

At this year's Land Use for Net Zero, Nature and People (LUNZ) Big Tent event, participants were invited to consider the concept of 'problematic' language – those words or phrases that, rather than improving connectivity between and across different groups in the land use sector, are in fact a cause of disharmony – and a blockage to communication themselves.

To kick off the conversation, three examples were given of why certain words might be especially problematic:

- They are jargon – widely used by some communities but incomprehensible to others
- They are loaded with unintended interpretations
- They mean different things to different audiences and so create misalignment and confusion

Over the course of the day, almost one hundred words were suggested as outlined in the glossary below. Many of these were representative of the categories above – but others arose because they betray a particular mindset, attitude or perspective.

1. Abatement: It's jargon. Just say 'emissions reduction'
2. Academic modelling: Loosely thrown around...
3. Artificial intelligent: The phrase is broad, can encompass many different techniques and different contexts. Brings with it scepticism and fear of the unknown.
4. Behaviour change: I hate this word, phrase when academics, researchers and others use it in the context: "We need to promote/achieve behaviour change to get people to do things differently to achieve that zero". It is an arrogant, top down and ignorant phrase that assumes we know best and we don't we need all knowledge together.
5. Carbon modelling
6. Carbon neutral: Very vague, fails to address the need to eliminate use of fossil fuels
7. Carbon sequestration
8. Carbon sequestration & storage
9. Co-design: Because it is mis and over-used
10. Communities
11. Consultant
12. Consultant: Because they have a poor image
13. Consultation/engagement: Has different meanings to different people, what changes as a result, how do people relate to it, does it feel meaningful?
14. Deliver/delivery to describe policy: It's what the postman does! How's the specify what has actually been done?: Tree-planting etc
15. Development: For whom, why, who wants it, what is it, how (economic, social, scientific)?
16. Ecologically beneficial: What does this even mean? Could be anything. Feel like it loses its value?
17. Ecosystem services: Fine when talking with policy makers and scientists but it is a nebulous term to most people
18. Ecosystem services: Meaningless to many
19. Efficiency: people assume it's free and easy. Everyone says it needs to be done but don't know how.
20. Ethnography.
21. Expert: I cannot identify with one kind of expertise - and this is almost an existential issue.
22. Expert: Is expertise the live experience or is it knowledge and training? We need both types.
23. Farmer
24. Farmer
25. Farmer: A problem when people use it as a stereotype
26. Food security: What do people really mean by this? Nutritional security, food production, self: sufficiency? Each of these means something different to everyone and correspond different goals and priorities. I think we need specific targets for this. Or will we just allow it to be an outcome of other targets?
27. Food system
28. Incremental: In research is often considered negative
29. Innovation

30. Innovation: Can be threatening, may for risk/loss employee implies change that may not be wanted, unintended consequences to health and nature misuse of technology (potential)
31. Innovative
32. Inventory (greenhouse gas): It's just jargon!
33. Just Transition
34. Just Transition: Needs to do a lot of work this term! Who gets to participating designing/putting the boundaries on what this looks like? What about inclusive transition? Can we include in our language what we mean when we say this?
35. Just transition.
36. Just: For whom and how?
37. Land management: A term used to dictate to custodians of the land how they should act
38. Low carbon and carbon neutral products: Depends on understanding fully the product to assess that she needs to do a full boundary analysis: What is included in this?
39. Mentor
40. Mitigation: Climate change mitigation means reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Members the public think mitigation is compensation, they confuse it with adaptation.
41. Modelling: What does it mean?
42. Multifunctional land use: Land sparing is land sharing
43. Narrative
44. Natural capital
45. Natural capital: Means different things to different people a term used badly and narrowly.
46. Natural capital: Triggers adverse reaction in some people.
47. Natural: Varied interpretation about what is natural and how society is a part of this. There is often dichotomy drawn which can be restrictive.
48. Nature based solutions: misused to mean tree planting without involving local people or in the wrong place.
49. Net Zero
50. Net Zero
51. Net Zero: It is not clear what it is when I referred to what I have to break it down into a context that works within my industry as an action.
52. Net Zero: Trigger words for farmers. It doesn't even make sense in accounting terms, suggesting challenge at both technical and values level.
53. Net Zero: Is the meaning changing?
54. Net Zero: Polarising, weaponised, ambiguous, global, vague, invisible. Switches people off and away from action.
55. Net Zero: The primacy of the term.
56. Offset: Because it can lead to the downplaying of emissions which suggests that emissions don't matter.
57. Our: As in our rivers, our wildlife, our trees. I understand that people speak like this to try to install a sense of responsibility towards nature, but we don't own them. I dislike the implication it is ours to control.
58. Policy
59. Qualitative data: Equals information.
60. Radical: A word used when its user doesn't know what they actually want.
61. Regenerative agriculture: Broad meaning to many different people.
62. Regenerative agriculture: Too vague.
63. Regenerative: Now establishes a system rather than a collection of practices with a wide range possible outcomes, a great descriptor for circular approach.
64. Regenerative: Regenerate back to what? Something new?
65. Regenerative: Remains undefined differs according to those using it, prefer the use of principles rather than labels.
66. Research: Very wide definition.
67. Resilience: Used in incorrect setting and meanings.
68. Resilience: Many interpretations overused and poorly defined.
69. Restoration: Seen as land abandonment by farmers.
70. Rewilding: Contested and misunderstood.
71. Rewilding: Sometimes okay for very specific locations e.g. a new country park.
72. Science: Creates a hierarchy about how knowledge is perceived and legitimised.
73. Scientist
74. Significance: Researchers often talk about statistical significance, yet the wider definition of the word can imply that change/ideas or project don't matter if an expert says it isn't significant.
75. Soil carbon: A blanket term which is oversimplified.

76. Soil carbon: Too technical, scientific for most people. Might soil organic matter (or even roots and dead plants) be more meaningful to farmers and gardeners and growers?
77. Soil health
78. Soil health: Ambiguous and used and interpreted differently by different people. Does it refer to structure, chemical composition or biology - or all three? What about its place in the wider system?
79. Soil health: What makes us so healthy? Physical, biological characteristics? What makes us so healthy in England is not the same as in Wales.
80. Stakeholder/practitioner/actor
81. Stakeholders: Who do we mean? Why do we assume they are homogenous?
82. Sustainability: Fluffy, multiple interpretations, vague.
83. Sustainability: Too broad and too much focus on the environment and not people
84. Sustainable
85. Sustainable: Do we want to carry on doing what we are? Don't we want to be doing something different?
86. Sustainable: Means different things to different people and has become a buzz word.
87. Sustainable/sustainability: This is used so much and so widely.
88. System thinking: Overused and is it really done or done properly? What actually is it? People have different understanding.
89. Systems thinking: Used as a throw away comment without knowing what it means or how to do it: but it's a very important thing to aim for.
90. The 'Net' part of Net Zero: Farmers I've spoken to see as inherently unfair way for others to buy themselves out.
91. Tradition: i.e. It's our traditional right to continue doing this.
92. Transformational: Often implies or perceived as loss of power and lack of trust.
93. Trial/Research: Lots of people talk about doing trials and research using only one test. It depends what research is.
94. Vertical farming: Farmers feel like it will replace the traditional way of work.
95. Weed: Labelling nature plants as an issue that needs to be removed even if it has no negative effects.



UK Research
and Innovation



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs



Department for
Energy Security
& Net Zero



Scottish Government
Riaghaidh na h-Alba
gov.scot



Uywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government



Department of
Agriculture, Environment
and Rural Affairs

