A drawing of a face

Description automatically generated**Glossary of Waste Words**

**Avoid**

The only way of not having any waste is to not produce it in the first place. Avoid is the top and most important part of the Waste Hierarchy.

**Biodegrade**

The process where any material is degraded or destroyed (usually by bacteria, but sometimes by plants or fungi) and returns to its original materials in the natural environment.

**Climate change**

The process of changing the weather patterns across the planet. We are in the middle of worldwide anthropogenic (or manmade) climate change due to the burning of fossil fuels and other greenhouse gases building up in the atmosphere and causing global heating because of the greenhouse effect. The Earth has experienced climate change in the past, but this was due to other factors, like volcanic eruptions or meteor strikes.

**Compost**

Organic matter like leaves, vegetable peelings, uncooked food and grass cuttings given the right conditions and time can decompose to produce a dark brown or black substance like soil that enriches and feeds plants. Composting is the natural form of recycling nutrients and organic matter.

**Decompose**

Natural or organic material (that was once alive) can degrade in the environment to become a base for new plants and animals.

**Disposable**

Items made to be thrown away, particularly after one use, like plastic cups and straws. A waste of resources and energy, these items are being phased out of common use, replaced by reusable items like metal or bamboo straws and refillable cups.

**Energy from waste**

Producing electricity from waste materials, these can also be called energy recovery facilities. This can be done through burning the waste materials in a controlled fire called an incinerator, or by digesting food waste in an **Anaerobic Digester**.

**Greenhouse gas**

This is the term used to describe any gas that can make our earth’s atmosphere act like a greenhouse and trap energy from the sun. Recently humans have been burning fossil fuels (coal, oil and gas) which produces a greenhouse gas called carbon dioxide. Other Greenhouse gases include methane, nitrogen oxide and and CFCs. They can be produced through natural cycles too, and some are useful as we would not have an atmosphere without them.

**Incineration**

Burning items completely to leave just ash.

**Landfill**

Large hole in the ground where waste used to be dumped. The decomposition of organic waste from old landfills produces landfill gas, which is a potent greenhouse gas. Modern landfills are lined and capped to prevent pollution. In Devon we don’t use any landfills for black bin bag waste anymore.

**Methane**

A gas with the chemical formula CH4 that occurs naturally and is burnt as natural gas. It is colourless, odourless and flammable. It is a strong greenhouse gas, and causes pollution if it is released into the environment.

**Ocean**

Large open body of saltwater; there are five main oceans: Atlantic, Pacific, Indian, Southern, Arctic. Smaller areas are called seas.

**Plastic**

A type of solid material made by adding together long-chain organic molecules to form substances that can be cast, modelled and extruded into any number of shapes and solid objects, including films, pipes, ropes, packaging and household items. It can be difficult to recycle unless it is sorted into very specific polymer types.

**Pollution**

Contaminating the air, water or ground with harmful substances.

**Reduce**

The next best way of not having waste is to reduce the amount of waste we produce, for example thinking about what we buy and consuming in a conscientious way. The first R of the 3Rs.

**Reuse**

To use an item again and again, for example a resusable water bottle which can be refilled again and again. The second R of the 3Rs and third down the Waste Hierarchy.

**Repair**

The action of mending an item so that it can be used again. A form of Reuse. Repair Cafes are becoming popular as a group of volunteers gather together to mend items in the local community.

**Recycle**

Making something new from old materials, or reprocessing waste materials to produce new materials. This is the third R of the 3Rs.

**Rubbish**

Stuff that people don’t want any more. Items that are ready to be discarded or thrown away.

**Waste**

A picture containing food, drawing, light

Description automatically generated Unwanted items or the act of consuming carelessly.