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# *A GUIDE TO ENVIRONMENTAL JARGON*

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## **FORWARD**

Jargon is an integral part of all sectors and industries, and for good reason! Its use can forge a sense of inclusivity to members of a select group or community, as well as help efficiently communicate niche and complex topics, in little words. However, reliance on jargon, and all community specific language, also has profound negative effects. For example, for those outside of a specific knowledge group or demographic, jargon is exceptionally alienating and bewildering. The feelings of isolation that this can create is a phenomenon that often lowers external engagement with a sector. Asking for more information on words that seem to be simple for others can be incredibly shameful, with individuals too intimidated to ask for help. This is not something unknown to discussions around environmental concerns – when surveyed, over two thirds (67%) of people who work in the environmental sector said they encountered jargon they don't understand some of the time, or oftentimes – and 0% said they never encountered jargon. If this is the case for people within this highly technical sector, what is to be said about the general public? This alienation and confusion are costs that within environmental discussions about topics that affect us all - are simply too high to pay. As someone with very little experience in the environmental sector, this is something that I have realised while working for the Tees Valley Nature Partnership. Consequently, I have compiled this ever-growing list of terms, stretching from intricate and technical initialisms to general buzzwords with cloudy meanings to try help those wishing to engage in nature-based discussions, but can struggle to keep up.

*Henrietta Porritt, TVNP Assistant 2023.*

### **BIODEGRADEABLE:**

Adj: Able to decay in a natural process that does not harm the environment.

*“This material is **biodegradable**.”*

Other forms: **Biodegrade**, verb.

Often confused with *compostable*. (see page ...)

### **BIODIVERSITY:**

Noun: The biological variety within a particular ecosystem or the world as a whole.

*“The planet is currently facing a **biodiversity** crisis”.*

Other forms: **Biodiverse**, adj.

### **BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN:**

Noun: An overall increase in the value of biodiversity in a particular area.

*“One way to recover nature is to adopt a **biodiversity net gain** approach.”*

### **BIOENERGY:**

Noun: The energy produced from burning biofuel.

*“**Bioenergy** is renewable”.*

### **BIOFUEL:**

Noun: Fuel made from biomass.

*“**Biofuel** is a renewable energy source that can be produced in a short amount of time but can still emit a large amount of CO2.”*

### **BIOMASS:**

Noun: 1. Plant material used as fuel. 2. The mass of living organisms in a certain area.

1. “**Biomass** is used to create biofuel.”
2. “On land there is around 1000 times more plant than animal **biomass**”.

### **BLUE CARBON:**

Noun: Carbon stored within the world's coastal and ocean ecosystems.

“**Blue carbon** solutions are a crucial part of a Net Zero future”.

### **BLENDED FINANCE:**

Noun: A process of funding that combines public and private investments.

“**Blended finance** mixes different forms of capital.”

### **CARBON CAPTURE:**

Noun: A process that prevents CO<sub>2</sub> from being released, instead storing it underground.

“The first **UK carbon capture** plants will be based in Teesside.”

### **CARBON CREDIT:**

Noun: A tradeable permit allowing an organisation to emit a certain amount of greenhouse gases. They are generated through removing pre-existing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions or reducing emissions.

“Many companies are reducing their overall carbon emissions through the use of **carbon credits**. “

### **CARBON FOOTPRINT:**

Noun: The sum of an individual or an organisation's carbon emissions.

“Many people are now making efforts to reduce their **carbon footprint**.”

### **CARBON NEUTRAL:**

Adj: Describes a person or body whose carbon emissions are offset by carbon reduction.

“Amazon pledged to become **carbon neutral** by 2040.”

Often confused with: *Net Zero*.

### **CARBON SEQUESTRATION:**

Noun: The process of capturing CO<sub>2</sub> out of the atmosphere and storing it. This can be through processes that are biological, geological or technological.

“Forest regrowth is a type of biological **carbon sequestration**.”

### **CARBON STOCKS:**

Noun: The amount of stored carbon that has been sequestered out of the atmosphere

“**Carbon Stocks** are a great thing for individuals to invest in If they want to contribute to a net zero future”.

### **CLIMATE ADAPTATION:**

Noun: The process of adjusting to changes in climate and the subsequent effects of such change.

“**Climate adaptation** is crucial to surviving the long-term effects of the climate emergency.”

### **CLIMATE EMERGENCY:**

Noun: An alternative to previously used terms such as ‘Climate Change’ and ‘Global Warming’ that denote the rapid changes in climate.

“We must be well equipped to fight the **climate emergency**.”

### **COMPOSTABLE:**

Adj: Made of natural matter, can be degraded into compost.

“Plenty of food waste is **compostable**”.

Often confused with: *biodegradable*.

### **COP (15/27):**

Acronym: Conference of Parties. These are meetings of nations to discuss climate change (COP27) and biodiversity (COP15).

“**COP27** was held in Sharm-el-Sheikh last year, while **COP15** was held in Montréal.”

### **CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY:**

Noun: A philanthropic business model where companies bear responsibility to contribute to the enhancement of society and the natural world.

“Many environmental projects can be aided by **corporate social responsibility**”.

### **DECARBONISATION:**

Noun: The measures by which organisations can lower their carbon footprint.

“Many businesses are aiming to **decarbonise** their practises.”

### **DEFRA:**

Acronym: The Government Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

“**DEFRA** is responsible for policy in areas such as, biodiversity, conservation and forestry.”

### **DIEBACK:**

Noun: The state where trees and shrubs begin to die from their tips moving in.

“**Dieback** can be caused by many different factors, including pathogens, insects and damage to the plant.”

### **ECOSYSTEM SERVICES:**

Noun: The benefits that nature provides to humanity.

“**Ecosystem services** have a profound impact on our quality of life.”

### **FAIRTRADE:**

Noun: An arrangement designed to give producers in developing countries sustainable and fair trade agreements with those in developed nations.

“The **Fairtrade** Foundation is a UK charity that sets standards of trade with disadvantaged producers in developing nations.”

### **GEODIVERSITY:**

Noun: The diversity of rocks, minerals and landforms that form the Earth’s landscape.

“**Geodiversity** is crucial to the Earth’s natural processes”.

### **GREENHOUSE EFFECT:**

Noun: The process whereby greenhouse gas levels trap heat within the Earth’s lower atmosphere.

“The **greenhouse effect** is a leading cause of climate change.”

### **GREENHUSHING:**

Verb: Where companies do not disclose information surrounding their environmental policy and targets.

“Many are concerned about the rise in corporate **greenhushing**.”

### **GREEN SOCIAL PRESCRIBING:**

Verb: A method of tackling ill mental health by outdoor engagement.

“**Green social prescribing** taps into the mental health benefits of the natural world”

### **GREEN TARIFF:**

Noun: A set electricity rate that allows the customer to receive 100% green energy.

“By purchasing **green tariffs**, consumers demonstrate a desire for green energy”.

### **GREENWASHING:**

Verb: The practice of a company manipulating environmental statistics to make them appear environmentally friendly while in reality, contributing little to environmental recovery.

“Many companies have been accused of **greenwashing**.”

### **IPCC:**

Initialism: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. A body of the UN tasked with advancing knowledge about human-induced climate change.

“**IPCC** report is code red for humanity.”

### **LANDSCAPE APPROACH:**

Noun: A collaborative approach that spans multiple sectors.

“**Landscape approaches** are becoming increasingly popular.”

### **MARSHLAND:**

Noun: A form of wetland that features high amounts of herbaceous plant life, such as grasses.

“Portrack **Marsh** is an important nature reserve at the heart of Tees Valley.”

### **MICROPLASTIC:**

Noun: Tiny pieces of plastic that are usually the result of degraded consumer products.

“**Microplastics** are very hard to remove once within the natural environment.”

### **MITIGATE:**

Verb: To reduce the harm or severity of something.

“Trees can help **mitigate** the effects of flooding.”

Other forms: Mitigation (noun).



### **NATURAL ASSETS:**

Noun: Stock of natural resources.

“Are you aware of the value provided by your area’s **natural assets**?”

### **NATURAL CAPITAL:**

Noun: The resources provided by nature that prove valuable to human populations, this can be clean air, food and carbon reducing forests – among other things.

“More and more companies are investing in **Natural Capital**.”

### **NATURAL CAPITAL ATLAS:**

Noun: An atlas mapping all the Natural Capital indicators.

“Four **Natural Capital Atlases** have been released across England.”

### **NATURAL CAPITAL INDICATOR:**

Noun: A measure of change within natural capital.

“**Natural Capital Indicators** were developed to measure change in natural capital.”

### **NATURE CONSERVATION:**

Noun: A movement and process focused on protecting the natural environment and species from extinction and degradation.

“**Nature conservation** is crucial in creating a better natural environment to live in.”

### **NATURE RECOVERY:**

Noun: The process of restoring and recovering the environment and its biodiversity that has been damaged.

“Everyone should be part of the **nature recovery** effort.”

### **NET ZERO:**

Noun: The state where all carbon emissions into the atmosphere are equal to those removed.

“The UK have set a target to reach Net Zero emissions by 2050”.

Often confused with: ***Carbon Neutral***.

### **NNR:**

Initialism: Natural Nature Reserves. Spaces designated by Natural England as important natural sites.

“**Teesmouth** is an NNR.”

### **NUTRIENT NEUTRALITY:**

Noun: A way to ensure that development and projects do not affect nutrient concentrations in one area.

‘Achieving **nutrient neutrality** for new developments.’

### **OFFSHORE WIND:**

Noun: A term used to refer to wind turbines off the coast.

“**Offshore wind** generates a good source of renewable energy.”

### **PEAT:**

Noun: A soil like substance comprised of dead or decaying plant life.

‘Dry **peat** releases CO<sub>2</sub> and is a large source of greenhouse gas emissions’

### **PEATLAND:**

Noun: Wetland landscapes consisting of peat.

‘Peatland store twice as much carbon as all the world’s forests.’

## **REWILDING:**

Verb: To restore land to its natural state.

‘Rewilding allows nature to take care of itself.’

## **SSSI:**

Initialism: Site of Special Scientific Interest that is protected due to it being habitat to unique or crucial species.

“Teessmouth and Cleveland Coast makes up an **SSSI** integral to the local landscape.”

## **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:**

Noun: Development (economic and physical) that does not compromise environmental or personal health and wellbeing.

‘In 2015, countries adapted the UN’s 17 goals for **sustainable development**.’

## **SUSTAINABILITY:**

Noun: The goal of living in a way that minimises the depletion of natural resources so that human life can sustain itself on Earth for a long time.

‘More and more individuals are aiming for **sustainability** within their practices.’

Other forms: Sustainable, adj.

## **WCAF:**

Initialism: Woodland Creation Acceleration Fund, a government fund designed to help local authorities plant more trees.

‘Tees Valley will receive £300,000 as part of the Government’s **WCAF** scheme.’

