

A glossary of terms for Sustainability

PRODUCED IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE ESSA SUSTAINABILITY
WORKING GROUP & GREEN CIRCLE SOLUTIONS.

Who are we?

ESSA SUSTAINABILITY WORKING GROUP

With sustainability on more and more agendas throughout the industry, ESSA's Sustainability Working Group will be creating resources and advice for members to meet their client's ever-changing requirements.

The group will be advocates for the ESSA Sustainability module, working with ESSA to develop the module following feedback from users and new regulations. Group members will support ESSA in ensuring Venues and Organisers understand the value of the accreditation process

GREEN CIRCLE SOLUTIONS

A forward thinking company striving to deliver sustainability solutions and excellence for events, exhibitions and businesses.

With a team of qualified sustainability professionals with decades of experience and knowledge working in the events industry, we provide an innovative service that builds sustainability into the heart of events, exhibitions and organisations.

We understand that each business and event is different to the next and offer simple, easy to understand advice and honest consultancy to support you on your sustainability journey.

What is Sustainability?

Sustainability is a wide and complex subject, so we have collated this useful glossary of some of the terms you may come across as you start your sustainability journey.

This is intended as a live document so please feel free to send us feedback, or let us know any other specific areas you come across that warrant better definition.

Terms	Acronym	Definition	Additional Notes
Brundtland Report		Our Common Future, also known as the Brundtland Report, was published on October 1987 by the United Nations	Sustainability as defined in the Brundtland Report: "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."
B-Corporation	B-Corps	Certified B Corporations are a new kind of business that balances purpose and profit.	They are legally required to consider the impact of their decisions on their workers, customers, suppliers, community, and the environment.
Carbon credit		A carbon credit is a generic term for any tradable certificate or permit representing the right to emit one tonne of carbon dioxide or the equivalent amount of a different greenhouse gas.	
Carbon cycle		The carbon cycle is the natural cycle by which carbon is exchanged among the biosphere, hydrosphere, and atmosphere of the Earth. Carbon is the natural building block of nearly all life.	Carbon dioxide naturally exists in the atmosphere, but through the burning of fossil fuels CO ₂ is building in the atmosphere so rapidly that it is causing a green house effect, leading to global warming
Carbon footprint	CO ₂ e	Emissions of greenhouse gases (in carbon equivalent) for an activity or organisation over a given period of time. Measured in tonnes or Kg	Also refer to GWP
Carbon neutral		Achieving net zero carbon emissions by balancing carbon emitted with an equivalent amount sequestered or offset, or buying enough carbon credits to make up the difference.	
Carbon offsetting		Reducing emissions of greenhouse gases by purchasing credits through emissions reduction projects or carbon trading schemes.	Carbon offsetting, and claiming carbon neutrality, only makes sense if a company is making positive steps to reduce its carbon emissions

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Carbon reduction		Positive action by a company or organisation to reduce its carbon emissions	
Carbon sequestration		The capture and storage of carbon from the atmosphere, for example by planting trees.	
Circular Economy	CE	An alternative to a traditional linear economy ('make, use, dispose') in which resources are kept in use for as long as possible, the maximum value extracted from them whilst in use, and then products and materials recovered and regenerated at the end of each service life.	A circular economy is based on the principles of designing out waste and pollution, keeping products and materials in use, and regenerating natural systems.
Climate Change Committee	CCC	An independent non-departmental public body, formed under the Climate Change Act to advise the United Kingdom and devolved Governments and Parliaments on tackling and preparing for climate change	
Climate Change Levy	CCL	A tax on energy delivered to non-domestic users in the United Kingdom.	Its aim is to provide an incentive to increase energy efficiency and to reduce carbon emissions; however, there have been ongoing calls to replace it with a proper carbon tax.
Closed loop		The most sustainable economic system, where the inputs used to create a product are the same as its end-of-life outputs.	It is a zero waste system that completely reuses, recycles or composts all materials.
Corporate Social Responsibility	CSR	A management concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations.	
Cradle to cradle		Using the end use product ('waste') for the source of a new product: a circular economy. All products can be designed for continuous recovery and re-utilisation.	

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Cradle to grave		Accounting for the impact of producing a product, from creation to end use. It is a linear flow: 'take-make-throw away'.	
Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy	BEIS	The Gov.UK department responsible for UK Sustainability	https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-business-energy-and-industrial-strategy
Ellen Macarthur Foundation		Develops and promotes the idea of a circular economy.	https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/
Energy Savings Opportunity Scheme	ESOS	is a mandatory energy assessment scheme, introduced by the UK government to make sure large enterprises in the UK are energy efficient.	Under the scheme, large organisations are required to assess their energy usage every 4 years and to find new ways to save energy.
Environmental Impact Assessment	EIA	An assessment of the likely significant environmental effects arising from a proposed development in a systematic way.	Specifically used in UK planning permission process but can be applied in context to any business or project.
Environmental Management Systems	EMS	A framework that helps an organisation achieve its environmental goals through consistent review, evaluation, and improvement of its environmental performance.	
Environmental, Social and Corporate Governance	ESG	The non financial pillars for measuring the sustainability and societal impact of an investment in a company or business.	Investors are increasingly applying these non-financial factors as part of their analysis process to identify material risks and growth opportunities.
Forest Stewardship Council	FSC	Gives the public reassurance that timber products originating from a forest are managed in a responsible and sustainable way	
Fossil fuel		Coal, oil and Natural Gas fuels were formed from the fossilized, buried remains of plants and animals that lived millions of years ago. Because of their origins, fossil fuels have a high carbon content.	

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Global Warming Potential	GWP	The global warming effect of a GHG relative to CO2. So if CO2 has a GWP of 1, methane for example has a GWP of 25 ie it has a GWP 25 x higher than CO2	
Greenhouse Effect		The build up up greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, acting like the glass of a greenhouse, causing the earths atmosphere to warm.	
Greenhouse Gas	GHG	A gas that contributes to the greenhouse effect that is causing global warming.	Although the main GHG in terms of volume is CO2, there are many other gases that contribute to the greenhouse effect. See GWP
Greenhouse Gas Protocol	GHG Protocol	An international standard for corporate GHG accounting and reporting.	https://ghgprotocol.org/
GHG - Scope 1 emissions		Scope 1 emissions are direct emissions from owned or controlled sources	For example fuel used in company cars, LNG Natural Gas for heating
GHG -Scope 2 emissions		Scope 2 emissions are indirect emissions from the generation of purchased energy	For example electricity purchased from the National Grid
GHG -Scope 3 emissions		Scope 3 emissions are indirect emissions from sources you do not own or control	For example business flights, train travel, consumable materials
ISO 20121 - event sustainability management systems - 2012	ISO 20121	International standard for event sustainability management systems	
ISO14001 - environmental management systems 2015	ISO 14001	International standard for environmental management systems	A set of processes and practices that enable an organisation to measure and ultimately reduce its environmental impacts.
Linear economy		Source and harvest resource - produce/manufacture - dispose/waste	

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Open loop		Open loop recycling refers to recycling a product into a different product.	For example, often plastic water bottles are recycled into sleeping bags or fleece jackets.
PAS 2060 - Carbon Neutrality	PAS2060	Specification for the demonstration of carbon neutrality	
Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification	PEFC	An international, non-profit, non-governmental organization which promotes sustainable forest management through independent third party certification.	
Publicly Available Specification	PAS	A Publicly Available Specification or PAS is a standardisation document that closely resembles a formal standard in structure and format but which has a different development model.	The objective of a Publicly Available Specification is to speed up standardisation. PASs are often produced in response to an urgent market need.
Renewable energy		Useful energy that is collected from renewable resources, which are naturally replenished on a human timescale, including carbon neutral sources like sunlight, wind, rain, tides, waves, and geothermal heat.	Unlike fossil fuels which when burnt now cannot be replenished on a human timescale
Resilience		The capacity of an organisation or individual to survive or even thrive in the face of unforeseen changes.	Sometimes used in place of 'sustainability', resilience looks for ways to manage in an imbalanced world, whereas 'sustainability' seeks to put the world back into balance.
Stream Lined Energy and Carbon Reporting 2019	SECR	A new industry legislation that was introduced in April 2019, replacing the Carbon Reduction Commitment (CRC) scheme.	SECR focuses on a company's emissions, whereas ESOS examines energy use. SECR applies to large companies but not yet SMEs
Sustainability		Oxford English dictionary: the ability to be maintained at a certain rate or level. Cambridge English Dictionary: the quality of being able to continue over a period of time.	Sustainability as defined in the Brundtland Report: Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties	COP26	UN summit that brought parties together to accelerate action towards the goals of the Paris Agreement and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.	Most recently held in Glasgow, November 2021.
United Nations Sustainability Development Goals	UN SDGs	The 17 goals set by the UN to guide global sustainable development	https://sdgs.un.org/goals

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Verified Carbon Standard	VCS	The VCS Program is the world's most widely used voluntary GHG program. Delivering and managing programmes of verified carbon sequestration. Managed by VERRA	https://verra.org/project/vcs-program/registry-system/verified-carbon-units-vcus/
Verified Carbon Units	VCU	Emission reductions certified by our program are eligible to be issued as VCUs, with one VCU representing one metric tonne of greenhouse gas emissions reduced or removed from the atmosphere.	
Waste & Resources Action Programme	WRAP	British registered charity. It works with businesses, individuals and communities to achieve a circular economy, by helping them reduce waste, develop sustainable products and use resources in an efficient way.	https://wrap.org.uk/
Woodland Carbon Code	WCC	The Woodland Carbon Code is the voluntary standard for UK woodland creation projects where claims are made about the carbon dioxide they sequester.	https://www.woodlandcarboncode.org.uk/

This glossary of terms is ever evolving so if you feel like anything is missing please feel free to submit any missing terms to Green Circle Solutions.

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Interested to join the Cross Association Sustainability Working Group? Please contact your relevant association.

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