

THE BY BROOK SUSTAINABILITY CALENDAR

JULY – TRANSPORT & TRAVEL

Welcome to the latest edition of the By Brook Sustainability Calendar. This month we look at travel and transport and their impact on our environment.

So is this about everyone not flying?

With climate change widely considered the biggest problem facing humanity, flying is certainly the most high-profile (and most controversial) form of transport when it comes to environmental impact. Campaign groups opposed to the expansion of airports, including our local international gateway, Bristol, point out that flying more is simply incompatible with the government's own climate change targets.

On a personal level, outside of a major purchase, taking a flight is likely to have the biggest environmental impact of any choice we make. For example, a return flight to Malaga is responsible for 0.5 tonnes of CO₂ - around three times MORE than the emissions saved from a whole year of diligent recycling.

But it's not about everyone not flying (although that would certainly help). The wealthy have a disproportionate impact, with an estimated 15% of people taking 70% of UK flights. Hence campaigns for a Frequent Flier Levy. Airport expansion would not be required if those flying most simply flew less.

What about offsetting?

Many airlines give the option of a payment to 'offset' your flight. For example, British Airways will offset a flight to Spain for £1. But if it were really that cheap, climate change would not be an issue at all! Offsetting is not the solution, but if you do fly you might feel it appropriate to make a donation to an environmental organisation instead.



What are the impacts of land transport?

There are no quick answers but looking at the CO₂ impact of different transport types is a good place to start. Eg, the impact of one person travelling in a medium-sized petrol car is 192g of CO₂ equivalent per km.

This compares to:

Standard Bus	
105g	
Medium Electric Car	53 g
National Rail Train	41g
Eurostar	6g

(Figures from UK Government 2019)

As always, the numbers aren't as black and white as they may seem. The electric car figure is based on the UK electricity mix in 2019 (part renewable, part standard grid electricity); a car charged on a 100% renewable tariff would have a lower impact.

In a similar way, four people travelling in a petrol car will have a lower CO₂ per person impact than a single driver in an electric car.

But aren't electric cars bad in other ways?

They can be. The batteries required for electric cars are a concern because they require large amounts of energy to manufacture. There are also significant concerns over the unethical and environmentally unsustainable mining practices (eg huge water use and pollution) involved with rare earth metals such as lithium and cobalt.

There is much work to be done to make electric vehicles more benign before new petrol and diesel cars are banned in the UK in 2030



Shouldn't we all just drive cars less often?

Yes, and perhaps our Covid experience taught us that some journeys just aren't necessary. However, old habits die hard. Current road traffic is only 1-2% less than pre-Covid levels during the week and 5-10% higher at weekends. Meanwhile, public transport - train, bus and tube - is still around 25% lower.

It is disappointing that having discovered the joys of home working by Zoom and Teams, we still seem to be driving as much as we did before.

What about Shared Cars?

With the huge amount of resource used in car manufacture and most cars parked for 96% of their life (RAC estimate), can we make better use of the cars we've got? Car clubs are a possible solution, with schemes such as Zipcar or Co-wheels, where members have access to a pool of shared cars, established in many cities.

But how is this relevant to the By Brook Valley area? You can now make your car available to your neighbours for a fee via a peer-to-peer car hire website. Or perhaps with a bit of co-ordination it might be possible to establish a low carbon car share club in a village, enabling people to get rid of rarely-used second cars.

What about electric bikes?

Here in the By Brook area, it is unlikely that residents will replace lots of car journeys by bike. However electric bikes are fantastic for giving people the confidence to get back on two wheels. You may cycle to the local shop, café or pub, and switch leisure drives for leisure rides. You'll also get great exercise and explore our wonderful local countryside.

What can we do now?

To join the campaign for a Frequent Flier Levy www.wearepossible.org

Travel around Europe by train not plane; the Man in Seat 61 can show you the way www.seat61.com

If you want to know more about electric cars, visit the informative www.fullycharged.show

Could car share work in your village? Check www.hiyacar.co.uk

Test an electric bike - ask a friend or take a free trial at Halfords www.halfords.com

Next month we cover Food. If you have any comments, feel free to get in touch at mike@vertigosdc.com