



CLIMATE JARGON BUSTER

An A to Z of climate related terms

A

- **Adaptation (or Climate Adaptation):** The process of adjustment to the actual or expected impacts of climate change
- **Anthropogenic climate change:** Man-made climate change, climate change caused by human activity as opposed to natural processes.

B

- **Biodiversity:** the variety of life on Earth: species of plants and animals, genetic diversity within and between these species and the different biomes and ecosystems of which they are part, Biodiversity also includes the diversity within microscopic organisms, including bacteria, viruses and fungi. The [Business and Biodiversity Charter](#) provides a framework to help businesses in Northern Ireland engage with biodiversity, develop their biodiversity initiatives, and provides external recognition for companies involved.
- **Business Action on Climate:** Business in the Community's collaborative climate campaign that put Northern Ireland businesses at the forefront of action on the climate emergency. Find out more [here](#).

C

- **Carbon:** refers to carbon dioxide or other gaseous carbon compounds released into the atmosphere (carbon emissions). To talk about carbon emissions is simply to talk of greenhouse gas emissions: the main contributors to climate change.
- **Carbon Negative:** Removing more carbon dioxide from the atmosphere than is produced throughout a business's operations – creating a negative carbon footprint for the company.
- **Carbon Neutral:** Achieving net-zero emissions by offsetting or sequestration of the equivalent carbon it produces through its operations.
- **Carbon Offsetting:** compensating for the carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions you produce by reducing emissions somewhere else. This is

usually through sponsoring activities or projects that increase carbon dioxide absorption, such as tree planting. This must be employed to balance residual carbon emissions, and cannot replace efficiency, innovation and business transformation. It must be undertaken with a verified scheme, providing activities that are additional to any legal requirement or other commitment undertaken.

- **Carbon Positive:** when the business gives back more than it takes out, such as through creating more renewable energy than required for operations, or helping to restore a landscape such as a peat moor that stored carbon but has been depleted.
- **Carbon Sequestration:** The long-term removal, capture and storage of atmospheric carbon dioxide
- **Carbon Sinks:** Something which absorbs more carbon than it releases.
- **Carbon Zero:** An operation that has eliminated carbon and does not release carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. This can include some offsetting.
- **CCC:** The [Committee on Climate Change](#), an independent, statutory body established under the Climate Change Act 2008, to advise the UK and devolved governments on emissions targets and to report to Parliament on progress made in reducing GHG emissions and preparing for and adapting to the impacts of climate change.
- **CDP:** Formerly the [Carbon Disclosure Project](#), an international non-profit organisation supporting companies and cities to disclose the environmental impact of major corporations
- **Circular Economy:** a system designed to maximise the value of products and materials while in use, then to recover and repurpose these at the end of their lives, ultimately eliminating waste. This approach reduces demand for finite natural resources, lowering carbon and regenerating natural systems.
- **Climate Action Pledge NI:** A commitment by an organisation to reduce their absolute scope 1 and scope 2 greenhouse gas emissions by either 30% or 50% by 2030; and to work towards measuring and reporting their Scope 3 GHG emissions. Find out more [here](#).
- **Climate Breakdown:** see Climate Crisis
- **Climate Change Act:** legislation requiring the government to set legally binding carbon budgets to act as stepping-stones towards the 2050 target of net zero carbon. A carbon budget is a cap on the amount of greenhouse gases emitted in the UK over a five-year period. The first five carbon budgets have been put into legislation and run up to 2032.
- **Climate Change:** a change in global or regional climate patterns – in particular, a significant change apparent from the mid-to late-20th century onwards and attributed largely to the increased levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide produced

using fossil fuels. These increased levels of carbon dioxide cause a gradual increase in the overall temperature of the earth's atmosphere, also referred to as global warming. The impact of global warming is to exacerbate many types of climate related disasters, including storms, heat waves, floods, and droughts.

- **Climate Crisis:** is a term used to describe the consequences of global warming and climate change. There has been increased frequency of extreme weather events, this has been attributed to increased levels of manmade greenhouse gases in the atmosphere – and highlights the need for climate mitigation.
- **Climate Emergency declaration:** or declaring a climate emergency is an action taken by governments at any level to acknowledge humanity is in a climate emergency, admitting that global warming exists and that the measures taken up to this point are not enough to limit the changes brought by it. [450 UK Local Authorities](#) have declared a climate emergency, covering 90% of the population, including the Northern Ireland Assembly in February 2020.
- **Climate Justice:** addressing the climate crisis whilst also making progress towards

equity and the protection and realisation of human rights.

- **Climate Resilience:** The ability of a system to absorb stresses and retain function when external stresses from climate change are imposed upon it.
- **Closed Loop:** the process in which waste, resources or a by-product of one process or product is recycled and re-used in making another product.
- **COP26:** The [COP26](#) event is a global summit about climate change and what nations are planning to do to tackle it. COP stands for Conference of the Parties and will be attended by countries that signed the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) - a treaty agreed in 1994. COP26 will be hosted in Glasgow between 1 – 12 November 2021.
- **Cradle-to-Cradle Systems:** models human industry on the natural world, in which the flow of industrial materials are nutrients circulating in healthy, safe metabolisms. Product components can be designed for continuous recovery and re-used as biological and technical nutrients within these metabolisms.

D

- **Decarbonisation:** refers to the process of eliminating carbon from an operation.
- **Designing Out Waste:** designing products and services that use fewer

resources or designing them in a way that the components can be disassembled, re-used and recovered into production processes.

E

- **Environmental Benchmarking Survey:** An annual scored online disclosure exercise that enables businesses to benchmark themselves against peers and organisations in other sectors and demonstrate commitment to improving environmental impacts. Read more [here](#).
- **EMS: [Environmental Management System \(EMS\)](#)** is a structured framework for organisations to reduce and control their environmental impacts. Business in the Community can advise and support companies wishing to achieve EMS certification in particular to BS 8555.
- **Energy Savings Opportunity Scheme (ESOS):** A UK Government scheme that addresses the requirements of Article 8 of

the EU Energy Efficiency Directive which, in order to promote energy efficiency, requires all Member States to introduce a system of energy audits for large enterprises. Business in the Community has a qualified Lead Energy Assessor available to conduct energy audits and ensure full ESOS Compliance. Find out more [here](#).

Environmental Lifecycle Assessments: a technique to assess and evaluate the environmental impacts associated with all the stages of a product's life across its value chain, from raw material extraction through materials processing, manufacturing, distribution, use, repair and maintenance, disposal and recycling.

F

- **Footprint:** Put simply, carbon or GHG footprint is how much carbon goes into the atmosphere as a result of the activities of individuals, businesses or communities. This is usually referred to human activity (not by nature). A carbon footprint is usually expressed in equivalent tons of carbon dioxide (tCO_{2e}).

G

- **Green Recovery:** An economic stimulus for nations, businesses and communities that considers social and environmental factors as key drivers and enablers to recover sustainably.
- **Greenhouse Gas Protocol:** An established methodology to help measure and manage emissions in terms of scope.
- **Greenhouse Gases:** Greenhouse gases include water vapour, carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, ozone and some

artificial chemicals such as chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs). Greenhouse gases do occur naturally and warm the earth ('the greenhouse effect') The problem we now face is that human activities – particularly burning fossil fuels

(coal, oil and natural gas), agriculture and land clearing – are increasing the concentrations of greenhouse gases. These are causing the earth's temperature to rise too much.

I

- **Inventory:** see Footprint
- **IPCC:** The [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#) is the United Nations body for assessing the science related to climate change.

M

- **Materiality:** is the quality of being relevant or significant. A highly material issue is one that is highly relevant/significant to both internal and external stakeholders or an issue that will impact stakeholders significantly and/or an issue upon which stakeholders can have a significant impact.
- **Mitigation (or Climate Mitigation):** The efforts to reduce or prevent emissions of greenhouse gases.

N

- **Nature Based Solutions:** The sustainable management and use of nature for tackling socio-environmental challenges
- **Nature:** Elements of the natural world such as plants and animals
- **Natural Capital:** The world's stock of natural resources, which includes geology, soils, air, water and all living organisms. At its simplest, a natural capital approach is about thinking of nature as an asset, or set of assets, that benefit people.
- **Net Zero Carbon:** 'Net zero' refers to achieving net zero carbon dioxide emissions by balancing carbon emissions with carbon removal (often through carbon offsetting) or simply eliminating carbon emissions altogether. It is a balance between production of manmade greenhouse gases from sources (such as burning fossil fuels, deforestation and refrigerant gases) and capture in 'sinks' (for example, forests, soil, the ocean, negative emission technologies (NETs)).



- **No Waste to Landfill:** At least 99 per cent of generated waste is diverted away from landfill. Any waste that is produced is re-used, recycled, composted, or sent to energy recovery.
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P

- **Paris Agreement:** sets out a global framework to avoid dangerous climate change by limiting global warming to well below 2°C and pursuing efforts to limit it to 1.5°C. It also aims to strengthen countries' ability to deal with the impacts of climate change and support them in their efforts.
 - **Prosperity Agreements:** are voluntary agreements through which DAERA and any organisation in NI can explore opportunities for reducing environment and heritage impacts in ways that create prosperity and well-being.
 - **Product Lifecycle:** the sequence of stages that a product goes through, from production and manufacturing, to use, and disposal or re-use/remanufacturing.
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R

- **Renewable Resources:** resources and materials that can be repeatedly used and replaced naturally (such as solar energy, wind energy, hydropower).
 - **Resource Productivity:** using resources in an efficient way, by using fewer natural resources, or maximising the value from these resources.
 - **Resource scarcity:** natural resources that are depleting due to overuse – refers to a resource that is not infinite and limited (non-renewable resources).
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S

- **Science-Based Targets:** adopted by businesses to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. They are in line with the level of decarbonisation required to keep global temperature increase below 1.5°C compared to pre-industrial temperatures, as described in the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).
- **Scope 1:** direct resource use (such as gas for heating, fuel used in business-owned vehicles or refrigerant gas leaks).
- **Scope 2:** bought resources for use in a business's direct operations (mainly electricity).
- **Scope 3:** all indirect emissions due to the activities of a business. Scope 3 can either be upstream - indirect emissions including: purchased goods and services; waste generated in operations; business and commuting travel; transportation and



distribution. Or downstream - as products and services are used and disposed of by customers including processing of sold products; use of sold

- **Secondary Materials:** resources and materials that have already been used at least once and are being used again or remanufactured.

- **Supply Chain:** A system of production and distribution of goods and services.
- **Sustainable Drainage Systems:** Water management systems that aligns modern drainage systems with natural water processes

T

TCFD: Formed by the Financial Stability Board, the [Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures](#) develops recommendations for voluntary climate-related financial disclosures that are consistent, comparable, reliable, clear, and efficient, and provide decision-useful information to lenders, insurers, and investors.

W

- **WEF:** The [World Economic Forum Climate Initiative](#) provides a global platform to help raise ambition and accelerate climate action
- **WRI:** The [World Resources Institute](#)'s research helps integrate environmental sustainability and business strategy by providing practical guidance, tools and initiatives to help companies assess and reduce impacts along their entire value chains

Z

- **Zero Waste:** Redesign of resource life cycles so all products are re-used. The goal is for nothing to be sent to landfills or incinerators.

This document has been produced as part of a suite of resources in support of Business in the Community's Business Action on Climate campaign, and Climate Action Pledge.

For more information visit www.bitcni.org.uk/climate or email environment@bitcni.org.uk.