

Climate Action Fund: Glossary and Jargon buster

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Word/Phrase	Meaning	Notes
Carbon dioxide equivalent (CO ₂ e)	Carbon dioxide equivalent (CO ₂ e) is the universal unit of measurement to indicate the global warming potential (GWP) of GHGs, expressed in terms of the GWP of one unit of carbon dioxide. (For example, the gas with the highest GWP is sulphur hexafluoride (SF ₆), used in the production of insulation for medium and high voltage electrical installations. It has a 100-year GWP of 23,900 times that of CO ₂ .)	The GWPs used in the calculation of CO ₂ e are based on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Fourth Assessment Report (AR4) over a 100-year period so that the GHG conversion factors are consistent with current national and international reporting requirements. GHG conversion factors, comprise the effects of CO ₂ , and other non-carbon GHGs including methane (CH ₄) and nitrous oxide (N ₂ O) and are used to convert activity data, e.g. distance travelled, tonnes of waste disposed into CO ₂ e. This enables consistent reporting of GHG emissions using a universally agreed methodology. The source of these in the UK is the Department of Business Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) . These are freely accessible and can be used to assess the carbon emissions (CO ₂ e) of a given activity.
Climate Change		Use climate breakdown or climate change or global heating when describing it specifically in a

		scientific or geophysical sense e.g. "Scientists say climate breakdown has led to an increase in the intensity of hurricanes". ¹
Greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs)	A greenhouse gas is a gas that absorbs and emits radiant energy within the thermal infrared range. Greenhouse gases cause the greenhouse effect on planets. The primary greenhouse gases in Earth's atmosphere are water vapor, carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, and ozone.	This is the term to use when referring to the collection of gases causing the greenhouse effect on Earth. There are seven main greenhouse gases (GHGs) that contribute to climate change, covered by the Kyoto Protocol: carbon dioxide (CO ₂), methane (CH ₄), nitrous oxide (N ₂ O), hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), perfluorocarbons (PFCs), sulphur hexafluoride (SF ₆) and nitrogen trifluoride (NF ₃). Avoid decarbonisation or negative emissions.
Climate Action	Stepped-up efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-induced impacts.	
Global warming potential (GWP)	A term used to describe the relative potency, molecule for molecule, of a greenhouse gas , taking account of how long it remains active in the atmosphere. The global-warming potentials (GWPs) currently used are those calculated over 100 years. Carbon dioxide (CO ₂) is taken as the	The GWPs used in the calculation of CO ₂ e are based on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Fourth Assessment Report (AR4) over a 100-year period so that the GHG conversion factors are consistent with current national and international reporting requirements. GHG conversion factors, comprise the effects of CO ₂ ,

¹ The Guardian – 'It's a crisis, not a change': the six Guardian language changes on climate matters - <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/oct/16/guardian-language-changes-climate-environment>

	<p>gas of reference and given a 100-year GWP of 1.</p>	<p>and other non-carbon GHGs including methane (CH₄) and nitrous oxide (N₂O) and are used to convert activity data, e.g. distance travelled, tonnes of waste disposed into CO₂e. This enables consistent reporting of GHG emissions using a universally agreed methodology. The source of these in the UK is the Department of Business Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). These are freely accessible and can be used to assess the carbon emissions (CO₂e) of a given activity.</p> <p>https://unfccc.int/process/transparency-and-reporting/greenhouse-gas-data/greenhouse-gas-data-unfccc/global-warming-potentials</p>
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Carbon emissions / Carbon dioxide emissions	<p>Carbon dioxide (CO₂) is the primary greenhouse gas emitted through human activities.</p> <p>The main human activity that emits CO₂ is the combustion of fossil fuels (coal, natural gas, and oil) for energy and transportation.²</p>	<p>This may well be the most accurate term to use if, for example, referring to the emissions caused by the burning of fossil fuels. However, it should be noted that this isn't to be used as a catch all when talking about greenhouse gas emissions as a whole.</p>
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Acronyms

(Some definitions taken from 'Oh FFS: A Guide to Climate Change Acronyms' – The New Humanitarian³)

Acronym	Definition
CO ₂	Carbon dioxide. Along with methane (CH ₄), nitrous oxide (N ₂ O), and other gases, carbon dioxide is one of the key components of the greenhouse gases (GHGs) responsible for climate change.
CO ₂ e	Carbon dioxide equivalent is the universal unit of measurement to indicate the global warming potential (GWP) of GHGs, expressed in terms of the GWP of one unit of carbon dioxide.
COP	The Conference of the Parties that have signed on to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The convention is the 1992 treaty, now signed by 197 countries, where nations agreed to the "stabilisation of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic

² United States Environment Protection Agency – Overview of Greenhouse Gases - <https://www.epa.gov/ghgemissions/overview-greenhouse-gases>

³ The New Humanitarian - 'A Guide to Climate Change Acronyms' - <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2019/12/09/oh-ffs-guide-climate-change-acronyms>

	interference with the climate system” – in other words, they pledged to tackle human-caused climate change. COP26 was held in Glasgow on 31 October – 13 November 2021.
GHG	Greenhouse gases. There are seven main greenhouse gases (GHGs) that contribute to climate change, covered by the Kyoto Protocol: carbon dioxide (CO ₂), methane (CH ₄), nitrous oxide (N ₂ O), hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), perfluorocarbons (PFCs), sulphur hexafluoride (SF ₆) and nitrogen trifluoride (NF ₃).
IPCC	The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is the expert body that sifts through, appraises, and compiles the rapidly expanding trove of scientific research into a mammoth compendium outlining what we know about climate change.
NDC	Nationally Determined Contributions spell out each country's actions to reduce emissions and adapt to a warming world. In other words, the NDCs are national gameplans to fight climate change.