Combatting climate change, without costing the earth

Low-Carbon Jargon Buster

A glossary of environmental phrases and terms to help you understand the low-carbon movement

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environmental services

TERM	MEANING
1.5°C Temperature Rise	Also known as Global Warming of 1.5°C, this refers to the rise in the average global temperature above the pre-industrial period (pre-1750).
Adaptation	Actions to reduce vulnerability to climate change impacts, reducing its effects on social, economic and natural systems.
Additionality	When relating to renewable energy, additionality is about whether the consumer's action or decision has made a genuine reduction in emissions beyond what would have happened in the first place.
Active Power	The rate of producing, transfer or using electrical energy. Measured in watts and often-shown in kW or MW.
Biodiversity	The variety of animal and plant life on Earth. A good level of biodiversity is indicative of a healthy ecosystem or habitat that can support a range of species.
Biomass & Biofuel	Fuel produced via organic matter i.e. plants and agricultural products. Using biomass is classed as a 'carbon neutral' process because the carbon dioxide released during the generation of energy is balanced by that absorbed by plants during their growth.
Business As Usual	The future emissions trend if current operational behaviours continue as they are today.
Carbon Budget	The maximum amount of carbon dioxide that can be emitted to be in line with keeping temperatures well below 2°C and pursue a 1.5°C limit to rising temperatures
Carbon Dioxide (CO^2)	A key greenhouse gas with a long lifetime in the atmosphere and both natural and human sources. Produced from decaying materials, respiration of plant and animal life, and combustion of organic matter, including fossil fuels.
Carbon Footprint	A measure of the amount of carbon dioxide or CO2 emitted through the combustion of fossil fuels. Can be calcularted for a variety of activities - on a personal, business, industry, national level or by a specific action e.g. car journey.
Carbon Neutral	Having no net release of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.
Carbon Offset	A program in which an organisation, country, etc., reduces or offsets its carbon emissions through the funding of activities and projects that improve the environment: Carbon-offsetting does not always have a quantifiable impact on the planet
Carbon Sequestration	Also known as carbon dioxide removal (CDR), this is the long-term removal, capture, or sequestration of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere to slow or reverse atmospheric CO2 pollution and to mitigate or reverse global warming.
Carbon Tax	A tax levied on fossil fuel usage usually based on the carbon content, generally designed to curb use rather than just raise revenue.
CIBSE	Chartered Institute of Building Service Engineers
Climate change	The long-term change of climate typically measured over decades or longer. This is different from the weather, which is now.
Climate Change Act (2008)	The basis for the UK's approach to tackling and responding to climate change. It commits the UK government by law to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by at least 100% of 1990 levels (net zero) by 2050.
Climate Change Adaptation Plan	Government strategy to address the main risks and opportunities re. climate change in the UK. Produced every five years. The latest program sets out what the government and others will be doing over the next 5 years to be ready for the challenges of climate change.
Climate Emergency	The adopted phrase to express how climate change is presenting as the greatest threat to life: on the economy, social well-being and the natural environment
CO^2e	Carbon dioxide equivalence: this includes all greenhouse gasses converted into the equivalent amount of carbon dioxide.
Earth Overshoot Day	Earth Overshoot Day marks the date when humanity's demand for ecological resources and services each year exceeds what Earth can regenerate in that year. We maintain this deficit by liquidating stocks of ecological resources and accumulating waste, primarily carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

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Ecosystem	Community of living organisms and the natural environment.
Energy Efficiency	Using less energy to provide the same service. For example, an LED bulb is more efficient than an incandescent bulb as it uses less electrical energy to produce the same amount of light.
Five Year Carbon Budget	Five-yearly budgets were set to meet the targets from the government's Climate Change Act (2008). They run until 2032 and limit the greenhouse gases the UK can legally emit.
Fossil Fuel	The common fossil fuels are oil, coal, and natural gas. The combustion of these contributes to carbon emissions.
Global Warming	Increase in temperature of the Earth's atmosphere over long timescales, caused by increased levels of greenhouse gasses.
Greenhouse Effect	The way gases in the earth's atmosphere trap heat. The build-up of these gases, especially carbon dioxide, is thought to cause global warming.
Greenhouse Gas (GHG)	Greenhouse gases are those that have the effect of creating a layer of atmospheric gases that disrupts the earth's ability to maintain a regular average temperature (about 15°C), each with differing lifetimes and abilities to capture heat (infrared radiation). Including Carbon Dioxide (CO^2) | Methane (CH^4) |Hydrofluorocarbons (HFC's) | Perfluorocarbons (PFC's) | Sulphur hexafluoride (SF6).
Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Protocol	A widely used standard for emissions reporting, covering project emissions reporting and corporate emissions reporting. Developed by the World Resources Institute and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development.
Grey Fleet	A term used to describe the business miles travelled by an employee in their own vehicle.
Hydroelectricity	Producing electricity by using the force of falling water to turn the turbine blades, usually accomplished by damming a river to create a source of falling water.
ISO	An independent, non-governmental international organisation with a membership of 164 national standards bodies – including the British Standards Institute (BSI) based in Geneva https://www.iso.org/about-us.html
ISO 14001	The ISO 14000 family of standards are developed by the ISO technical committee ISO/TC 207 and are the internationally recognised methodology for benchmarking and reporting environmental and sustainability management in supporting compliance with the UN sustainability development goals.
ISO 50001	ISO 50001 are the standards adopted for benchmarking and managing energy systems and are based on the model of continual improvement, used in 140001 making it easier for organizations to integrate energy management into their overall efforts to improve quality and environmental management.
Kilowatt / Hour (KW / A)	A standard unit of electrical power equal to 1,000 watts. Kilowatt-hour is a unit of energy consumed.
Low Carbon	Causing or resulting in only a relatively small net release of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.
National Grid	All electricity generated in mainland UK is fed into the National Grid before being transported via distribution networks. The National Grid owns the main transmission systems and is responsible for transmitting the electricity from the generator to the local area.
Net Zero	A balancing of greenhouse gas emissions by offsetting or sequestering an equivalent amount of greenhouse gas emissions. This should primarily be achieved through a rapid reduction in carbon emissions, followed by, offsetting through carbon credits or sequestration through rewilding or carbon capture and storage needs to be utilised.
Net Zero Target	Refers to reaching net-zero carbon emissions by a selected date, but differs from zero-carbon, which requires no carbon to be emitted as the key criteria.
Paris Agreement (2016)	An agreement within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The agreement's goal is to pursue efforts to limit the increase to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels, identifying that this would substantially reduce the impacts of climate change.
Planetary Boundaries	Energy collected from resources that are naturally replenished on a human timescale, such as sunlight, wind, water and geothermal heat.

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Renewable Energy	Energy collected from resources that are naturally replenished on a human timescale, such as sunlight, wind, water and geothermal heat.
Renewables	Types of technology, including solar, wind, hydro, that make use of energy from renewable sources (naturally replenished on a human timescale).
Resilience	The ability of a system and its component parts to anticipate, absorb, accommodate, or recover from the effects of a hazardous event in a timely and efficient manner, including through ensuring the preservation, restoration, or improvement of its essential basic structures and functions
Retro-fitting	Modifications to existing buildings that can reduce carbon footprint and improve energy efficiency.
Scope 1 Emissions	All direct emissions from the activities of an organisation or under their control. Including fuel combustion on-site such as gas boilers, fleet vehicles, and air-conditioning leaks.
Scope 2 Emissions	Indirect emissions from electricity purchased and used by the organisation. Emissions are created during the production of the energy and eventually used by the organisation.
Scope 3 Emissions	All emissions produced within the supply chain from 3rd party suppliers.
SDGs	The 17 Sustainable Development Goals adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2015. https://sdgs.un.org/goals
Sustainability	Meeting the needs of current generations, without compromising future generations or the natural environment.
Triple Bottom Line	An accounting framework that incorporates Social, Environmental and Financial performance measures as the basis of reporting business and operational KPIs. This differs from traditional reporting frameworks as it includes ecological (or environmental) and social measures. It can also be called the three Ps: people, planet, and profits.
tCO_2	Metric tonnes of carbon dioxide
UK Net Zero Target of 2050	The UK has passed laws that require the UK to bring all greenhouse gas emissions to net-zero by 2050, Net zero means any emissions would be balanced by schemes to offset the equivalent amount of greenhouse gases from the atmosphere, such as planting trees or using technology like carbon capture and storage.
Waste Residue	The portion of the waste stream (domestic and commercial) which cannot currently be recovered or recycled.
Wind Power	The conversion of energy in the wind into electrical power. This is done via wind turbines that rotate to power generators.

Have you come across a phrase you don't understand? Let us know.
We'll explain it to you in simple terms and add it to this jargon buster to help others, too.

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