



# Climate Conscious Travel Policy

Version 1 May 2024

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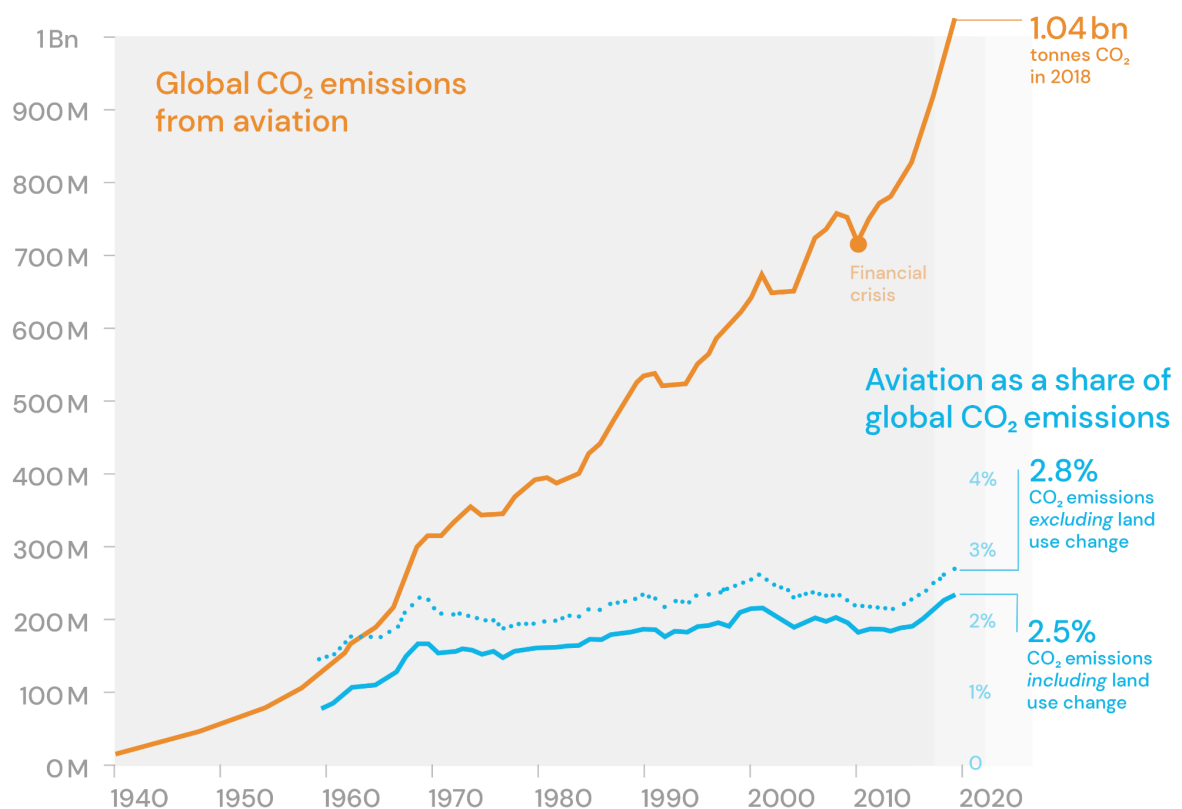
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# 1. Introduction and Context

Gallery Climate Coalition (GCC) is committed to reducing the visual art sector's emissions by a minimum of 50% by 2030 (from 2019 or equivalent baseline year). This includes monitoring and limiting our own environmental impacts.

GCC's carbon footprint for 2023 was **3.16 tCO<sub>2</sub>e**. 81% of this total was related to travel, and **2.56 tCO<sub>2</sub>e** of emissions came from just three flights.

GCC is an international coalition with members based in over 40 countries across the world. Many of our activities involve working across our membership to share knowledge and build community. In the visual arts sector, travel is routine and frequent – for research, networking, and career development as well as the cultural exchange of ideas in an increasingly globalised art world. Unfortunately, a lot of this travel is by air.



Aviation emissions includes passenger air travel, freight and military operations. It does not include non-CO<sub>2</sub> climate forcings or a multiplier for warming effects at altitude.  
Source: [ourworldindata.org](https://ourworldindata.org)

Source: Our World in Data (<https://ourworldindata.org/co2-emissions-from-aviation>)

Based on the annual carbon reports submitted and published by GCC members, travel is typically the largest single source of emissions for our membership. Therefore, travel is a key priority for GCC, and that's why we've decided to develop our own travel policy.

The airline industry is expanding rapidly, and is estimated to be responsible for approximately 3.5% of the total global human impact on the climate to date.<sup>1</sup> While this may not sound like a huge percentage, flying is the fastest-growing contributor to climate change globally.<sup>2</sup> It's also an activity largely reserved for the globally privileged people who can afford it: only 1% of the world's population emit 50% of the CO<sub>2</sub> generated by commercial flights.<sup>3</sup>

As it stands, there's no feasible replacement for fossil-fueled long-haul aviation at its current scale.<sup>4</sup> This means that, to keep in line with the targets set by the 2015 Paris agreement, we need large-scale behaviour change in order to reduce aviation emissions. Cultural, social and workplace innovations will be a vital part of facilitating and driving this behaviour change.

GCC recognises that the challenge of decarbonising the global economy must have equity considerations at its core. Citizens in "global north" countries must be empowered to reduce their lifestyle greenhouse gas emissions, in order to assist developing countries in providing their citizens with a higher standard of living within finite global carbon budgets. We are therefore committed to supporting a cultural shift towards Climate Conscious Travel practices.

A travel policy cannot be realistically implemented without considering intersectionality. We recognise that, in some cases, more sustainable forms of travel are not accessible to disabled and neurodivergent people, as well as those with caring responsibilities. We acknowledge this in our travel policy and expand on this in the 'Exceptions and Acknowledgements' section below.

With the implementation of this policy, we acknowledge that there are many brilliant international opportunities and events that – in line with our policy – we cannot justify attending. To balance this, we're working on developing a strong and dynamic network of ambassadors who share their experiences of events we cannot attend.

**With all of the above in mind, we have developed this Climate Conscious Travel Policy to encourage and guide GCC staff, trustees and volunteers to travel responsibly while representing GCC.**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://ourworldindata.org/co2-emissions-from-aviation>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.climateperks.com/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0959378020307779>

<sup>4</sup> <https://noflyclimatesci.org/>

**We hope that our members and partners will follow suit and use GCC's policy as a template for implementing their own changes. In the future, evidence of having implemented a travel policy will become a mandatory criteria for GCC Active Membership.**

**Note:** This is the first version of our Climate Conscious Travel Policy and includes processes and steps that are entirely new ways of working for us. Furthermore, we anticipate that we will learn a lot in the process of implementing the actions, and that unforeseen outcomes – both positive and negative – will occur. As such, we anticipate that the policy will need to be revised, or at least thoroughly reviewed, after the first year of use in order to adjust and improve it. However, we will strive to keep it as close to the original intention of the project as possible.

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## **2. Policy Summary**

- Before agreeing to any form of travel, the Decision Tree for Climate Conscious Travel will be followed (see section 4 for further information).
- Before agreeing to any form of travel, at least **4** of the seven Climate Conscious Travel Criteria must be met (see section 6 for further information).
- All travel (whether paid for externally by a project partner or from an internal budget) must be achievable within GCC's annual carbon budget. If there is no carbon budget available, the journey will not be approved.
- GCC representatives must always select the least environmentally damaging way of travelling.
- GCC follows a 'trains first' approach, which means that train travel is always the preferred option where routes allow (see section 5 for further information).
- We will plan as far in advance as possible to make use of low-carbon travel options, and examine travel schedules and combine trips wherever possible to maximise efficiency.
- We will review the number of staff that need to attend a trip and consider working with GCC Ambassadors locally to minimise the need for carbon-intensive travel.
- If a flight is deemed necessary, we will always opt for Economy class. Premium Economy and Business class may be allowable for disability or other health-related reasons.
- If a flight is deemed necessary, we will always take direct flights (where routes allow) to reduce emissions.

- GCC's Strategic Climate Fund will be used to subsidise the additional costs of low-emission travel, such as a train journey plus accommodation.
  - GCC will measure and report our organisational emissions via our annual carbon report.
  - GCC has introduced staff incentives to support these changes.
  - As an organisation, we aim to be flight-free by 2031.
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### **3. What is Climate Conscious Travel?**

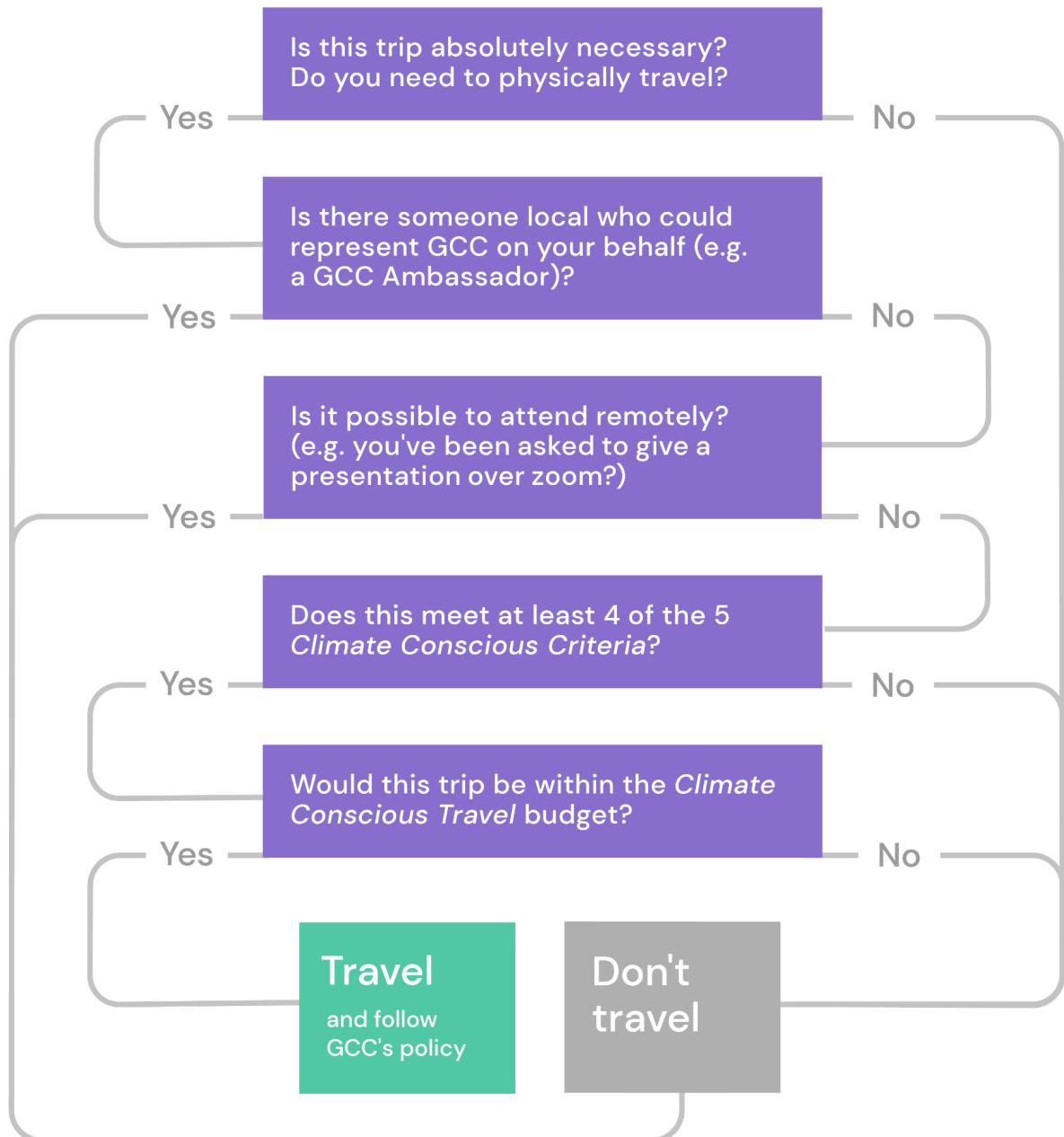
GCC defines 'Climate Conscious Travel' as:

- Having an awareness of the environmental impacts of travel and accepting responsibility for damage caused.
  - Taking steps to reduce overall volumes of travel.
  - When travel is deemed necessary, choosing a method of travel that limits damaging impacts as much as possible.
  - Planning schedules in advance to make use of low-carbon travel options and making the most of any necessary air travel by combining trips and avoiding the need for last-minute flights.
  - Measuring and tracking GHG emissions associated with any travel as part of annual carbon reporting processes.
  - Raising awareness of the environmental impacts of travel to colleagues, partners, clients, visitors, audiences, etc., and incentivising them to make sure they are also being climate conscious with their travel.
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## 4. Climate Conscious Travel Decision Tree

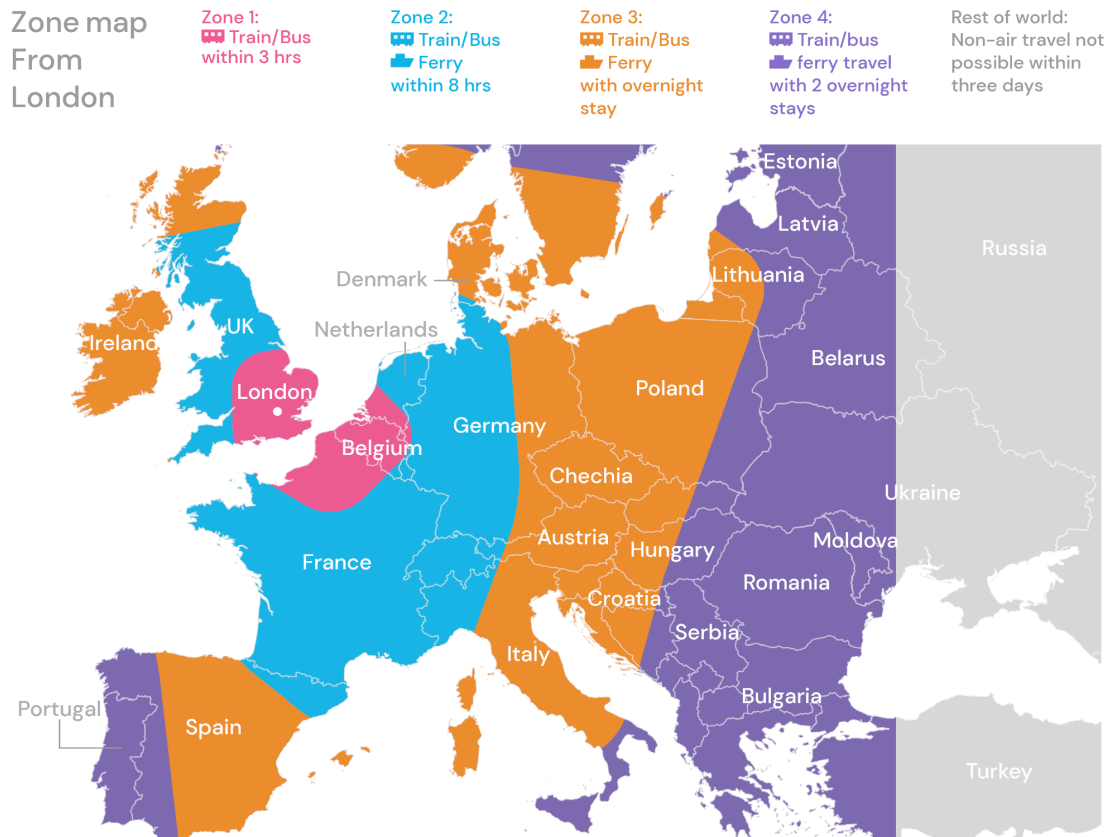
To help us decide what travel we will undertake we have developed this decision tree. This tree should be used for all travel, including travel that is paid for by external organisations.

Before approving the travel in question, ask yourself these questions:



## 5. 'Train-First' Guidance and Zone Map

GCC has developed guidance to support our 'train first' approach and our wider climate conscious travel decision-making process, based on five 'zones' of travel.



**Zone 1** – Train/bus travel possible within 3 hours

**Zone 2** – Train/bus travel possible within 8 hours

**Zone 3** – Train/bus/ferry travel possible with an overnight stay

**Zone 4** – Train/bus/ferry travel possible with two overnight stays

**Rest of World** – Non-air travel not possible within three days

**Zones 1 & 2** – Absolutely no flights within these areas. GCC team will travel to destinations in these zones by train, bus and ferry only.

**Zone 3** – Preferably no flights unless there are justifiable reasons to fly, e.g. caring responsibilities, **and** the flight sits within the carbon budget.

**Zone 4** – GCC team will travel to a destination in this zone by train if the inviting organisation covers the cost of travel and overnight accommodation, **or** by aeroplane only if at least **four** of the air travel criteria are met and there is a carbon budget available.

**Rest of World** – GCC team will travel to a destination by aeroplane only if at least **four** of the climate-conscious travel criteria are met and there is a carbon budget available.

Employee Incentives (see section 8): To qualify for the Climate Perk incentives of additional holiday days, non-air travel must be to destinations beyond the pink zone to qualify for one extra holiday day.

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## 6. Criteria for Air Travel

For carbon-intensive (i.e. air) travel to go ahead, the trip must meet at least **4** of the following criteria, following completion of the decision tree:

- Travel offers an opportunity to make significant progress in addressing the climate emergency within the visual art sector to an extent which makes the associated emissions justifiable.
- Travel will establish or maintain crucial relationships with significant funders, leading to financial security for GCC or substantially increasing our impact.
- Travel is required to establish new GCC offices, International Volunteer Chapters or deliver essential staff training and onboarding.
- Travel efficiency can be maximised by arranging a full schedule of meetings, events etc. that would further the charity's mission and which would not have been otherwise possible.
- It can be demonstrated that one (longer) trip could replace at least two shorter trips to the same destination.
- Any air travel is economy class and airlines/aircraft are specifically selected to minimise emissions.
- Choosing air travel over other surface travel options (e.g. train, bus, car or ferry) is due to the need for quicker journey times as a result of a justifiable personal or family emergency, for health reasons, or parental or caring responsibilities.

If at least four of these criteria are met, then the potential travel may be approved as long as there is adequate carbon budget available.

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## 7. Carbon Budget for Travel

If air travel (to a destination beyond Zone 3 – see section 5) has been deemed essential, GCC's annual carbon budget will be used to monitor and limit the amount of air travel taken each year.

Similarly to financial budgeting, any proposed travel that is not possible within the annual carbon budget for travel will not be approved. In addition, just because the budget is there, it does not mean that it should necessarily be used. The carbon budget will be renewed annually at the beginning of the calendar year.

GCC's carbon budget for air travel applies to any flight taken by anyone on the team, including freelancers and trustees, for flights paid for both internally and externally, e.g. by project partners. Therefore, even if the cost of the flight is covered by another organisation, GCC would still need to budget for the carbon emissions.

**GCC's annual Carbon Budget equates to 1.5tCO<sub>2</sub>e per permanent staff member per year @ 4 permanent staff = 6tCO<sub>2</sub>e.**

The carbon budget will be reduced over time in line with our emissions reduction targets.

**By 2030 we aim to make our Carbon Budget for Travel 0.75tCO<sub>2</sub>e per staff member per year and to be flight-free by 2031.**

### Our carbon budget and overall targets

As an environmental charity our ambition is to be better than the average. A 1.5tCO<sub>2</sub>e allocation per staff member means our staff would generate less than half the emissions of a typical UK office worker.

For context, a return flight from London to New York emits around 1.66tCO<sub>2</sub>e, and a typical small business in the UK can expect emissions of 3.7 tCO<sub>2</sub>e per employee per year.<sup>5</sup>

As we are a small organisation still in its 'start-up' phase, GCC currently has a minimal carbon footprint (GCC's carbon footprint for 2023 was 3.16 tCO<sub>2</sub>e), but we do have plans

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<sup>5</sup> <https://ecohedge.com/blog/carbon-footprint-of-companies-navigating-reduction-strategies/>

to grow in the coming years. Following our own [published guidance on growth](#), this means that GCC does not yet have a 2030 reduction target. Instead, we are building low-carbon and regenerative practices into our operations from the start, to act as an example of a future-ready charity.

Once the organisation has grown sustainably and is at a level of equilibrium, we will set end-of-decade targets for the reduction of travel emissions and reduce the carbon budget accordingly. This explains why GCC's carbon budget for 2024 is double our CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions from 2023.

We encourage other start-ups and small arts organisations to similarly introduce low-carbon practices, including travel policies, into their operations, and to be ambitious in their practices from the beginning. Whereas large, long established or organisations with particularly carbon intensive travel habits should introduce end-of-decade targets as part of an ambitious travel policy immediately.

While our total annual carbon budget is based on the number of permanent staff, this does not mean that each staff member 'owns' an equal share of the budget. Instead, we view this as a **collective** budget that is spent based on the needs and priorities of the organisation, as agreed collectively by the GCC team.

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## 8. Employee Incentives

Because there is no immediately viable technological solution on the horizon that will reduce the emissions created by air travel, behaviour change is the only way to meaningfully cut carbon emissions generated by flying.

Therefore, GCC will offer incentives to employees to encourage and normalise low-carbon travel options. This will cover both business and leisure travel.

### **Business travel**

Staff days dedicated to business travel beyond Zone 1 (see section 6) via low emissions methods will be given back as time in lieu.

For example, the train journey from London to Basel takes approximately 7 hours.<sup>6</sup> Any staff making this journey will be given the same time again in lieu, to be used within one month.

## **Leisure travel**

Staff choosing to travel via low-emission methods for their personal trips outside of work will be rewarded with additional paid holiday time, as per the [Climate Perks](#) initiative, of which GCC is proud to be an accredited employer. This is to encourage behaviour change beyond our own operations.

We will give additional paid holiday time where employees elect to travel via land or sea rather than via air. The time can be claimed for any additional hours spent travelling. The maximum travel time that can be reclaimed is two working days in any one 'travel time year.' The travel time year is the same as our annual leave year, namely from the 1st of January to the 31st of December. To qualify for this perk, non-air travel must be outside the UK to destinations beyond Zone 1 (see section 5) to qualify.

## **Additional benefits & incentives**

In future, GCC will consider additional benefits to reward staff who choose climate conscious travel, and we encourage our members to think creatively about ways to incentivise low-carbon travel options. For example, could staff bonuses be tied to meeting carbon reduction targets, or additional bonuses be given for staff who do not take the plane for personal holidays?

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# **9. Using SCFs to Support Climate Conscious Travel**

In line with GCC's guidance, part of our Strategic Climate Fund could be used to help subsidise the cost of lower emission but higher cost travel (and overnight accommodation), i.e. to pay the difference between the cost of a train journey and a plane ticket on the same route.

GCC's SCF guidance advises members to first make a plan to meet their reduction targets, and only then spend their internal SCFs on things that go beyond that target or that they wouldn't otherwise be able to afford. It is then obviously essential that GCC

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<sup>6</sup><https://galleryclimatecoalition.org/news/62-climate-conscious-travel-art-basel-have-you-book-ed-your-travel-to-art-basel/>

follows the same principles. Importantly, this should only be used in this way on environmental measures that we wouldn't otherwise be able to afford. Therefore, only if it is absolutely necessary, will we use our own Strategic Climate Fund to pay for additional travel costs for lower impact options.

### **Examples**

Plane from Paris to Madrid: c.2 hours / €50 / 0.29 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e

Train from Paris to Madrid: c.10 hours / €200 / 0.09 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e

Use €150 from existing SCF pot to subsidise cost of train

Plane from London to Venice: c.2 hours / £90 / 0.36 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e

Train from London to Venice: c.20 hours / £300 + hotel £200 / 0.10 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e

Use £310 from existing SCF pot to subsidise cost of train & overnight accommodation

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## **10. Exceptions and Acknowledgements**

We recognise that, in some cases, more sustainable forms of travel are not always accessible to disabled and neurodivergent people, as well as those with caring responsibilities, health issues, or those who are experiencing personal or family emergencies.

This policy acknowledges this and allows for some exceptions to be made in extenuating circumstances, as long as these travel decisions are approved by the Operations Manager. These travel choices should still come out of the existing annual carbon budget.

Exceptions may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- The use of flights in light of family or medical emergencies.
- The use of Premium Economy or Business class for disability or other health-related reasons.
- The consideration of individuals' family or caring responsibilities when planning the organisation's travel for the year.

This policy is new and we are continually learning. We will review and update this policy annually to incorporate insights that emerge.