

Environmental and social impact policy: progress in 2023/24

Introduction

This progress report is the first since the publication of Orbital's environmental and social impact policy. It sets out the company's impacts during the financial year running from 1st October 2023 to 31st September 2024.

Clients

Orbital's clients up to the end of the 23/24 FY are:

- Buckinghamshire County Council;
- The Circular Economy for Flexible Packaging (CEFLEX) initiative;
- CRC (Certified Recycled Content);
- Lincolnshire County Council;
- The Environment Agency;
- The Health and Safety Executive;
- Natural England, and
- Royal Holloway, University of London.

The environment

Greenhouse gases

The greenhouse gas emissions associated with Orbital's work can be broadly split into the following areas:

- Home working
- Commuting
- Office use
- Business travel

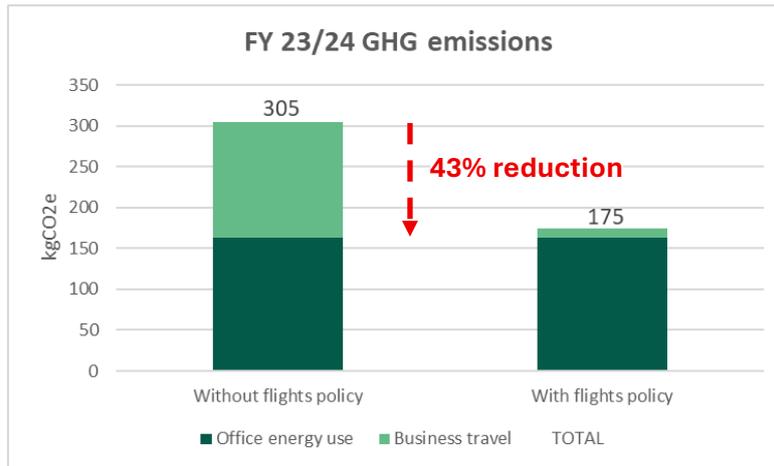
Home working is extremely limited and so emissions from this activity are considered to be negligible.

Commuting takes place by bicycle and so produces no greenhouse gas emissions.

Orbital is based out of a shared office chosen partly for its environmental and social credentials. Orbital's share of the emissions from gas use in this workspace are 101kgCO₂e per year and from electricity they are 63kgCO₂e. This varies slightly from year to year but is not something that Orbital has influence over.

The 2023/24 financial year is the first complete year of data on emissions from Orbital's business travel. The amount was 12kgCO₂e, however this includes the effect of Orbital's avoided flights policy. Without that, emissions from business travel would have been 142 kgCO₂e. This information is summarised in **Figure 1** below.

Figure 1: Greenhouse gas emissions from Orbital’s business activities



This is the first year that avoided flights have been recorded and information on this is set out below¹ using rounded figures. An avoided flight is only recorded when it seems reasonable to state that a flight would have been taken in the absence of Orbital’s environmental and social impact policy. As such, trains from London to Brussels are not counted because this is the most convenient method of travel.

Financial year	Journey	Flight emissions (kgCO ₂ e)	Train emissions (kgCO ₂ e)	Percentage saving	Cost of emissions saving (normalised to £/tCO ₂ e)
2023/24	London to Amsterdam	~130	~5	~96%	~£2,150

Offsets

The cost per tonne of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by avoiding flights is very high but this is also the most effective action that Orbital can take in this area. For all other unavoidable emissions, offsets were purchased in line with Orbital’s commitment to donate 3.5% of post-tax profits to a range of organisations that are closely aligned to the mission of the company. See the **Society** section for more information on the precise number of offsets purchased.

Waste, materials and resource efficiency

Paper and IT purchases were made in line with Orbital’s policy to only purchase post-consumer recycled paper and source all IT equipment from second-hand retailers. On average over a 12-month period, the shared workspace occupied by Orbital generated 5.1 tonnes of waste, of which over 86% was recycled.

¹ GHG conversion factors sourced from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6722566a3758e4604742aa1e/ghg-conversion-factors-2024-condensed_set_for_most_users_v1_1.xlsx

Water

As stated in Orbital’s environmental and social impacts policy, the shared workspace occupied by Orbital does not have any data on water usage. Discussions with the building owners were started to see if this situation could be improved.

Society

Approximately three days of staff time (half an hour per week, every school week) was donated to provide reading mentoring to Year 7 children identified as likely to benefit from one-to-one support at The Kingston Academy.

Orbital has committed to spend 3.5% of post-tax profits on charitable causes that align with the company’s mission. In practice this is calculated once the accounts for the previous tax year have been finalised, so the specific organisations that Orbital is supporting based on profits made in 2023/24 are:

- The Bhopal Medical Appeal (<https://www.bhopal.org/>), which “provides free medical care, education and community support to those suffering the effects of Union Carbide’s gas disaster, and to families still being damaged in their thousands by ongoing water poisoning”. The charity also “promotes community-led practices that can be adopted by those affected by industrial disasters around the world [and] supports activities to prevent future such disasters.” If you would like to know more about the world’s worst industrial disaster you may wish to read ‘Five Past Midnight in Bhopal’ by Dominique Lapierre and Javier Moro.
- The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (<https://www.icij.org/>), which “tells stories that punch through the noise, showing how the world really works, triggering positive change. [They] are driven by the belief that citizens have the right to be better informed, that access to independently sourced facts is not only essential for democracy but is also a fundamental human right.” Misinformation and organised disinformation campaigns are a threat to action to protect society from environmental harms. A strong, vibrant information ecosystem is the basis of a flourishing natural one.
- BRITE Box (<https://www.voh.org.uk/britebox/>) “is a recipe box initiative for children and families, in which pre weighed complete ingredients sufficient for cooking a meal for a family of five are supplied weekly, accompanied by easy-to-follow, low cost, nutritious recipes. Primarily aimed at low-income families, it is administered by schools in Kingston (which covers schools and families located in Kingston, Richmond and Elmbridge boroughs), and Southwark.” Being able to cook and enjoying healthy food is a powerful way of connecting with nature and taking back control from companies that profit through providing products that damage the environment and human health.

3.5% of Orbital’s post-tax profits in the 2023/24 financial year is £2,131.26. Split four ways this is £532.81, but as carbon offsets are only available in ½ tonne increments, the closest value to this amount was purchased, which was £540. The remaining £1,591.26 was divided equally between the Bhopal Medical Appeal, The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists and BRITE Box. The £540 investment allowed for the purchase of 5 tonnes of carbon offsets – 28 times Orbital’s greenhouse gas emissions for the financial year – and created £2,456 worth of social value².

² <https://hact.org.uk/retrofit-credits-offset-your-emissions/>