UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

**SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS TRAVEL WORKING GROUP**

**SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

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| ***Data*** | |
| 1 | A clear communications plan should be developed to promote and embed the institutional expectation that (i) carbon emissions from business travel will not return to pre-pandemic levels, and (ii) alternatives to business travel will be adopted wherever they exist, are viable and/or are being widely adopted elsewhere in the sector e.g. online participation in conferences. |
| 2 | Effective recording systems should be established and maintained to support the collection of accurate data on a range of activities with a carbon footprint. |
| 3 | The twice-yearly publication of data at both institutional and School/Directorate level outlining the carbon footprint associated with business travel and progress towards the achievement of the net zero target should be made widely available across the University. |
| 4 | Schools and Directorates should be invited to consider their contribution towards sustainability and net zero (including how they intend to address business travel) as part of the annual School/Directorate Planning process. |
| 5 | The Sustainable Development Committee should be invited to give consideration to exploring further the implementation and impact of establishing School and individual ‘carbon budgets’ as a means of reducing the University’s business travel carbon footprint (especially if there is insufficient progress towards meeting the net zero target via the implementation of less restricting actions and/or incentives to encourage behaviour change). If taken forward it is recommended that it is done so by means of a pilot scheme to understand the impact of introducing such a scheme. |
| ***Travel Decisions*** | |
| 6 | The University should further develop the physical infrastructure and provision of support to hybrid/online events to embed the Travel Hierarchy principles and associated guidance and ensure that they become a genuinely viable alternative to business travel. |
| 7 | Policies to encourage sustainable business travel should be bespoke to institutional circumstances and consider the specific challenges (and potential opportunities) associated with Aberdeen’s geographical position, key business critical activities and their impact on individuals. |
| 8 | It should become the norm that prior to decisions being reached on business travel, all staff and Line Managers reflect on the Guiding Principles and Travel Hierarchy to reach an informed view that takes account of the requirements to (i) conduct business-critical activity efficiently and effectively, (ii) be cognisant of specific individual circumstances in relation to travel mode (e.g. disabilities, caring responsibilities), and (iii) the need to reduce travel where it is possible to do so. |
| 9 | Information sources should be developed about the environmental impact of travel and the choices which are available to staff/PGRs at the University of Aberdeen, including through the use of the Travel Hierarchy, case studies (including encouraging senior managers to ‘lead by example’), incentives and awareness-raising events. |
| ***Modes of Travel*** | |
| 10 | Awareness of the impact of business travel (and particularly air travel, including variances by class of air travel) on the environment should be raised across the University with a view to reducing emissions and minimising our environmental impact as an institution. |
| 11 | Line Managers should be reminded of their responsibility to only authorise First and/or Business Class air travel which complies with the Expenses & Benefits Policy. |
| 12 | It should be made clear that staff at all levels and across all areas of the University are expected to comply with the ethos and principles underpinning the Guiding Principles and Travel Hierarchy. |
| 13 | The expectation should be communicated across the University that where an activity can reasonably be undertaken without incurring the need to travel by air (i.e. there will be no significant detrimental impact), an alternative mode of transport and/or virtual participation will be used instead. |
| 14 | It is the responsibility of Principal Investigators (working closely with Heads of School and Professional Services advisers e.g. Research & Innovation) to ensure that options to reduce business travel are considered at an early stage of developing grant applications, and that where travel is planned the associated costs are based on accurately costed and sustainable travel options. |
| ***Travel Authorisation*** | |
| 15 | The expectation that Line Managers discuss the utility and value of proposed business travel (particularly by air) with members of their team on a regular basis, and in line with the Expenses & Benefits Policy should be communicated across the University. |
| 16 | Awareness should be raised across the University of the current business travel and reimbursement claims processes. |
| 17 | A communications plan should be developed to regularly promote the services and benefits of the University’s appointed travel provider. |
| ***Incentivisation*** | |
| 18 | The opportunity to negotiate discounted travel for staff and/or students with public transport (especially rail) providers should be kept under regular review. |
| 19 | Rail travel should be considered the norm for all journeys which would take under 6 hours, unless there are exceptions for clearly defined extenuating circumstances. |
| 20 | Institutional support/encouragement will be provided to members of staff who are able and willing to adopt alternatives to air travel to do so where such travel is required e.g. subsidising time/costs if a rail journey costs more and takes longer. |
| ***Guiding Principles & Travel Hierarchy*** | |
| 21 | The Guiding Principles of Sustainable Business Travel and the Travel Hierarchy should be reviewed by the Sustainable Development Committee on an annual basis. |