

## Carbon Guilt or Carbon Gift?



Having recently come back from a wonderful and literally 'once in lifetime' trip to the far side of our wonderful planet, I've been doing a lot of thinking about how to compensate for the **10 tonnes of additional carbon emissions** I've caused.

Tempting though it is to pretend that our carbon emissions from flying are not a problem, any thinking and ecologically aware person knows that they are. It has been estimated that each tonne of carbon emissions knocks a year off someone else's lifespan, so controlling my carbon emissions matters to me: I hadn't flown for 5 years before this trip.

**I don't want to wallow in Carbon Guilt about it for ever more, nor deny the consequences of my actions, so what to do?**

We have various carbon reducing improvements planned for our home, but I don't think I can honestly claim them as offsetting my flights, because we were planning to do it anyway.

In general I don't like **Carbon Offsetting**, because it gets you into the mindset of "how can I offset my carbon emissions as cheaply as possible" Almost inevitably, this pushes you towards schemes that are virtually scams: not additive, not verifiable and at crazily cheap prices, determined by a dysfunctional carbon market. In all probability the only people that benefit are the financiers.

An alternative approach is to make a **Carbon Gift**. This is offered as an apology, not a purchase. It recognises that a wrong has been done, and is a way of saying sorry to the planet and its inhabitants.

The question then is "How Much?" As with any gift, I think this depends on the circumstances and how well off you are, but following the example of the traditional Church, a reasonable range might be 10% - 100% of the carbon-guilt causing expenditure. The lower end would be appropriate if, say, the guilt causing event was a flight for a rare and much needed holiday and you didn't have much money. The upper end (or more) would be appropriate if you were well off and/or the trip was an enjoyable but inessential extravagance.

The next question is "Who to?". This is your choice, but I suggest that it's particularly effective if its gift aided to a charity of your choice that's working on climate change. The Gift Aid increases the value of the gift and a good charity will get far more value from your gift than the carbon market ever can.

**Thinking of it as a gift completely changes the mindset.** Now you start thinking: "Given that I've got £X to spend, how can I make this gift as valuable as possible?"

- Should I help 3<sup>rd</sup> world victims of climate change adapt?
- Help groups campaigning for political action?
- Help preserve rainforests, coral reefs or polar bears?
- Or help reduce carbon emissions closer to home, by supporting Cambridge Carbon Footprint?

**I've made my decision, written the cheque and feel good.**

Anne