



Clover English

PODCAST PDF GUIDE IRELAND AND THE ENVIRONMENT

ENVIRONMENTAL VOCAB
FACTS AND FIGURES
APPROXIMATING

TRANSCRIPT



Hello everyone and welcome to this week's episode of the Clover English podcast, today we'll be looking at language used to describe the environment. This is a topic that is unavoidable nowadays and comes up a lot as a speaking question in various English language exams. Make sure you download the PDF guide for free from my website www.cloverenglish.org First we'll speak a bit about the environment in a more general way then we'll look at the situation in Ireland which, unfortunately, isn't as good as you might think.

Climate change is one of the most serious problems facing our society today and the evidence of this phenomenon is becoming harder to ignore. For instance, the last extreme European heat wave, (which here in Paris was absolutely awful), more frequent and violent hurricanes in the Americas and rising sea temperatures have all been linked to climate change. And climate scientists are almost completely in a unanimous agreement that these changes are related to climate change caused by human activity. First of all let's have a look at some key vocabulary for discussing the environment and climate change. So some of these might be familiar to you and others might not.

Pollution is a word you're probably familiar with. Pollution is the introduction of harmful substances into the environment, notably carbon dioxide which is a gas that contributes to the problem of global warming when there is too much of it in our atmosphere. There is a similar word "contamination" which a lot of Spanish students will use instead of pollution. It's very similar in meaning, but generally speaking we use more "pollution" and the verb to "pollute" more than "contamination" or "contaminate". For example, we could use contaminated with food. "The meat was recalled because it was contaminated with bacteria" (like salmonella) here we wouldn't use "polluted". We say polluted more for air.

I mentioned global warming earlier. Global warming is the rising of the earth's temperature which provokes changes in the planet's climate.

Related to this, there is also the greenhouse effect. The greenhouse effect refers to the problem of having too many greenhouse gases, such as methane or CO₂ (carbon dioxide) in the atmosphere resulting in the planet heating up, so heating up means it's getting warmer. Now, I'm not a scientist so I'm not 100% sure about the differences between the greenhouse effect, global warming they're very similar concepts. So, yeah if you really want to get into the details of the difference there you'll need to ask someone who is more scientifically minded than myself.

Renewable Energy is one of the solutions proposed to help reduce the effects of global warming. Renewable energy is the opposite of what we call fossil fuels, such as coal or oil which pollute when they are burned. Renewable energy includes wind and solar energy. Other environmental problems include:

Deforestation which is the process of cutting down trees in forested areas to make room for farmland or to obtain wood.

Intensive Farming refers to farming on a massive scale. These farms are so big and use such aggressive methods that the **welfare** of the animals involved is impossible to guarantee and they damage the environment by releasing a lot of methane into the environment (by having too much livestock, or farm animals) and they also use harmful substances such as pesticides to grow more fruit and vegetables.

So let's have a look at the environmental situation in Ireland. I spent like a week re-searching our country's environmental policies and where we were in relation to the 2020 carbon emissions goal and the prognosis wasn't great. It made for kind of depressing reading...

NOTES:

Welfare: safety and well-being

TRANSCRIPT



According to the European Commission:

- Temperatures in Ireland have increased by about 0.8°C since 1900, an average of about 0.07°C per decade.
- Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions are **projected to** increase, so those greenhouse gases we spoke about (like methane and carbon dioxide) and at best the country will only achieve a 1% reduction by 2020 compared to a target of 20%. So it's like... we are really really not hitting that target for next year, we are way below our reduction target
- Agriculture remains the single largest contributor to Ireland's Greenhouse Gas Emissions it contributes about 33.3% of the total. Transport and energy industries which are the second and third largest contributors at 19.8% and 19.3% respectively.
- One good thing is that Ireland's soil is in good condition, we have quite good soil. We also have a lot of land which is called peat land, and this is a type of soil (there's a little description in the PDF guide of what peat is). And what's good about peat is that it acts like a little carbon storer, like a little carbon sink so it absorbs carbon dioxide, but when it's damaged the opposite happens: it actually releases carbon dioxide. So it's really important that we protect those peat areas.

NOTES:

According to: this is a great way to report information. In this sentence I mean that the following information was provided by the European Commission.

Projected to: similar meaning to "expected to" due to statistical findings.

WHAT IS PEAT?

Peat or turf, is an accumulation of partially decayed vegetation or organic matter. It also acts as a climate cooler because of its ability to store carbon.

- Recent evidence shows that Ireland's biodiversity is dwindling (dwindling just means decreasing) and is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change
- Renewable energy actually increased in Ireland by 19% in 2017.
- **Coal** use decreased by 20% over the same period. So that's at least a positive.
- The Central Office of Statistics also **highlighted** that Ireland had the second lowest percentage of agricultural land designated as organic in the EU in 2015. So that basically means that the majority of our farms are not organic and they aren't environmentally friendly. They probably use a lot of **pesticides**, they probably pollute a lot more, maybe there's the use of **genetically modified organisms**... things like that.

So, not a great forecast for Ireland. However, the country has made efforts to **tackle** its environmental problems, going back to like the 70s around about there.

For instance, the country rejected nuclear energy in the 1970s after popular protests, however they just merely introduced another coal-burning power station in its place, which isn't exactly a great **trade-off**.

The Plastic-bag-**levy** is one of Ireland's most successful environmental policies, it's our little "get-out-of-jail-free card". The country introduced a 15c charge for the use of plastic bags in 2002 which led to a 90% decrease in the use of single-use plastic bags. So that was a huge success in Ireland.

NOTES:

Coal: a black combustible mineral substance consisting of carbonized vegetable matter.

Highlight: to emphasize

Pesticides: a chemical substance used to kill animal, fungal or plant pests

Genetically Modified Organism (GMO): an organism or microorganism whose genetic material has been altered by means of genetic engineering

Tackle: deal with/resolve a problem

Trade-off: the exchange of one thing for another

Levy: a type of tax

TRANSCRIPT



Dublin City council is also planning to **pedestrianize** Lower Liffey Street in Dublin to try and deter cars away from the polluted city centre. The city centre in Dublin... the air quality is quite bad, quite polluted so they're making an effort to try and keep cars away from the centre. There have been other measures too to encourage people to leave their cars at home and travel in a more eco-friendly way.

I have to say I was so disappointed after doing research for today's show. The thing I love most about Ireland is without a doubt its beautiful countryside and breathtaking scenery, and also being an island, we are particularly vulnerable to climate change. So I was hoping that we were doing well with regards to our 2020 emissions goal, but it seems we are still a **long way off** from achieving what we need to achieve. Hopefully the future will bring better news and more robust policies to protect our environment. We'll see... cross our fingers.

Well that's all for today, make sure to download the PDF guide from my website www.cloverenglish.org which has the transcript, vocabulary explanations, extra vocabulary not covered in this episode and advice on how to report facts and figures. A lot of English exams will choose the environment as a topic and with a lot of English exams you also might have to do something like read a report and then give your opinion on it so you need to know how to do that; what verbs you should be using, what vocabulary you should be using, how to speak about facts and figures and how to report things that you read.

So that'll all be available in the PDF guide. Please like and share this podcast also if you've found it interesting and helpful it really helps me. I'd also love to know what your countries are doing with regards to the environment so please get in touch on [Twitter](https://twitter.com/clover_english) @clover_english or you can also find me on [instagram](https://www.instagram.com/clover_english/) with basically the same tag @clover_english_

Okay, thanks very much and I'll see you soon.

NOTES:

Pedestrianize: infrastructure that is adapted for pedestrians
A long way off + gerund: be very far from

ZERO-WASTE LIVING



Extra Vocab!



Another huge environmental problem is the issue of waste. Waste is what we throw away after we use it such as organic waste, packaging, cardboard, glass and plastic. Plastic reduction has become a huge concern for many people because it isn't biodegradable and ends up polluting our oceans and countryside. Due to the problems associated with excessive waste, many people have adopted what's known as a zero-waste lifestyle. This lifestyle aims to reduce as much as possible the waste we produce as a result of modern life.

It revolves around the elimination of single use items such as packaging, single use plastic bags and other non-essential items. For example, bringing your own canvas bags to the supermarket is a zero-waste gesture, as is reusing items in your home instead of throwing them away (eg glass jars for storage). People who follow a zero-waste lifestyle tend to turn their organic waste into compost and try to grow their own fruit and vegetables either at home or at communal vegetable patches.

TALKING ABOUT FACTS AND FIGURES



When quoting information from reports it's important to get your big numbers right. Let's look at those now:

150.00: one hundred and fifty

1,200: one thousand two hundred

1,260: one thousand two hundred and sixty

200,000: two hundred thousand

2.5m: two point five million

FRACTIONS

Apart from percentages, we might have to express results in terms of fractions. For example:

“Half of all respondents to the survey claimed that there were too many cars in the city centre” Half = 50%

$1/3$ = a third

$1/5$ = a fifth

$1/4$ = a quarter

$3/5$ = three fifths

Okay, you get the idea... your ordinal numbers are important here.

APPROXIMATING



Sometimes we don't know a figure exactly so we have to approximate, there are various ways to do this in English.

1) More or less

"There were more or less 200 people at the protest"

2) About

"The concert was really full, I'd say there were about 1,000 people there"

3) Around

"I'll be home around five o'clock"

4) Round about (colloquial)

"I'd say he's round about 50 years old"