an annual 2 day meeting.

It has also used its Intranet to conduct interactive discussions, for issues that would normally have been decided in multiple 2-3 day meetings, involving 10-20 participants. By holding these discussions on-line, it saves on the costs of CO2 emissions, travel and meetings costs, and can now benefit from the inclusion of more participants than in the past and a full history of the discussion.

WWF has been using videoconferencing since 1996 and 15 offices have video conference capacity in house while others use local commercial facilities. Increasingly, WWF meetings are taking place via telephone conference and video conference.