

Forestry in the Highlands International Conference and Film Festival – Carbon Footprint

Introduction

The Forestry in the Highlands International Conference and Film Festival was held in Inverness in the September 2011. It brought together government agencies, academic institutions, communities, private sector, NGOs and the wider public sector. It provided a platform for learning and dialogue through films, lectures, facilitated networking and fieldtrips.

Trees act as a natural carbon store. They soak up carbon as they grow. The recently published Woodland Carbon Code provides a robust and transparent process to measure the volume of timber being absorbed and stored by trees.

Event organisers were interested in measuring the carbon footprint of delegates travelling to the conference and participating in the field trips.



Event Carbon Footprint

Travel is responsible for over a fifth of the UK's greenhouse gas emissions, which have been linked to climate change. There is growing legal, financial, stakeholder, shareholder and customer pressure on organisations to measure, report and reduce emissions.

Conferences, festivals and sporting events can have a significant environmental impact and for many, emissions arising from delegate/participant travel will be one of, if not the main, environmental impact.

The Process and Results

Travel information was collected from delegates. This identified how they travelled to the event and the distances involved. Field trips had been organised for the final day of the conference and this travel was also included. The more comprehensive measure of carbon dioxide equivalents CO₂ e was used to provide a thorough review.

- Delegate travel generated 1,800 kg of CO₂ e
- Delegates travelled just under 6,000 miles
- The average distance travelled per delegate was 99 miles
- The average travel emissions per delegate were 33kg CO₂ e
- Travel intensity was 3.3 miles per kg CO₂ e
- A quarter of delegates travelling by car shared the journey



Conclusions

This was a pioneering approach to review and benchmark delegate travel for a highland conference. It has established a valuable benchmark to help develop future, lower carbon conferences and events. This will become an increasingly important aspect for event organisers, their sponsors and stakeholders as well as the participants who attend events.

With over 5 years of carbon footprinting experience, Archie Prentice of Practically Green is seen as one of the highland's experts on practical and pragmatic carbon footprint measurement. His clients range from small local tourism businesses to global organisations.

Malcolm Wield of the Forestry Commission commented, "delegate travel carbon footprinting was a really thought provoking and objective element of the Conference and the organisers are really pleased that Practically Green was able to deliver the information in such an interesting and relevant way".

May East of CIFAL Findhorn commented "for years CIFAL has been running events under DEFRA's Sustainable Event Guide, communicating electronically, being energy and water efficient, using the 3 Rs, reducing need for travel. We have now taken one further step in partnership with Practically Green and have adopted event carbon management as policy and practice to all events. Measurements will allow continuous improvement while helping CIFAL to minimise further its negative sustainability impacts".