

Planes, Trains, Automobiles and Bicycles: Sustain's policy on greener travel

Sustain and its member organisations are working to reduce the damage to the environment caused by the food and farming system, and to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions that are causing dangerous climate change. This is everyone's business, and an urgent priority. Greener travel is an important commitment, because transport is one of the UK's biggest source of greenhouse gases.

Policy summary

To fulfil our commitment to greener travel, Sustain organises meetings and events at venues within easy access of public transport. Also, when we provide food, we prioritise suppliers of sustainable and locally produced food (who also have green policies on things like reducing plastic use and food waste). See Sustain's Model Catering Policy and Sustainable Food Guidelines:

www.sustainweb.org/about/sustains_sustainability_policies/

We warmly encourage staff to:

- Use public transport, walk or cycle to meetings and events.
- Avoid flying, especially to events within the UK or in nearby European destinations. We generally agree to people travelling by air on Sustain business only in exceptional circumstances and will explore 'offsetting' the carbon emissions associated with flying, if a gold-standard scheme exists.
- Support local and national campaigns for policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to reduce air pollution.

Walking, cycling and public transport

To encourage staff to walk, cycle or use public transport:

- Sustain will reimburse staff who need to make journeys for work purposes by public transport. We will reimburse the costs of use of private cars and taxis only in exceptional circumstances, where there is a valid justification for their use on Sustain business.
- Sustain asks staff to choose venues for meetings or events for that are easily accessible by public transport. When we send out details of the meetings or events, we try to make public transport or cycling easy choices, and this information comes first.
- Sustain runs a registered 'Cycle to Work' scheme, meaning that staff can buy a bike and safety-related accessories tax-free (up to £1,000) and then pay this back via their wages in instalments, interest-free via salary sacrifice, over a 12-month or 18-month period.
- Sustain can pay a bicycle mileage (currently at a rate of 20p per mile) to staff and volunteers for activities undertaken on behalf of Sustain.
- There are shower facilities in the Green House (Sustain's office building) and facilities for storing bicycles securely.

Travelling by air

We will always encourage staff to consider using more sustainable modes of transport and to avoid air travel as much as possible. Specifically:

- Sustain discourages staff from choosing air travel for any work trips within the UK or to nearby European destinations. Sustain will offer flexibility and additional paid time to enable longer essential journeys via public transport.
- Sustain will generally agree to people travelling by air on Sustain business only in very exceptional circumstances and where this is deemed essential, we will explore the possibility of 'offsetting' the carbon emissions associated with the flight, if a gold-standard scheme exists.

- Sustain staff rarely travel overseas for work purposes. However, when invited to international meetings or conferences, we ask staff to consider:
 - Is this journey necessary?
 - Is there someone in the host country who could fulfil the role, and/or report on findings of the meeting? Can we brief them to present on our behalf?
 - Can we send a written/PowerPoint/audio contribution instead?
 - Do tele-conference or Skype facilities exist – can we participate in this way?
 - Will attendance at the meeting help Sustain or its projects to make a significant step towards achieving our aims? If staff feel that the meeting is essential, can they make good use of time spent in the country, networking with other organisations or finding out about relevant work? Can we arrange this in advance?
 - Where long-distance travel is considered essential, we ask staff to investigate all travel alternatives before opting to go by air.

Cars

Sustain staff very rarely use cars or taxis for work purposes, except where there is no other alternative, if they have a personal physical need or disability, or if they have heavy materials or equipment to carry, such as display materials for a conference. Sustain will:

- Reimburse staff for car mileage or taxi journeys undertaken for Sustain work, but not for routine journeys where other transport options exist.
- Avoid using taxis, but when using a taxi service within London, use www.greentomatocars.com (tel: 020 8568 0022) which run a fleet of fuel-efficient hybrid and electric cars.

Additional considerations

Further choices made by Sustain have an effect on transport, and hence the environment and climate change. We therefore:

- Routinely send post by second-class mail, which can be delayed long enough to ensure that the vans are filled to capacity. First-class mail is more carbon intensive.
- Avoid using couriers or special delivery. This saves money. It also saves on transport fuel use, cutting down on single-use journeys.
- Always use tap water (filtered if preferred), never bottled water. Not only does this reduce plastic waste and energy in manufacturing, it also reduces emissions from transportation of bottled water.
- When hosting events, prioritise catering from suppliers of local and sustainably produced food, avoid bottled water, and give a preference to caterers that reduce food waste and plastics.

Further reading

- For more information on climate change and what you can do to help, visit the Friends of the Earth website to read [Five ways to make the UK carbon neutral: Our net-zero plan](#).
- Staff based in London may wish to join the [London Cycling Campaign](#) membership group, which campaigns for safer roads, more cycle lanes, provides information on safe cycle routes, and offers discounts on bike maintenance and cycling accessories.
- [Sustrans](#) is a national charity that aims to make it easier for people to walk and cycle and provides information on the National Cycle Network.

**Availability: To be referenced in induction materials, and published on the Sustain intranet.
 Publication: Publicly available on the Sustain website; promoted to members as good practice.**