Film Hub North

BFI FAN
BFI FILM AUDIENCE NETWORK

THE NATIONAL LOTTERY

Demystifying Terms 101

A Glossary of Sustainability Terms for Funding & Capital Investments.

JB BFI THE NATIONAL LOTTERY

SUSTAINABLE SCREEN RESOURCE HUB

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

This document defines some of the key terms used in applications and grants for capital-based sustainability funding.

It has been prepared by Georgia Ewington (MA in Film and Television: Research and Production, University of Birmingham) as part of their student placement with Film Hub North. It is not an exhaustive list, and has been designed for cultural organisations and the screen sector. Refer to the linked resources for further information.

Overview

Biofuels

Fuels – liquid or gas – produced from bio-mass, generally from plants or animals.

These are renewable alternatives to fossil fuels and release less greenhouse gas emissions when burned. Some examples include ethanol (from crops such as corn or sugarcane), biodiesel (vegetable oils or animal fats), and HVO (hydrotreated vegetable oils, which is fully usable in existing diesel engines or infrastructure). They are also biodegradable and non-toxic, improving environmental safety. However, they are typically more expensive and less widely available. In some cases, there are significant biodiversity and deforestation losses associated with increasing demand for biofuels.

Learn More ↓

Biofuels
International Energy Agency

Biofuels policies to massively increase deforestation by 2030 – study
European Federation for Transport and Environment

Carbon Footprint

A measure of the amount of greenhouse gases released as a result of our actions.

It is important to understand how actions contribute to climate change, and then to use this information to inform decisions. You can do this through a calculator, such as the Creative Climate Tools (free, designed for the cultural sector). Carbon footprints are models with simplified representations based on assumptions. Whilst they are useful, they are not perfect and can ignore broader environmental and ethical impacts, such as justice or biodiversity.

Climate Adaptation

The process of adjusting to actual or expected climate change impacts.

There is no one-size-fits-all in adaptations, and communities and organisations will have varying solutions that are best implemented. This may be building flood defences, redesigning communication systems or updating policies, for example. Adaptation is a critical component of the long-term global response to climate change.

Learn More ↓

Resources on Adaptation
Julie's Bicycle

Adapting our Culture toolkit
Cultural Adaptations

Maximising UK Adaptation to Climate Change
MACC Hub

Local Climate Adaptation Tool
University of Exeter

Climate Justice

A movement recognising the unequal and exacerbating impacts climate change has on different groups, and the need for a fair and just global response.

Those responsible for the most carbon emissions tend to be the least impacted by climate change; in contrast, those generating minimal greenhouse gas emissions are often disproportionately impacted. This is distinct from environmental justice, which specifically focuses on the inequitable exposure to hazards such as air and water pollution, chemicals, waste, and the ecological destruction of marginalised people and ecosystems.

Learn More ↓

Creative Climate Justice Guide
Julie's Bicycle

ClimateJust map tool
ClimateJust

Climate Resilience

The ability of a system or community to withstand, recover from, or bounce back stronger after climate-related disruptions.

This involves a comprehensive understanding of potential climate risks, and preparing for interconnected events – it can sometimes include adaptation. It requires a holistic approach that incorporates nature, humans, biodiversity, social, and physical preparedness.

Learn More ↓

What is the difference between climate change adaptation and resilience?
London School of Economics and Political Science

Independent Assessment of UK Climate Risk
UK Climate Risk

Climate Risk Mapping for London's Cultural Venues
Julie's Bicycle

Digital Sustainability

The use and design of digital technologies in ways that are environmentally, socially and economically sustainable.

This includes using cloud storage, data centres, devices and artificial intelligence (AI) in ways that minimise their environmental impacts as much as possible. The more digital products used, the more physical infrastructure is required – minerals for devices, data centres that use significant amounts of water and power.

Learn More ↓

Guide to your digital carbon footprint
Culture for Climate Scotland

Green Web Directory
Green Web Foundation

Energy Efficiency

Using less energy to achieve the same outcome, often for lighting or appliances.

This can include switching to LED bulbs or improving insulation to reduce heat loss. Minimising energy waste can cut costs, lower carbon emissions, and reduce pressure on energy systems. The UK Government's Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) scheme assesses the energy efficiency of a building from A to G, and supports informed decisions about buying or improving energy efficiency.

Learn More ↓

Energy
Sustainable Screen Resource Hub

Screen Savers webinar
Julie's Bicycle

Transforming Energy programme insights
Julie's Bicycle

What to ask your [festival] energy supplier
Powerful Thinking

Environmental Management

How people and organisations monitor and reduce their impact on the environment.

This can encompass individuals, organisations, or governing bodies assessing, controlling and improving their interactions with the natural world. This involves planning and decision making to support sustainability, biodiversity and climate goals, often through structured systems, impact assessments or sustainability reporting. It involves actions such as reducing emissions, managing waste, conserving energy and water.

Learn More ↓

Getting to Grips with Environmental Performance and Progress
Julie's Bicycle

Environmental Plan

A document or set of principles that detail an organisation's commitment to environmental sustainability.

This can be in slightly different formats for different uses and audiences – a commitment is normally a public statement, a policy is a set of guiding principles, a plan has key goals to reach by a specific deadline, and a charter tends to be guidance shared across an industry. They all generally have the same outcome: to reduce environmental impact in a sustainable, transparent way.

Learn More ↓

Environmental Policy and Action Plans
Julie's Bicycle

Green Transition

A larger societal and cultural shift that involves transitioning from unsustainable, fossil fuel economies to resource-efficient alternatives.

The definition can differ depending on its context, but it generally focuses on reducing environmental impact, combating climate change and promoting a circular economy – meaning limiting waste and maximising the use of resources.

Greenwashing

Organisations or individuals intentionally misleading the public to appear more environmentally sustainable than they actually are.

Some examples include pretending to be perfect (or 'the most sustainable'), hiding information about sustainability progress, or claims that are designed to create an overly positive picture.

Learn More ↓

Communicating Sustainability Guide
Julie's Bicycle

Greenwashing
United Nations

Sustainability Communications Guide
Fairtrade

Heat Pump

Electrical appliances, known for their efficiency, that can transfer and intensify heat into a building from the air or the ground.

They are roughly 300% efficient at producing heat – as opposed to a gas boiler that is 90% efficient – making them a much more sustainable and cheaper alternative. The government has implemented schemes to support businesses to install heat pumps.

Learn More ↓

Decarbonisation of Heating in UK Non-Domestic Buildings
Julie's Bicycle

How do heat pumps power the British Film Institute?
Energy UK

Insetting

A process where companies invest directly in reducing emissions within their own operations or supply chain, using funds and resources to create tangible, internal decarbonisation.

Whilst 'offsetting' involves removing emissions elsewhere and after they have already been produced, insetting refers to tangibly reducing emissions into your own supply chain or sphere of influence.

Learn More ↓

Carbon insetting vs offsetting
World Economic Forum

Low Carbon

Activities or processes that tend to produce less carbon dioxide than traditional methods.

Renewable energy sources, electric vehicles, energy-efficient buildings and sustainable materials are all considered to be low carbon. Many governments release strategies to aim towards a society making use of low-carbon technologies.

Offsetting

Compensating for emissions by paying for an external company to undertake activities that may remove emissions, for example tree planting.

This is normally achieved through projects relating to forestry or agriculture, for example, planting trees or conservation. It can also relate to non-natural projects, such as renewable energy or waste management. Not all offset types are created equally, and offsets tend to be attempts to 'marketise' greenhouse gas emissions – they are a voluntary and retrospective payment for the right to pollute. Alternatives include insetting or strategic climate funds.

Learn More ↓

Putting a Price on Carbon
Julie's Bicycle

Power Grid

Network delivering electricity to homes and businesses, also known as the National Grid in the UK.

This takes energy from generator sources, whether renewable or non-renewable, and transports it to demand from buildings. More 'decentralised' grid models, including solar panels and community batteries, can also increase climate resilience and prevent blackouts from extreme weather or increased energy demands (e.g., during heatwaves).

Learn More ↓

Enabling Decentralised Energy Innovation
Sustainable Energy Futures Ltd

Assessing Energy System Resilience in the UK to 2050
National Preparedness Commission

Regeneration

An approach that moves beyond sustainability, towards an overall positive, restorative impact on the planet.

Terms like ‘regenerative design’ and ‘regenerative farming’ have their own specific definitions, but the overarching idea is repairing past damage and leaving environments better than before, coinciding with a move away from constant prioritising of economic growth. It should not be used in place of sustainability, as regeneration refers to active rebuilding and a systemic overhaul, as opposed to responsible resource use.

Learn More ↓

Sustainability vs Regenerative, Explained by 5 Graphics
Bowie Yin Sum Kung

The role of culture-led regeneration in place transformation
OECD

Renewable Energy

Energy that comes from sources that are not depleted when used, such as solar panels, hydropower, and wind power.

This is in contrast to non-renewable fossil fuels, such as oil, coal and gas. Solar power is the most prevalent and can be installed on building rooftops, such as this project undertaken by Creative Folkstone. If you don’t own your own building, you could move to a green tariff or renewable energy plan, where a supplier matches your electricity use with renewable energy. In practice, energy still comes from the National Grid, but the supplier ensures that the amount you use is offset elsewhere.

Learn More ↓

Green electricity tariffs
Centre for Sustainable Energy

Scope 1/2/3 Emissions

This refers to a categorisation of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by the GHG Protocol.

Scope 1: emissions from sources that an organisation owns or controls directly, i.e., burning fuel in cars owned by an organisation.

Scope 2: emissions caused indirectly by an organisation, i.e., using energy in your office building that has been generated by another company.

Scope 3: emissions not produced by the company, and they are not owned or controlled by the company, but the company is indirectly responsible for them, e.g., purchased goods and services, business travel, investments, and waste.

Learn More ↓

Corporate Value Chain (Scope 3) Standard
GHG Protocol

(Sustainable) Supply Chain Management

The sustainable planning, coordination and oversight of activities involved in producing and delivering a product, from sourcing raw materials to disposal.

In an environmental context, this is also referred to as 'green procurement', which is the process of selecting goods and services that have a reduced environmental impact. Working closely with suppliers to encourage improved sustainability can have a positive flow-on effect across the industry. As well as reducing environmental impact, it can also lower costs and reduce greenwashing risks.

Learn More ↓

BFI FAN Green Hour: Sustainable Procurement
Julie's Bicycle/FAN

Our approach to procurement
Depot Lewes

Green Supply Chains
Institute of Supply Chain Management.

Sustainability

Responsibly using our natural resources so that future generations can have the same benefits.

This refers to balancing our current needs in society with the needs of the planet, limiting harm to our precious ecosystems. It is a complex term meaning different things depending on the context; consider asking 'could this be done forever without causing harm?' to really determine the level of sustainability.

Learn More ↓

Sustainability, explained
Greenpeace

Travel Emissions

Pollutants released from travel, such as for business, commuting, holidays, or transportation of goods and services.

Burning fuel creates a significant number of pollutants and is a major contributor to global emissions, with roughly 14% of all emissions being from transport. For film production, travel and transport make up half of a production's emissions. It is recommended to avoid unnecessary travel, driving and flying less, or taking public transport where possible.

Learn More ↓

Moving Green: Business Travel for the Screen Sector
Julie's Bicycle

Sustainable Scenes: Audience Travel Guide for the Screen Sector
Julie's Bicycle

Acknowledgements

This resource was produced by Georgia Ewington, in consultation with Manon Euler (Film Hub North), Claire Buckley, Danielle Pipe and Tenaya King (Julie's Bicycle), Keir Oldfield-Lewis and Arunee Sarasetsiri (Environmental Sustainability Team, BFI).

Thank you to Jemma Penny, Placement Co-ordinator at the University of Birmingham, Zoe Rasbash, Action Researcher, the Film Hub Managers and the BFI Audience Team for their support.

Report Designed by Lowe&Co - www.loweandco.uk