

Bleeding-heart jetsetters spell bad news for climate

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The emergence of a new generation of ‘bleeding-heart jetsetters’ has disturbing implications for the UK’s spiralling emissions from air travel, according to new research by the University of Exeter. The results of the research by the School of Geography, Archaeology and Earth Resources and University of Exeter Business School were presented by Dr Stewart Barr at the Royal Geographical Society with IBG Annual Conference.

According to a survey of over 200 people, along with focus groups and in-depth interviews, even the most committed environmentalists – identified by green trademarks such as shopping ethically, installing water and energy saving appliances and recycling – would not be prepared to accept extra ‘green taxes’ and are deeply sceptical of the

carbon offsetting schemes designed to mitigate them.

Indeed, of those questioned, 59% were against the introduction of further taxes on air travel, whilst just 15% of those questioned had used carbon offsetting. The largest group identified from the survey, the ‘eco-hypocrites’ – those who operate green households yet also choose to fly – justified their jaunts by suggesting that recycling, using energy saving lightbulbs and buying ethically-sourced groceries were sufficient to ‘trade off’ the impact of their holidays abroad.

Even the most ‘eco-conscious’ were determined to keep flying regardless of environmental cost, believing that taxes and offsetting would have little impact on the reducing emissions from flying, the researchers found.

Dr Stewart Barr of the University of Exeter’s School of Geography, Archaeology and Earth Resources said: “Ironically, our research shows that even the most bleeding-heart jetsetters aren’t willing to reduce their flying habits significantly, despite their supposedly impeccable green credentials. Low-cost air travel has become embedded into our culture here in the UK, so trying to change everyone’s behaviour, when even the most eco-conscious amongst us have very little trust in the ability of either green taxes or carbon offsetting to reduce the impact of flying, will be a formidable challenge.”

Provided by University of Exeter

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