



Parliamentary Travel – Carbon Offsetting

20 September 2022

Request for Information.

Thank you for your request received on 23 August in which you asked:

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to you to ask for your advice on Parliamentary travel, more specifically, carbon-offsetting of expensed domestic air travel.

Glasgow hosted COP26 last autumn, and the governments in Westminster, Holyrood and Cardiff Bay all want to reduce government carbon emissions to net zero by the end of the decade. Whilst the target varies, this is a policy broadly agreed on by every party in these three houses - however, I understand your remit is only MSs in the Senedd.

- 1. Can you tell me what requirements there are to ensure that any taxpayer expensed domestic (and/or international) flights are carbon offset? Is this something that is dealt with by the Senedd or is this a responsibility of the individual MS or their party?*

If there is no requirement to carbon offset expensed domestic (and/or international) flights, would this be something you could raise with the government to ensure there are changes going forward?

- 2. As a further question, is there any mechanism that ensures that MSs are only using/expensing domestic flights as a last resort? i.e. I understand Northern Irish MPs and AMs would have to fly as a ferry service would be too slow and cumbersome, but should MSs not have to ensure there is no alternative train service before taking a domestic flight?*

Please see our response below.

Senedd Cymru
Bae Caerdydd
Caerdydd, CF99 1SN

Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff, CF99 1SN

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1. *Can you tell me what requirements there are to ensure that any taxpayer expensed domestic (and/or international) flights are carbon offset? Is this something that is dealt with by the Senedd or is this a responsibility of the individual MS or their party?*

The provisions for Members to claim costs relating to travel in the performance of the Member's duties which are funded through the determination are made by the **Independent Remuneration Board** and published in the **Determination** (specifically Chapter 5 – Members' Travel).

There are no requirements for offsetting against flights and no provisions for Members to claim costs relating to carbon offsetting.

The Senedd Commission is responsible for collating and publicly reporting carbon data for Members (in relating to their duties as Members, rather than any Government work as Ministers), as well as Members' Support Staff and Senedd Commission staff. We report such data in the Sustainability section (page 95) of the **Annual Report and Accounts**, as well as the **Sustainability** Annual Report, both available on our website.

Also, on our website is our **Carbon Neutral Strategy**, which details the measures we plan on taking in order to be *net carbon neutral* by 2030. This includes an offsetting element, only as a last resort. Once operational emissions have been reduced to their lowest possible levels, we will, from 2030, be looking to offset residual carbon.

As this information is already available, your request is subject to section 21 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) which exempts information that is already reasonably accessible by other means.

2. *As a further question, is there any mechanism that ensures that MSs are only using/expensing domestic flights as a last resort? i.e. I understand Northern Irish MPs and AMs would have to fly as a ferry service would be too slow and cumbersome, but should MSs not have to ensure there is no alternative train service before taking a domestic flight?*

Section 1.3.8. of the **Determination** states that "*Members must seek to ensure that any expenditure incurred provides value for money to the taxpayer, represents the most sustainable and reasonable option available...*"

Again, as this information is already available, your request is subject to section 21 of FOIA which exempts information that is already reasonably accessible by other means.

Yours sincerely

Buddug Saer

**Freedom of Information Manager
Welsh Parliament**

Your request has been considered according to the principles set out in the **Code of Practice on Public Access to Information**. If you have any questions regarding this response please contact me. If you feel you have cause for complaint, please follow the guidance below.

Cause for concern or complaint with your FOI response?

If you are dissatisfied with the Welsh Parliament's handling of your request, you can request an internal review within 40 working days of the date of this response. Requests for an internal review should be addressed to the Freedom of Information Manager at:

Information-request@senedd.wales or in writing to

Welsh Parliament
Governance and Assurance
Cardiff Bay
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If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF