

Environmental progress report

Period: 1st May 2017 – 30th April 2018

Author: Alex White, Senior Policy Officer

BACKGROUND

The Aldersgate Group is an alliance of leaders from business, academia politics and civil society that drives action for a sustainable economy. Formed in 2006, the Group now has 92 members, including 57 organisation members and a permanent Secretariat of five. The environmental progress report refers to impacts of the Secretariat's activities and does not include environmental impact of the membership or Board of Directors.

The Aldersgate Group has prepared annual reports showing its greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions since its 2011-2012 fiscal year. However, changes in scope of data have affected the consistency of accounting over recent years, primarily arising from challenges in obtaining robust and comparable data from key suppliers and changes to suppliers. The Group determined that the ongoing effort to publish full GHG emission reports was not justified due to lack of comparability of data year on year, but acknowledged the value of monitoring key activities to help identify its impacts.

In line with the Board of Directors' recommendations, the Aldersgate Group Secretariat has not published a GHG report for the last two years, but has continued to review and record its environmental impacts and engage with suppliers.

ASSESSMENT

A lack of data and changing scope arising from several changes in office premises have limited consistency and accuracy in this reporting year.

The Aldersgate Group was located at The Hub Westminster, a managed co-working space in New Zealand House, from the beginning of the reporting period to 21 February 2018 when it closed down. The Hub was unable to supply any gas and electricity information for the reporting period, or data on printing from September 2017 onwards. Moreover, the floor space and occupancy of The Hub changed several times over the seven months as a result of landlord demands to vacate.

We have therefore used Scope 1 & 2 emissions figures from the 2016/17 reporting year as indicative figures for the sake of comparability. The Secretariat is now in a new co-working space, The Office Group, who own and manage the building. Future Scope 1 & 2 emissions reporting will be based on our occupancy of this office.

Scope 3

The Aldersgate Group has continued to closely monitor Scope 3 emissions, as this is the sole area where we have consistently held accountability.

The Secretariat's Scope 3 overall emissions decreased this year by 15%. The decrease can be largely attributed to the significantly lower volume of air travel this year, which brings it more in line with 2016/17 business travel emissions, after an usually high volume of flights in 2017/18. Emissions related to car, train and Eurostar travel also decreased thanks to fewer trips in 2018/19. The Secretariat has newly included overnight hotel stays in its calculations this year as conversion factors have become available. Secretariat commuting emissions increased by 53%, which is due to changes in staff and in office location.

Estimated paper emissions increased by 172%, resulting from a doubling of reports published compared to the previous reporting year. On average, reports were also longer and had larger print runs, due to increasing stakeholder interest. The figure for office printing is estimated, as the Hub Westminster stopped logging printing from September 2017 onwards. As such the office printing figure reflects averaged volume in the preceding months. In March 2018 the Secretariat printed in unusually high volumes because of a number of briefings printed for distribution at a report launch.

In calculating data emissions, a calculation error in the last reporting year was identified: email data usage included the usage of just one member of the Secretariat, rather than the full Secretariat. Adjusting last year's calculations post-hoc result in a decrease in data-related emissions of 14%. This can be attributed to lower data usage on the Cloud storage software used by the Secretariat, after deleting unnecessary files.

FUTURE EFFORTS

The Secretariat has made progress on reducing Scope 3 emissions, particularly from business travel, but has continued to struggle with consistency of emissions measurement. We will aim to build on this progress to improve:

1. **Supplier engagement:** Now that the Secretariat has moved office premises we will seek to engage building management robustly to access a full data set for Scope 1 and 2 emissions. As the building is also owned by the office management group, we expect that this will produce fewer barriers than we faced in New Zealand House. We will also begin to engage building management on water usage to improve our reporting.
2. **Scope 3 emissions:** The Secretariat will continue to monitor and endeavour to limit Scope 3 emissions, keeping office printing to a minimum and continuing to use low carbon transport methods wherever possible.
3. **Methodology:** The Secretariat continues to use Defra's guidance for compliance with greenhouse gas reporting regulation¹ and Defra's greenhouse gas conversion factors.²

Consistency of metrics has continued to be a challenge as a result of an unexpected office relocation. We have traditionally calculated our impact as a share of total occupancy of the office. However, this was changed for the 2016/17 reporting year due to a significant fall in occupancy of the Hub, which was reflected as an inaccurate increase in the Secretariat's Scope 1 & 2 emissions. As such, the methodology was changed to reflect the Secretariat's floor space usage as a proportion of the total office floor space. Neither methodology is appropriate in this reporting year, as the Hub changed occupancy and floor space numerous times through the year. Going forwards, the Secretariat will seek a better methodology to reflect its impact in necessarily inconsistent co-working spaces.

The Secretariat will continue to seek a more appropriate methodology to measure emissions from our online data storage and emails, as current conversion factors are from 2012 and based on US data. As more conversion factors become available, such as hotel stays, the Aldersgate Group will also seek to include these in our future calculations to provide a fuller picture of the Secretariat's environmental impact.

¹ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (October 2013) <http://bit.ly/1cUDUtF>

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/greenhouse-gas-reporting-conversion-factors-2017>