

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

G101 Theme 4 - Sustainability

BIOFUELS

A type of fuel whose energy is derived from biological carbon such as oil extracted from crops.

CARBON FOOTPRINTS

The net amount of carbon dioxide or other carbon compounds emitted into the atmosphere by the activities of an individual, company, country etc.

CARBON NEUTRAL

Carbon neutral denotes a situation where carbon emitted is balanced by carbon saved elsewhere (eg by investment in zero carbon technology for the future, sponsoring tree planting).

CITY FARMS/COMMUNITY GARDENS

Existing in urban areas, these community led and managed projects are created in response to a lack of access to green space. They range from tiny wildlife gardens to fruit and vegetable plots on housing estates, community poly-tunnels and large city farms.

CODE FOR SUSTAINABLE HOMES

This is an environmental assessment method for rating and certifying the performance of new homes. It is a national standard for use in the design and construction of new homes with a view to encouraging continuous improvement in sustainable home building and energy efficiency.

CONSUMERISM

The desire to purchase goods and services by individuals. Consumerism may benefit the economy but it commonly has negative connotations in terms of issues like the neglect of human/spiritual values in favour of material possessions, increasing personal (unsustainable) debt and environmental damage.

EARTH SUMMIT: RIO DE JANEIRO 1992

A meeting of UN Governments to rethink development and halt the destruction of irreplaceable natural resources and pollution of the planet.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY INDEX (ESI)

Tracks 21 elements of environmental sustainability covering natural resources, pollution levels, environmental management and society's capacity to improve its environmental performance over time.

GDP (GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT)

Gross Domestic Product is the market value of all goods and services produced/provided within the geographical boundaries of a country. GDP per Capita is this total value divided by the total population of the country. It often used as an indicator of the country's standard of living.

GM (GENETICALLY MODIFIED) FOODS

Are foods that have been artificially changed by scientists. Their genetic structure has been altered in an attempt to improve features like shape, size, taste and productivity/ disease resistance.

GNP (GROSS NATIONAL PRODUCT)

Gross National Product is the market value of all goods and services produced/provided by a country's citizens in a year regardless of their location (the income from goods and services can be generated abroad but accrue to the source nation).

GUERRILLA GARDENING

Is gardening on land without the owner's permission. It can include an over-enthusiastic gardener who overflows their legal boundaries or the politically motivated gardener who uses public or unused land to grow plants and vegetables (similar to a gardening 'squatter').

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX (HDI)

Combines the indicators of life expectancy, educational attainment and income to form one composite measure of countries' development.

INTERGENERATIONAL EQUITY

The idea that resources, such as the quality and diversity of the environment, do not 'belong' to any generation but should be preserved intact for all future generations.

INTERGENERATIONAL JUSTICE

The concept of fairness in the use of the world's resources from generation to generation (ie the rights of future generations should not be damaged by current activity).

LANDFILL TAX

Is the monetary tax or levy applied to a unit weight of waste to be disposed of in a landfill site. It encourages waste producers to produce less waste and recover more value from waste through recycling.

MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Adopted by world leaders in the year 2000 and set to be achieved by 2015, the MDG provide numerical benchmarks for tackling poverty. Goal 7 is to ensure environmental sustainability.

OFF-GRID ENERGY

This is the production / storage of energy on a local or individual household scale using renewable sources such as solar energy and wind power. 'Off-grid' refers to not accessing the national grid system which stores and distributes electrical or gas supplies to homes.

OVERPOPULATION

This is the condition where a country or region's population is higher than can be sustained adequately by its resources e.g. India, China. Commonly leads to widespread poverty, poor health and living conditions, low life expectancy etc.

QUALITY OF LIFE

A person's level of satisfaction regarding their cultural, social, environmental and personal condition.

Shopocalypse The idea that the end of human life will be brought about through the negative consequences of excessive shopping (see Consumerism).

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES ACT

This Act was passed in 2007. Its aim is to promote the sustainability of local communities in social, economic and environmental terms.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

UN COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The Commission was set up in 1992 by the UN General Assembly to ensure an effective follow up from the Earth Summit. It is responsible for the implementation of Agenda 21 and policy guidance.

UNDERPOPULATION

This is the condition where a country or region's population is lower than can be sustained adequately by its resources e.g. Australia, Canada. Although populations may currently benefit from high standards of living, the future may hold economic problems for countries with falling birth rates and ageing populations (lack of an adequate working population).

WELL-BEING

A good or satisfactory state of existence. It is characterised by a variety of factors that include health, happiness, welfare and prosperity.

WORKPLACE AFFLUENZA

It is from the words 'affluence' (wealth) and influenza (flu). It explains the problems that occur when individuals are in pursuit of wealth and material possessions at the expense of other sources of happiness.

ZERO CARBON

The UK government's definition of 'Zero Carbon' means net emissions from houses and activities within them over the course of a year should be zero. Surpluses of power (eg from solar panels in summer) would balance emissions in other periods. The UK Government's target is to make all new homes zero carbon by 2016.