

LSE business travel includes carbon offsets

Business travel is mostly not possible for now, but it usually makes for a significant part of LSE's carbon footprint. While staff should actively consider alternatives to travel, the School also wants to mitigate the environmental impacts of essential travel. Thus, air and rail travel booked through our travel supplier (Diversity) now includes carbon offsets.

In 2020 circumstances have drastically reduced business travel and associated carbon emissions. While we hope this is an opportunity for everyone to reconsider the need for travel, we recognise travel can be a necessary part of the School's business, for instance as part of research work.

In previous years, business travel has been a significant part of [LSE's carbon footprint](#), making for 3,618 tonnes of carbon in 2018/19, almost as much carbon emissions as our use of gas for heating buildings across campus that year.

The School wants to mitigate the environmental impacts of essential business travel. This is commonly done through the funding of carbon offsetting projects, which deliver measurable and verifiable carbon emissions reductions.

In line with the results of LSE's sustainability consultation, in 2020/21 academic year LSE started to include carbon offsets costs to air and rail travel bookings made through our travel supplier (Diversity travel).

What changed?

Starting in August 2020, carbon offsets costs are recharged for air and rail travel booked through LSE's travel supplier, Diversity travel. The carbon offsets costs do not appear when booking but are internally recharged periodically by Finance at a later date to the budget code provided for the booking. There are no changes to the booking process, and no action needed from bookers or travellers. While we use an internal recharge for now, we are working with our travel supplier how to include carbon offsets at the point of booking in the future.

What are the financial implications?

In 2020/21 the cost of carbon offsets added to air and rail travel booked through Diversity at LSE are currently £15 per tonne of carbon. The table below provides an example of London to New-York City return flights, for which carbon offsets make for a small increase in cost of under 3%.

Example - Carbon offsets for a London to NYC return flight			
	Average ticket cost	Carbon emissions	Carbon offsets
	Diversity travel	Tonne CO ₂ e	£15/Tonne CO ₂ e
Premium economy Air Travel	£1,350	2.5	£37

Why this change?

LSE is committed to reducing the environmental impact of its operations. In our [sustainability consultation](#), 86% of LSE's community agreed that LSE *should mitigate the impacts of its current carbon emissions using carbon offsets*. Mitigating the carbon impact of necessary travel has also become a requirement linked to many research grants, for example the Wellcome Trust. This change will ensure a simple and consistent approach to carbon offsetting at LSE for business travel.

What carbon offsets will LSE purchase?

LSE will only support high-quality carbon offsetting projects which meet robust certification standards, such as [Gold Standard Voluntary Emissions Reductions](#) certified carbon offsets.

Among the numerous carbon offsets standards available, the Gold Standard stands out as a high-quality option. Gold Standard is an independent, internationally recognized benchmark for carbon offset projects currently supported by 51 NGOs around the world. Gold Standard certified offsets provide robust assurance through third-party verification to ensure they deliver genuine carbon reductions, and provide social co-benefits to the communities it operates in.

You can read more about [carbon offsets in this FAQs](#) produced as part of the sustainability consultation. You can also [contact the Sustainability team](#) for questions.

What about travel booked on travel expenses?

Currently only travel booked through LSE's travel supplier, Diversity travel, will include carbon offsetting. We strongly encourage LSE staff to book business travel through Diversity, for their competitive costs and as it helps the School in supporting the safety of staff when travelling. Booking travel through Diversity travel ensures LSE's business travel carbon emissions are accounted, and now mitigated using high quality carbon offsets.

How do I book travel on Diversity travel?

For the reasons described above, we encourage all staff to book travel and accommodation via LSE's travel supplier, Diversity Travel. Diversity is a specialist academic and charity travel company.

To book you must be set up as an Authorised Booker. To find your local Authorised Bookers, contact your usual administrative support for details. If you require a new authorised booker, please ask your Budget Controller/ Departmental Manager to [contact the procurement team](#) to set you up.

What can I do to reduce the environmental impact of my business travel?

Staff are encouraged to actively consider alternatives to travel to reduce their environmental impacts, and if travel is necessary to consider lower carbon alternatives.

Simple steps to reduce the impact of business travel include:

- Joining meetings remotely (eg [your LSE Zoom account](#) or [Teams](#)).
- Taking public transport instead of taxis.
- Traveling by rail instead of air.
- Flying Economy rather than higher classes.