

BROWN HIRES A LUXURY JET TO FLY TO GREEN SUMMIT

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By Macer Hall Political Editor

GORDON Brown provoked ridicule last night after chartering a luxury jet from America to fly to Japan for a conference discussing global warming.

The Prime Minister was flown on a gas-guzzling Boeing 767 private jet to attend the G8 Summit of world leaders in Hokkaido.

Downing Street's choice of private hirers – MLW Air in Dallas, Texas – added over 9,000 carbon-emitting air miles to the journey.

MLW Air chief executive Martin Woodall confirmed last night that 767 flew 4,700 miles from Dallas to collect Mr Brown.

After the 12,000 round-trip to the summit it will drop the leader off in London, then have to fly all the way back to Dallas.

The whole exercise is thought to have cost the British taxpayer at least £500,000.

Hire of the luxury 767 doesn't come cheap. Billed as the "largest VIP aircraft available in the world", it is understood to have been used to ferry guests to Tom Cruise's wedding in Italy.

Other celebrities said to have used MLW's two aircraft include the Spice Girls, David Beckham, Beyonce, Robbie Williams, Destiny's Child, Bruce Springsteen and Bob Dylan. The aircraft boasts "luxurious 60-inch seat pitch for all passengers", in-flight catering "at its finest" and pledges that the "VIP experience continues to arrival."

Conservative MP Philip Davies said: "It's absolutely striking how much these people who lecture us about using cars or taking flights rack up so many air miles themselves.

"If he started practising what he preaches, the Prime Minister might find himself a little less unpopular."

On the eve of the summit, Mr Brown issued a statement saying: "My message to the G8 will be that instead of sidelining climate change and the development agenda, the present economic crisis means we have got to accelerate them."

Mr Woodall confirmed: "The contract was arranged about 30 or 40 days ago.

"We hope we have the privilege of flying him again soon."

The journey is bound to enrage green campaigners, who say pollution from air flights is a major contributor to global warming.

Climate change is one of the key issues for the G8 summit for the leaders of the world's eight leading industrialised countries. Its logo is a sprouting plant.

Mr Brown was flying through the night to attend the summit.

He has been forced to charter aircrafts for several flights after blocking plans for a "Blair Force One" prime ministerial jet when he was Chancellor.

It is understood the accident involving a British Airways jet overshooting a Heathrow runway earlier this year has left BA without spare capacity to rent planes to Downing Street.

