

● GREEN BULLET

1st October 2021

The Green Bullet connects and supports networks of voluntary, community and public sector organisations across a wide range of environmental and related issues, in North West England and beyond, originally produced by North West Environment Link (NWEL).

NWEL was a partnership of environmental NGOs established to respond jointly to regional environmental challenges and opportunities. NWEL was wound down after regional governance arrangements ended, and remaining funds supported the continued production of this bulletin. More recently CPRE North West has supported its production and retained the same aim.

Please send any items for inclusion in the next bulletin to andyuille@gmail.com - and feel free to forward all or parts of these bulletins throughout your own networks to help spread the word!

The Green Bullet is also available to download from [VSNW](#), the regional voluntary and community sector network.

CONTENTS

- **Campaigns** – Hedgerows, the climate and nature emergency in Cheshire, air quality, soils
- **Information update** – Brexit & beyond; climate change & energy; planning; transport; biodiversity and nature
- **Publications** – Keeping 1.5 alive, rivers, sustainable land management, no place left behind
- **Events** – Greater Manchester Green Summit, Cumbria Dark Skies Festival, social value & government procurement
- **Resources** – Biodiversity net gain, local nature recovery strategies, natural capital assessment
- **Consultations** – Energy National Policy Statements, transport regulatory reviews, local nature recovery strategies
- **Research / calls for input** – Planning reform, biodiversity net gain
- **Funding** – The Schroder Charity Trust

Campaigns

Hedgerows

The UK hedgerow network is our largest nature reserve. The unique environmental, economic, and social benefits of our hedgerows make them essential key workers of our countryside. But around half our hedgerows have been lost since the end of the Second World War - leaving us vulnerable to the threats of climate change and air pollution, while intensifying nature's decline. The Climate Change Committee has recommended that the extent of hedgerows in the UK is extended by 40% by 2050. [New CPRE research](#) shows that this could create 25,000 jobs over the next 30 years and yield almost £4 for every £1 invested. They are calling on individuals, groups and organisations to [write to MPs to ask them to support the campaign](#) to expand and restore the UK's hedgerow network.

Nature and climate emergency – Cheshire

Cheshire Wildlife Trust have launched a campaign for the [councils in their area to fully link nature's recovery into their climate plans](#). It is primarily aimed at Cheshire East Council,

Cheshire West & Chester Council, Halton Council, Stockport Council, Tameside Council, Trafford Council (Warrington and Wirral have already made declarations along these lines, but they could also be congratulated and/or encouraged to improve!)

The climate emergency and the nature emergency must be tackled together if we are to have any hope of reaching net zero and preventing ecological breakdown. The campaign will be running up until the COP climate conference. They are encouraging groups and organisations to sign and support the campaign as well as members of the public. So if you or your organisation are in Cheshire, please do!

Air quality

The World Health Organization has [cut its recommended limits for air pollution](#) and urged nations to tackle dirty air and save millions of lives. In the first update for 16 years, the guideline limit for the most damaging pollution – tiny particles from burning fossil fuels – has been halved. The new limit for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), mainly produced by diesel engines, is now 75% lower.

Soil health

The Government has announced that it will consult on a [Soil Health Action Plan](#) early next year, in a major victory for campaigners for the much-undervalued underpinning of almost all terrestrial life!

Information update

Brexit and beyond

- Over several late-night sittings in September, members of the House of Lords voted through 14 separate amendments to the Environment Bill in the face of Government opposition. Although all the amendments are welcome, seven are particularly so. The seven key amendments would:
 - make interim targets binding
 - remove exceptions to the duty to give due regard to environmental principles
 - secure OEP independence
 - empower courts to grant meaningful remedies following an environmental review
 - extend the charging power to cover all single use items
 - safeguard the habitats regulations
 - give greater protection to ancient woodlands[Wildlife and Countryside Link and Greener UK briefings](#) summarise and explain these amendments and other key issues in the Bill. House of Commons considerations of the Lord's amendments will take place on 20 October. It has been suggested that these amendments will [cause further delay to the Bill](#), with the Government unwilling to accept amendments that would deliver what they say they want the Bill to achieve. In which case, the Bill may not be passed before COP26, damaging the UK's hoped-for positioning as a global leader on environmental issues. The amendments secured at Lord report stage, if carried through into the Bill, would make royal assent a hugely important moment for nature – especially when combined with the Government's own welcome [amendment](#) creating a State of Nature target.
- One of the effects of Brexit is to release the UK from the EU's strict rules on genetically modified foods. Seen by some as the solution to world hunger and rising food prices, they are seen by others as an existential threat to both farmed and natural ecosystems. The UK government is to [relax the regulation of gene-edited crops](#) (so, only *slightly* genetically modified) to enable commercial growing in England.

- The Government has announced a [review of all retained EU laws](#), including around environmental protection, with wording that suggests that Ministers will be given powers to significantly [amend laws with no public or Parliamentary scrutiny](#).
- One of the [first complaints lodged with the post-Brexit environmental watchdog](#), the Office for Environmental Protection (OEP), accuses the government and Ofwat of failing to enforce the law to stop water companies from routinely discharging raw sewage into rivers – on over 400,000 separate instances in 2020, according to Environment Agency data. The OEP is being asked to investigate why water companies have been able to continually fail to meet duties placed on them by law to treat sewage.

Climate change & energy

- Boris Johnson has come out strongly championing the climate agenda this month, asserting that we are at [“a turning point for humanity”](#) urging other nations to “grow up” and step up their NDCs (Nationally Determined Contributions, ie individual national greenhouse gas emissions targets) and for rich nations to follow through on their promises to provide green finance to the global South their. He set out his priorities for COP26, to be hosted in Glasgow in November, as [“coal, cars, cash and trees”](#). He agreed that young people have every right to be angry about the state of climate change because they are paying the price for the [“reckless actions of their elders”](#). Climate scientists and campaigners have welcomed his words, but pointed out that if this genuinely reflects his views, then some [significant changes need to be made immediately](#) to UK domestic and foreign policy. Caving in to pressure to [drop climate commitments from international trade deals](#) probably doesn’t help either.
- The UN has published its latest [Synthesis Report](#) into Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) submitted as part of the Paris Agreement. The report found that these NDCs would contribute to a projected decrease in global emissions of 12% by 2030, compared to 2010 levels. This would leave the world off-course to deliver either of the Agreement’s temperature pathways: a 25% reduction would be needed for 2C and 45% for 1.5C. And in fact, it reports that an [increase in emissions of 16% by 2030 is a more likely scenario](#), “in sharp contrast with the calls by science for rapid, sustained and large-scale emission reductions”.
- New research suggests that over [60% of known gas and oil reserves, and 90% of coal](#), will have to stay in the ground in order to meet Paris Agreement targets, and that [oil and gas production must halve by 2030](#). This should signal an immediate [end to exploration for or opening of new reserves](#) – like the untouched Cambio oil field which the UK Government remains keen to start exploiting
- More than [three-quarters of planned coal power stations have been scrapped](#) globally since the Paris Agreement in 2015.
- Climate change is the [number one risk concern](#) of both the UK public and risk assessment experts, according to a new report by AXA Insurance, while another survey covering 10 countries shows that nearly [60% of young people are very worried](#) or extremely worried about climate change.
- A study of the decarbonisation plans of 17 of the UK's biggest sectors has found that most are recording either stable or increasing emissions, and are [only on track to reduce emissions by around 30% of requirements](#) to meet net-zero by 2050.
- With less than 50 days to go until COP26, the latest edition of [Edie’s COP26 Action Tracker](#) paints a mixed picture – with positive announcements on climate finance and corporate sustainability marred by fears over Covid-19 preparations for the UN talks, speculation that Australia and South Africa may not attend, and pessimism around its outcomes.

- A new report from Greenpeace shows how a properly funded, ambitious programme to [insulate homes and swap gas boilers for heat pumps](#) could create 138,000 new jobs and inject £9.8bn into the economy
- The public inquiry into the [West Cumbria coalmine](#) has reached its fourth and final week. Friends of the Lake District has summarised the [main arguments put forward by South Lakes Action on Climate Change](#) against the mine
- A group of 36 county councils has called on the UK Government to provide more funding that [enables areas outside of cities to reach net-zero emissions](#), warning the decarbonisation across key areas such as buildings and transport is slowing in these regions and that net zero strategies are too urban-centric.

Planning

- The big planning news this month is of course the departure of Robert Jenrick, and indeed of MHCLG, and their replacement with Michael Gove and DLUHC, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. [Speculation is rife](#) as to whether Gove has been brought in to [water the reforms down](#) or to [drive them through](#); whether his presence signals renewed importance for the planning agenda or whether the merging with levelling up will push planning into the background. [DLUHC's Twitter feed](#) describes them as "levelling up the UK, regenerating towns and high streets and supporting communities across the country" – no mention of either planning or housing. Local government, unsurprisingly, are not happy to have been dropped from the title of the department, viewing the move as [sidelining them from agendas in which they play a central role](#).
- Gove has officially ["paused" the reforms](#) in order to review them, which he would do in consultation with Tory backbenchers who had threatened to block the plans. A junior Minister has said that the Planning Bill is in a ["state of flux at the moment"](#), although later that week he told the Environmental Audit Committee that it would be published ["in the relatively near future"](#). However, commentators do not expect it before Christmas. In the same session he said that a full review of the NPPF would be carried out as part of the reform process, and that he was "sure" that this would better align it with the Government's net zero strategy.
- Gove is reportedly considering introducing a new land designation for councils aimed at restoring England's natural habitats. Councils would be encouraged to create ["nature recovery zones"](#) earmarked for biodiversity projects.
- The [2021 Housing Delivery Test](#) will be calculated using a four-month adjustment to the housing requirement figures for 2020/21 to account for fluctuations in construction output owing to the Covid-19 pandemic, easing the pressure on councils to demonstrate unrealistic build rates or to have the presumption in favour of development imposed on them.
- The HCLG select committee has recommended that government should press ahead with further devolution across England, including handing combined and local authorities fresh powers over spatial planning, 'calling-in' planning applications and strategic infrastructure levies. The report, [Progress on devolution in England](#), also recommends that devolution should extend (beyond planning) not only to combined authorities but to local government as a whole, and to rural as well as urban areas; that devolved power should be the default unless there are compelling reasons otherwise; and that government should examine the case for further devolution in respect of other policy areas, such as energy efficiency, public transport and the environment

Transport

- Transport Secretary Grant Shapps has stated that the [Government will continue to support a third runway at Heathrow](#) Airport, arguing that it would "not be appropriate" to review the National Policy Statement on airports due to climate concerns. The National Policy

Statements on energy are being reviewed due to climate concerns (see Consultations section).

Nature and biodiversity

- The Government has claimed considerable progress towards its commitment to protect 30% of land and sea for nature by 2030, suggesting that 26% of land is already protected for nature. A new report from Wildlife and Countryside Link, "[Achieving 30x30 in England](#)" has explored these claims in detail and found they cannot be substantiated. The 26% land figure comes primarily from National Parks and AONBs, where a lack of sufficiently strong management priorities and actions for nature's recovery mean that in reality, nature within these designated landscapes is often in poorer condition than nature outside them. As a result, Link suggests that only 3% of land can currently be said to be genuinely protected for nature, with a maximum of 4% protection applying to the marine environment. The Link report sets out a plan for upping these figures swiftly and effectively, through ambitious expansion of strictly protected sites, combined with strengthened landscape designations on land and better management of the Marine Protected Area network at sea.
- The UK's five statutory nature organisations, Natural England, Natural Resources Wales, NatureScot, Northern Ireland Environment Agency and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) have produced a new report, [Nature Positive 2030](#), setting out how the UK can achieve its public commitment to reversing biodiversity decline and being 'nature positive' by 2030. It says that a lot more work and investment is needed, but that it is possible and sets out nine changes that can be delivered "rapidly" by national and local governments, land owners, businesses and other to help reverse biodiversity loss this decade.
- The IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) Congress has come up with a [blueprint for a "transformative" deal to protect plants and wildlife](#), which members hope governments will embrace at the UN biodiversity talks which are due to open in Kunming, China, in October and finish in May 2022. In its final hours, the Congress overwhelmingly endorsed [the blueprint](#) to halt and reverse biodiversity loss. It calls for a deal to "ensure there is more nature globally in 2030 than there was in 2020".
- The Government has confirmed a £15m funding [boost for the "Northern Forest"](#) to enable the planting of one million new trees over a 12-month period. The project aims to plant 50 million trees between Liverpool and Hull over 25 years. Ministers have also published plans for 3,000 hectares of new woodlands along waterways.
- There are more tree species threatened with extinction than all the world's similarly threatened mammals, birds, amphibians and reptiles, according to [a new study](#) - in fact there's twice the number. The State of the World's Trees survey, published by Botanic Gardens Conservation International, is the first to examine over 58,000 species. It concludes that almost a third of the world's trees are at risk of extinction, while in the UK the figure rises to 40%.

Publications

Keeping 1.5 Alive

The Energy Transitions Commission has published a new landmark report, [Keeping 1.5 Alive: Actions for the 2020s](#), outlining how policymakers can deliver the deep emissions cuts needed this decade to put the world on track to deliver the Paris Agreement. The UN [recently revealed](#) that Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) submitted as part of the Paris Agreement would only deliver a 12% reduction in global emissions by 2030, on a 2010 baseline. This would leave the world off-course to deliver either of the Agreement's temperature pathways: a 25% reduction would be needed for 2C and 45% for 1.5C. The new report outlines how actions in

just six fields could deliver more than 90% of the emissions reductions needed to deliver the Paris Agreement's 1.5C pathway: reducing methane emissions; halting deforestation and scaling reforestation; phasing out coal; increasing the uptake of electric vehicles (EVs); improving energy productivity and decarbonising industry. In each field, recommendations are made for actions to be taken this decade, on the basis that they are possible using existing technologies; that they come at nil or low net cost; and that they deliver socio-economic benefits other than decarbonization, such as improved air quality, biodiversity restoration and job creation.

Rivers

Wildlife and Countryside Link's Blueprint Group launched a new [report](#), setting out the actions needed to bring our freshwaters and associated wildlife back to health. Whilst the problem of river pollution is rising up the political and media agenda, comprehensive solutions have been in short supply. The new report, entitled 'Blueprint Vision' puts forward three key proposals to clean up our rivers; large scale habitat restoration, a fully resourced monitoring & enforcement regime to tackle pollution and a change in public behaviour to reduce water consumption. The Blueprint Report formed part of a series of papers on England's rivers published in September, including '[Troubled Waters](#)' from the RSPB and others and '[State of our Rivers](#)' from the Rivers Trust.

Sustainable land management

England is at a historical crossroad for the governance of land and the natural environment. Actions for addressing and adapting to climate change, achieving food security and tackling the biodiversity crisis are all embedded in and depend on how land is managed. Existing Government policy and targets have so far failed to address many of these complexities of land, farming and the natural environment. This new POSTNote from the House of Commons library, [Sustainable land management: managing land better for environmental benefits](#), reviews how the concept of Sustainable Land Management (SLM) could be a way of addressing the criticisms the Government's schemes face. SLM is a broad framework to help decision making around how we manage our land for greatest societal benefit. It emphasises local buy-in, stakeholder and community engagement as part of a larger coherent national scale spatial plan showing what to do and where.

No Place Left Behind

The Commission into Prosperity and Community Placemaking concluded in its report, '[No Place Left Behind](#)' that investment should be made in local neighbourhoods with bottom-up control, rather than grand infrastructure projects. Convened by the Create Streets Foundation and chaired by Toby Lloyd, a former housing adviser to the Prime Minister, the commission recommend a stronger focus on quality of place, green space, and child-friendly environments, and reduce reliance on new roads and car-dominated landscapes and townscapes. Specific recommendations include a one-off transfer of local government debt onto the national balance sheet and guaranteeing core revenue funding for local authorities in left-behind places for 10 years to 'liberate councils'. It also advocated a £2bn Community Wealth Fund and new procurement rules that prioritise social value.

Events

Greater Manchester Green Summit 2021

Monday 18th October, 9am to 4:30pm, The Lowry, Salford Quays. [The Summit is a great opportunity](#) to meet and network with colleagues who share the same ideals and worries on the climate and other environmental issues, and to celebrate those people, community groups and

organisations who are taking action and inspiring others to do the same.

Sessions will be based on key areas including:

- Environment through the ages - what does climate change mean for all of us?
- Nature and green spaces including the Greater Manchester Environment Fund, social prescribing and community action.
- Smart energy including the Green Homes Grant and community solar projects.
- Waste and resources including the Recycle for Greater Manchester food waste campaign, Renew shops and innovative local community projects.
- Transport including active travel and public transport.
- Research, innovation and creativity - the story far, green skills and planning for the future.

Cumbria Dark Skies Festival

Taking place between the 6th – 14th November 2021, the [Cumbria Dark Skies Festival](#) will celebrate the county's fantastic stargazing opportunities through an exciting calendar of activities, both in person and virtual, including a Dark Skies fell walk, nighttime wildlife sounds woodland walk, a moonwatch event with Eddington Astronomical Society, a night canoe trip, an interstellar art exhibit at Grizedale Forest, dark skies art workshops and online planetarium shows for children and adults. The festival will provide an opportunity for both visitors and locals to celebrate the unpolluted views available in Cumbria and raise awareness of their importance.

Social value and government procurement

From 1st January 2021, the government's new social value framework has been applied to new central government procurements in order to maximise benefits and develop a more consistent approach to social value. The current priority areas within the framework are: COVID-19 recovery, tackling economic inequality, fighting climate change, equal opportunities and wellbeing. All organisations applying for funding and contracts will require to set out how they will deliver social value and implement ways of ensuring it is delivered and monitored. VSNW is hosting an event at the Conservative Party conference fringe to [promote the voluntary and community sector as key providers of social value](#) through effective government procurement, and better increase Conservative Party members knowledge of how to best work with the VCSE sector. 5 October, 6.15 – 8.30, Friends Meeting House, Manchester.

Resources

Biodiversity net gain

The Planning Advisory Service ran five workshops on the Environment Bill and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) for local authorities in May, June & July 2021. They've published a [summary of workshop outputs](#), including what local authorities are doing now and what they need to enable them to be ready for mandatory BNG.

Local Nature Recovery Strategies

The UK Government is introducing Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) from April 2022, to map where local habitat improvement and restoration could address national-scale environmental objectives. This POSTnote from the House of Commons library [summarises the LNRS approach](#), including mapping ecological networks, the opportunities for LNRSs to deliver wider benefits to nature and people, and the likely challenges associated with the strategies and their delivery. There is currently a live consultation on LNRSs – see Consultations section.

Natural Capital Assessment

The [Natural Capital Assessment Gateway](#) brings together information on the growing number of projects in the UK concerned with mapping and assessing natural capital and ecosystem

service delivery at the local, regional or national level. You can use the interactive, searchable, map-based facility to explore a wealth of projects in progress or completed across the UK.

Consultations

Energy National Policy Statements

The Government has published five [updated draft national policy statements for major energy infrastructure projects](#). They set out the government's policy for the delivery of energy infrastructure and provide the legal framework for planning decisions. The consultation seeks views on whether the revised energy NPS provide a suitable framework to support decision making for nationally significant energy infrastructure, and on the appraisals of sustainability (AoS) and habitats regulations assessments (HRA) that have been carried out in relation to the draft energy NPS. Proposed changes include removing coal and large-scale oil, but retaining gas-burning infrastructure as "urgently needed"; bringing large-scale solar into scope; supporting small "modular" nuclear reactors and unknown, unnamed, future "novel" technologies (!!!); and caveating support for energy from waste projects with a warning about over-capacity (yes, we are still incinerating huge amounts of waste). Deadline: 29 November.

Future of UK Transport: regulatory review

The Government has launched [five consultations](#) into the regulations governing various elements of transport policy and infrastructure, including aviation, maritime, vehicle standards and electric vehicles. This regulatory review considers how transport regulations need to change to be fit for the future and seeks to address outdated regulation, which acts as a barrier to innovation. The consultation will be promoting a "[flexible legislative and regulatory framework](#)", which sounds rather like bendy rules with lots of loopholes.

Local Nature Recovery Strategies

There's still time to respond to the Government consultation on Local Nature Recovery Strategies - a new, England-wide system of spatial strategies that will establish priorities and map proposals for specific actions to drive nature's recovery and provide wider environmental benefits. [The consultation](#) includes an overview of what LNRs are and how Government intends for them to be used. Deadline: 2 November.

Research / calls for input

MHCLG / DLUHC: user research and planning reform

As highlighted last month, over the coming months, MHCLG announced that will be carrying out user research to support the planning reform programme - speaking to those involved in the planning system, from all sectors, to hear about your experiences of planning and build that into future reform work. With the fate of the reforms very much up in the air, getting your voice heard will be more useful than ever! They're calling for anyone involved in planning to [sign up to be part of their user research panel](#). This means when they're conducting research, you'll be offered the opportunity to take part. Each opportunity is on a voluntary basis, so you're not obligated to get involved, but you'll hear about it first.

Biodiversity net gain

The Community Planning Alliance are asking people to complete a survey about habitat, species and diversity. This is to provide information in readiness for an expected government consultation this autumn on [Biodiversity Net Gain](#) (BNG). The CPA would like to submit an informed response and the data and opinions you provide will be very valuable to this. The survey is open until Saturday 30 October 2021. You'll need some knowledge of BNG

• GREEN BULLET

to complete it, so do please pass the survey link onto anyone you know who has this if you don't.

Funding

The Schroder Charity Trust

The [Schroder Charity Trust](#) awards grants of up to £5,000 towards core and project costs to charities registered in the UK, for work under the a selection of categories including Environment and Conservation, Training and Employment, Health and Wellbeing, Arts, Culture and Heritage, and Strengthening Communities. Applications re-open on 6 December 2021.

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