



British & Irish Association of Stroke Physician (BIASP) Sustainability Policy





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a) **BACKGROUND**

The climate crisis is a health crisis. Global temperatures have already increased by 1.2 degrees since pre-industrial times due to human activity, mainly from the burning of fossil fuels¹. We are already seeing the health impacts of this, disproportionately affecting low and middle income countries,² but also becoming more apparent in the UK with increases in the frequency and intensity of heatwaves and more extreme weather events.³ The effects of climate change affect the most vulnerable groups even in high-income countries and exacerbate already existing health inequalities². In addition environmental degradation and biodiversity loss deprive us of the resources we need to live full and healthy lives including access to clean air, clean water and green space.

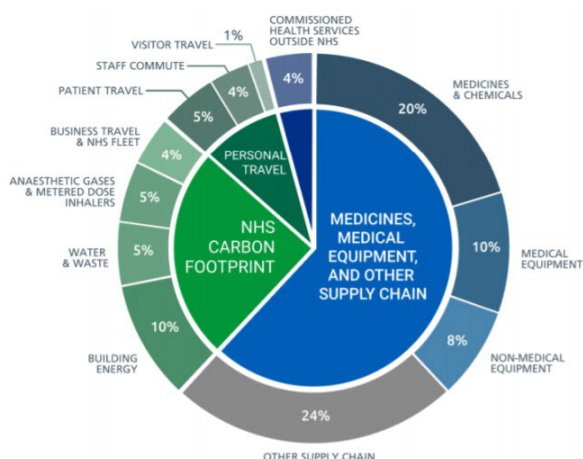
As an organisation of healthcare professionals delivering stroke care, this is of particular concern to us because some of the effects of climate change may increase the risk of stroke, worsen outcomes and will affect our ability to deliver timely, effective stroke care. Heatwaves lead to increased morbidity and mortality from cardiovascular events including stroke,⁴ flooding and other extreme weather events impact on ambulance response times and can directly affect delivery of care, and the burden on health services from these and other health threats from climate change such as spread of infectious diseases and effects on food, water and medicines security, will also have knock-on effects on services. In addition, our high-carbon lifestyles characterised by high levels of consumption across many areas, contribute to both the climate crisis and stroke risk.

BIASP has been a member of the UK Health Alliance on Climate Change since 2020 and responding to climate change is part of our strategic plan.⁵ We have signed the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation treaty. We set out this position statement and sustainability policy to guide our current and future operations and activities to ensure that we are not only advancing stroke medicine but also mitigating and adapting to the effects of the climate crisis.

b) **POSITION STATEMENT**

BIASP identifies sustainable healthcare as healthcare which meets needs of today's population without compromising the wellbeing of future generations, and value as good outcomes for patients and populations balanced with the 'triple bottom line' of minimising environmental, social and financial impacts.⁶

BIASP aims to advance stroke medicine within the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. We recognise that the delivery of stroke care is associated with considerable resource use across the range of NHS carbon hotspots including medical equipment and devices and pharmaceuticals, while stroke care pathways as a whole also contribute in terms of energy use, healthcare-associated travel and waste generation.⁷



Sources of carbon emissions by proportion of NHS Carbon Footprint Plus⁷

The precise contribution of stroke care is as yet unquantified, but given that stroke is the fourth leading cause of death and the single biggest cause of adult disability in the UK, it is reasonable to expect that the contribution of stroke care to the NHS carbon footprint is significant.

In our mission to advance stroke medicine, we have a duty to minimise its contribution to the climate crisis and wider planetary health issues. Indeed, given the deleterious effects of climate change and burning of fossil fuels on the health of people at risk of stroke and those who have already suffered a stroke, along with the health co-benefits to be gained from a move towards more sustainable lifestyles, BIASP commits to actively addressing the climate and wider ecological crisis.

BIASP will address the climate crisis through

- Addressing the environment impact of our organisation's own activities and embedding sustainability in all our practices.
- Advocating for action on climate change through the channels available to us, namely education, research, our relations with other organisations and commercial companies.
- Work to make stroke medicine more sustainable to enable stroke services to play their part in achieving the NHS net zero target

Our vision for the future is stroke care which delivers the highest clinical standards for patients in a sustainable system, where disease prevention is maximised, resource use is optimised with low carbon alternatives becoming the norm, and health and wellbeing for patients, staff and the wider population are optimised through promotion of sustainable lifestyles.

3.Role of Sustainability Lead and engagement with UKHACC⁵

In 2021 BIASP appointed a Sustainability Lead to our executive committee. This will be a permanent role on the executive committee and the holder of the post has responsibility for monitoring and minimising the environmental impact of BIASP's own activities, raising and maintaining awareness of the climate and ecological crisis among BIASP members and developing guidance on sustainable stroke care.

The sustainability lead, along with the President, will represent BIASP at the UK Health Alliance on Climate Change (UKHACC), which BIASP joined in 2020. The BIASP secretariat will be the day-to-day staff contact for UKHACC and the President is the nominated UKHACC Council Member.

The sustainability lead will chair the BIASP sustainability sub-committee, formed in 2024, to support this work



4. OUR ASSOCIATION

a) Carbon footprint of BIASP

BIASP commits to measuring our own carbon footprint to include scope 1,2 and 3 emissions on an annual basis. The first iteration of this will be complete in 2024. BIASP commits to reducing our carbon footprint year-on-year with a target of achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2040, in line with the NHS net zero ambition.

b) Finance

BIASP does not now, and will not in the future, have any direct or indirect financial investments in fossil fuels. BIASP will review annually the banks in which it holds its funds for their environmental profile and will move any funds from banks that invest in fossil fuels to those with green investment profiles.

c) BIASP meetings

We recognise that carbon emissions and air pollution are associated with travel to in-person meetings and educational events. We aim to minimise the need for travel to in-person meetings and ask attendees at any BIASP event to avoid flying, unless they start their journey overseas. We will facilitate this by ensuring that any in-person meetings have the option to be attended virtually. Our expectation is that BIASP executive and sub-committee members do not travel by air for any other BIASP business.

Executive committee meetings

Since the outbreak of the Covid 19 pandemic in 2020, all BIASP executive meetings have been held online successfully, negating the need for executive committee members and administrative staff to travel to meetings. It is our intention that these meetings will continue online with the exception of one annual meeting that will take place in-person during the UK Stroke Forum, if this is an in-person event. In this case, there will be the option for members to join virtually to prevent unnecessary travel if they are not attending the UK Stroke Forum.

Sub-committee meetings

The same principles apply for BIASP sub-committee meetings as for executive committee meetings.

Meetings between BIASP executive committee and sub-committee members and other individuals/organisation on BIASP business.

It is expected that these meetings take place virtually wherever possible. If in-person attendance is necessary, BIASP expects members to avoid air travel, unless they start their journey overseas.

Educational meetings

In 2021 the BIASP trainees' event was successfully held online, and achieved record attendance by a considerable margin. In the future, if the trainees' event is an in-person event, it will be a hybrid event to allow virtual attendance and will be held in a location that will allow easy access by public transport. Again, the expectation is that no-one should have to fly to attend a BIASP event. At the present time, all other educational events are held online and the intention is for this to continue to both maximise participation, and avoid unnecessary travel for both delegates and speakers

UK Stroke Forum

BIASP is financially responsible for one third of the annual UK Stroke Forum conference (UKSF) and can influence many aspects of the conference relevant to sustainability. We commit to working closely with the UKSF organisers to ensure that UKSF as sustainable as possible following the standards for BIASP meetings as outlined below.



Additional standards for all BIASP meetings

Carbon footprint and ease of low-carbon travel for attendees should be a key consideration when selecting venues for meetings and conferences. Meetings should be paperless unless it is essential to have hard copies of documents; ideally we would avoid any merchandise but if this is considered necessary it should be as low-carbon as possible. If catering is required, this should be plant-based, fairtrade and locally sourced wherever possible, avoid packaging and single-use items regardless of the material from which these are made and include tap not bottled water.

d) Companies we work with

Secretariat

We require the Association Management Company providing BIASP's Secretariat to have a sustainability policy that addresses the environmental impact of their operations, which includes divestment from (or non-investment in) fossil fuel companies.

Other partners

BIASP may purchase the services of other partners (e.g. web developers) and would expect them to have a sustainability policy that addresses the environmental impact of their operations, which includes divestment from (or non-investment in) fossil fuel companies.

e) Commercial engagement⁵

In our engagement with commercial companies, BIASP has an opportunity to ask these organisations to make their operations sustainable and send a clear signal about our priorities, which we hope will have wider influence in the healthcare sector.

BIASP may seek commercial sponsorship for its own events and awards and likewise, commercial organisations may seek BIASP endorsement of their events, products or educational material. In any of these cases, the commercial sponsors should not have investments in fossil fuels, and should ideally have a plan to achieve net zero carbon emissions at least as ambitious as that of the NHS, including eliminating fossil fuels from their supply chain. We will encourage sponsors not to distribute paper literature or other merchandise to delegates.

For BIASP to endorse an in-person educational event, the event must meet the standards for BIASP's own meetings as a minimum.

f) Future activities⁵

In the future, the environmental impact of any decisions taken by BIASP will be considered as standard alongside financial and other considerations. It is the responsibility of the Sustainability Lead to identify where there may be undesirable environmental impacts in BIASP's activities and highlight these alongside suggestions on how to mitigate them.



5. ADVOCACY AND ENGAGEMENT

a) Education and training⁵

BIASP will incorporate teaching on the impacts of climate change on stroke medicine and the principles of sustainable stroke care through its virtual learning hub and sessions at the UK Stroke Forum and BIASP trainees' event. We will maintain an up-to-date sustainability page on the BIASP website and promote resources and educational material to members through this and regular bulletins. We aspire to support the development of educational material on the interface between stroke medicine, climate change and planetary health and practical steps to reduce the environmental impact of stroke care.

b) Research⁵

BIASP recognises that there is currently a lack of research on the environmental impacts of stroke medicine and sustainable stroke care and will look for ways to support research in this area for example encouraging application for funding for writing groups working on this.

c) Engagement with partner organisations⁵

BIASP will promote its sustainability policy to other professional and charitable organisations with whom we have common interest, for example The Stroke Association, British Geriatric Society and Association of British Neurologists.

6.Review date

October 2027 and every 3 years thereafter

7.References

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6. Mortimer F, Isherwood J, Wilkinson A, Vaux E. Sustainability in quality improvement: redefining value. *Future Healthcare Journal*. 2018. 88-93
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