

Carbon offsetting allows those that emit planet-warming gases to pay for carbon cuts by others, as a cheaper or easier alternative to cutting their own. So how does this fit for the events industry?

Should we continue as usual, count up our greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, pay for an offset, feel great, and tell everyone about it? And if we do 'count our carbon' what are we counting anyway? With so many different players on the field – carbon offset retailers, environmental consultants, carbon calculation tools, industry associations and even carbon certifications – all advising how to count an event's GHG emissions – it is a muddy field indeed.

So where to start? The first step should always be to cut emissions at the source, making demonstrated reductions through our own actions.

In the UK, the British Standards Institution (BSI) has published **BSI PAS 2060 – Specification for the demonstration of carbon neutrality**. This standard offers guidance to organizations on quantifying, reducing and offsetting greenhouse gas emissions. It says first to measure business as usual, then to put initiatives in place to reduce, and then measure performance with a view to neutralizing. It guides us to include all emissions from core event production activities. But what would be considered 'core'? Some events are measuring electricity only; others are going into extravagant detail and measuring everything that has a sniff of GHG about it.

There is no question that GHG emitted by an event is an indicator of sustainability performance. The **Global Reporting Initiative's** draft **Event Organizers Sector Supplement** certainly states several areas of GHG emissions should be reported on.

So assuming we are going to measure GHGs, consider this:

- **Have we identified what will be included?**
- **Have we communicated and justified what is included, and the methodologies undertaken?**
- **Have we measured and disclosed previous emissions, or anticipated what they could be in a 'business as usual' scenario?**
- **Have we undertaken our own action to make measurable reductions?**
- **Have we disclosed performance indicating what reductions were achieved and how we achieved them?**

What Should Be Measured?

The Greenhouse Gas Protocol prescribes that Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions are included in impact measurement. That is pretty straight forward;

- **Scope 1** emissions are those from sources that are owned or controlled by the event - 'direct' emissions – energy generated onsite at an event and would include mobile power generators, bottled gas for cooking or heating, and fuel used in site plant, equipment and vehicles. It would also include

vehicles owned by the company and used offsite for the purposes of the event. It could also include chartered mass transport or hired vehicles under this description.

- **Scope 2** emissions from 'indirect energy' – that is energy generated at sources owned or controlled by others, but is used by the event (mains electricity supply and mains gas supply).

The event industry has no commonly used boundary on what should be included in emissions calculations over and above Scope 1 & 2 emissions, and that is where it gets confusing for everyone. We need to establish parameters to identify what Scope 3 emissions are an event organizer's responsibility and what aren't.

- **Scope 3** emissions are 'other indirect' emissions – these are emissions that occur because of an event's activities but occur at sources owned by others. This includes emissions embodied in the products purchased or used, transport of all people attending the event, energy used to process waste (liquid & solid), and energy used to produce and supply water. It would also include the transport impacts of these.

Agreement across the industry will mean that one event's emissions declarations makes sense in context of the rest of the industry's emissions declarations.

Do we include audience/attendee travel? If we use the premise of 'direct control or significant influence' then in some cases audience travel would be included. What about emissions from the processing and transport of waste, water, sewage? Or embedded energy in materials, food, and supplies? Do we include freighting of materials and products, equipment, infrastructure, etc? How do we separate what would be considered staff commuting, from crew event transport? Do we include only air travel for talent/performers/speakers/VIPs, or their ground transport as well?

I believe the event industry needs to get on the same page on what Scope 3 emissions to include as 'core' and what 'non-core' emissions could also be voluntarily reported which the event takes responsibility for.

Where and How to Offset?

The next step is to learn more about the types of carbon offset projects you could invest in.... and that's a whole new story.

I advise anyone considering offsetting to scrutinize the projects that are being funded, and to actively choose the ones that fit you. I believe the events industry should support the Voluntary Carbon Standard (VCS)/Social Carbon voluntary offsetting

Continued on page 112

schemes which add more than just a carbon emissions reducing benefit. Actively seek out some of the wonderful projects that have ongoing and broad sustainability benefits.

What about Carbon Footprint & Carbon Neutral?

I believe neither of these terms should ever be used in relation to the GHG emissions reporting for an event. 'Carbon footprint' infers a total calculation of GHG emissions, and we have established there is no clarity in our industry on what that could be. 'Carbon neutrality' infers that all GHG emissions have been neutralized through reductions intervention or through offsetting. As there is no commonality of accounting across the event industry to get to a complete 'footprint' to therefore 'neutralize,' using either of these terms can be nothing but misleading.

Responsible reporting is key and this means providing details on what's included in calculations. Even in those events providing comprehensive explanations on process, the marketing communications may get distilled down to these terms. There is nothing really to moderate the emissions performance claims and less scrupulous or even just unaware event producers (or their marketing teams) are doing damage to the understanding of emissions reporting by making these claims.

I strongly recommend you report the emissions performance of your event but leave any carbon footprint or carbon neutrality claims out of the picture!

To add your two bob's worth to the GHG emissions discussion, please join the Event Sustainability Practitioner's group on LinkedIn. You will find a link through to that on the Sustainable Event Alliance website.

British Standards Institution (BSI) www.bsigroup.com
GRI EOSS - www.globalreporting.org/ReportingFramework/SectorSupplements/Events/
Greenhouse Gas Protocol - www.ghgprotocol.org
Voluntary Carbon Standard - www.v-c-s.org
Social Carbon - www.socialcarbon.org

Meegan Jones is an event professional focusing her work on developing sustainable management solutions for live events. She is the President of Sustainable Event Alliance; Author of "Sustainable Event Management: A Practice Guide"; Director of GreenShoot Pacific; and Head of the Australian Delegation of ISO 20121.

Sustainable Event Alliance:

www.sustainable-event-alliance.com

Sustainable Event Management:

A Practical Guide - www.thegreeneventguide.com

GreenShoot Pacific - www.greenshootpacific.com

She can be reached at: meegan@greenshootpacific.com