

# ● GREEN BULLET

26<sup>th</sup> November 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](mailto: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.

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## Campaigns

### Climate change

- After the close of COP26 earlier this month, the Climate Coalition are [asking people to contact their MPs](#) to put pressure on the Prime Minister to make clear commitments on climate action in the first 100 days after COP. Use their template to send an email to your MP to ask them to ensure that climate action is at the top of Boris Johnson's to-do list.
- A group of planning and environmental organisations have issued an urgent call to Government to [put the climate crisis at the heart of all planning decisions](#). The statement highlights the power of planning to promote renewable energy, restrict fossil fuels and design places to reduce energy use and promote walking and cycling. It also highlights the lack of priority given to climate change in existing planning policy and calls on Michael Gove, to urgently issue a ministerial statement to prioritise net zero and tackling flooding and overheating.

### Nature North

[Nature North](#) is a collaboration working to create an improved “environment” for delivery of improvements in the state of the natural environment, with the aim of achieving climate resilience and green growth in the north of England. This month, the initiative has published its

vision and a business case for nature recovery in this region, together with a set of focal areas for investment. Nature North seeks to harness the capability of the region's existing environmental restoration activities, including the Great North Bog and the Northern Forest working alongside key partners such as Local Nature Partnerships, Metro Mayors and NP11 (Local Enterprise Partnerships from across the North of England)

### **Public awareness**

A new survey shows that [climate change, environment and pollution is the British public's number one pressing concern](#), above the economy, with levels of concern similar across social classes and Labour and Conservative supporters. So, (alongside COP26 and the sewage debacle) we've been doing something right! Keep it up!

### **Wilder national parks**

Wilder Britain is calling on the UK Government and devolved administrations to [make Britain's national parks wilder](#) — including 10% core rewilding areas – so that these precious places can play a vital role in tackling the extinction crisis and climate emergency. Wilder national parks can lead the way for a healthier, more nature-rich Britain, with opportunities for communities and local economies as well.

### **Air pollution**

Over 29,000 children across the world have called on the Committee of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) to acknowledge their right to clean air, through the Freedom to Breathe campaign. The vice-chair of the Committee [acknowledged this month the right of children to clean air](#) and confirmed it will be elevated within the UNCRC.

### **Information update**

#### **Brexit and beyond**

- The [Environment Act](#) has finally passed into law. Ruth Chambers gives a [brief rundown of the highlights and lowlights](#), and Addland provides a [more detailed briefing, with a focus on biodiversity net gain](#). The Act creates a framework for protecting and enhancing the natural environment through long-term, legally binding targets. It embeds the [five EU environmental principles](#) into British law. It requires government to set targets by late 2022, to be in place for at least 15 years, to increase biodiversity, improve air quality, improve water quality, reduce waste, increase recycling, and improve resource efficiency. It also introduces:
  - A requirement for biodiversity net gain of 10% for new development
  - A requirement for local authorities to produce Local Nature Recovery Strategies
  - Five-yearly Biodiversity Reports from local authorities, detailing action taken, its impact and a summary of Biodiversity Net Gain activity.
  - A target on ambient PM2.5 concentrations in the air, the most damaging air pollutant to human health
  - A target to halt the decline of nature by 2030
  - A 25-year national environmental improvement plan, with 5-yearly interim targets (although these are not binding)
  - Environmental monitoring and reporting to be made part of domestic policymaking
  - The Office for Environmental Protection (OEP), created to uphold environmental lawHowever, there remain concerns, such as that the Act's principles do not apply to the Treasury or the Ministry of Defence; that the OEP is not sufficiently independent and may not be adequately resourced; that the government will use the powers it has given itself to amend the Habitats Regulations to downgrade protection for rare habitats and species; and that it will weaken rather than strengthen rules on sewage discharges to rivers and seas.

Green groups have recognised the Act as [a major milestone, but one that still leaves a lot of unfinished business](#), and [far from the world-leading legislation that was promised](#).

- The [Office for Environmental Protection](#) has confirmed that it has now been legally formed, following its launch as an Interim body this summer. The OEP will [begin the transition to an independent entity in early 2022](#). In the coming weeks, it will work on fleshing out its strategic approach. In its current form, the OEP is open to complaints from members of the public about cases of potential non-compliance with environmental law. However, it does not yet have full powers to hold offending bodies to account. As soon as the OEP receives its full remit in law, Defra has said that consultations will launch around the evolution of its strategic approach.

### **Climate change & energy**

- COP26 already seems a long time ago, but its ramifications will be with us for a very long time. It was badged by many as the last best chance to avert climate breakdown. Pre-COP reports by [Climate Action Tracker](#) put the world on course for 2.7c of heating; post-COP estimates range from a very optimistic 1.8c to a more realistic 2.4c. That leaves a gap that the Glasgow deal seeks to narrow by requesting another round of national climate plans – both stronger 2030 targets and long-term strategies – next year. Scientists and [leading climate experts have voiced concerns about the outcomes](#). The ‘Pact’ makes incremental progress on how to cope with the impacts already brought by 1.1C warming and mobilise support for developing countries, characterized by the Wildlife Trusts as [“taking baby steps forward where giant leaps were needed”](#). The best that COP President Alok Sharma could say was that “we have kept 1.5C within reach but its pulse is weak” and that he was [“deeply sorry”](#) about how events had unfolded. Greta Thunberg denounced the whole COP as just more [“blah blah blah”](#). It is plainly not enough to avert or manage dangerous levels of climate change. However, it is nevertheless still a long way forward from where we were five years ago and [some genuine progress was made](#).
- Other coverage of COP26: Climate Change News provides a [plain English breakdown of what was in the final Glasgow Climate Pact](#). Michael Jacobs sets out a balanced summary of the [main points as briefly as humanly possible](#); Edie covers [the same points in a little more detail](#). Becky Willis explains the why conference was, in fact, both a [relative triumph and an absolute failure](#), and why we need to bear both in mind; the FT similarly reflects that [we’ve come a long way but have a frighteningly long way still to go](#). The Conversation has a [series of short, factual articles from leading researchers](#) on pretty much every COP-related angle you might be interested in. Scientists for Global Responsibility provide an [overview of what has been achieved, what’s been missed, and what’s been ignored](#).
- Steady State Manchester provide a [detailed critique of the UK’s Net Zero Strategy](#), launched last month
- Lichfields have prepared a useful briefing on [how planning can contribute to tackling the climate emergency](#) and where English local authorities are up to in terms of climate emergency declarations, targets, and planning-based actions to implement them
- [Research](#) released this week by Stop Funding Heat and the Real Facebook Oversight Board found that “rampant” climate misinformation attracts between 818,000 and 1.36 million views on the platform each day. It also noted that the platform continues to underperform on fact-checking.
- The carbon dioxide emissions of the richest 1% of humanity are on track to be 30 times greater than what is compatible with keeping global heating below 1.5C, new research warns, as scientists urge governments to “constrain luxury carbon consumption” of private jets, megayachts and space travel. In keeping with the Paris climate goals, every person on Earth needs to reduce their CO<sub>2</sub> emissions to an average of 2.3 tonnes by 2030, about half the average of today. The richest 1% – which is a population smaller than Germany – are on

track to be releasing 70 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per person a year if current consumption continues, [according to the study](#). In total they will account for 16% of total emissions by 2030, up from 13% of emissions in 1990. Meanwhile, the poorest 50% will be releasing an average of one tonne of CO<sub>2</sub> annually.

## Planning

- The government is still keeping in suspense about what the planning reforms will be and when they'll come forwards. There are rumours that there will no longer be a Planning Bill at all, but that the reforms will be packaged up as part of a Levelling Up Bill. In any case, the Levelling Up Bill is taking priority, and Christopher Pincher and Joanne Avery are on record as saying that [planning will be looked at through the lens of levelling up](#). It does seem clear that there will be a focus on [digitizing the planning system](#) to widen participation and that reform are intended to make it "simple, sensible and speedy". At the launch of [CPRE's State of Brownfield launch event](#) Christopher Pincher spoke warmly about going further and faster on prioritizing brownfield, extending neighbourhood planning and protecting the environment from development in inappropriate locations. The zoning idea at the heart of the original proposals seems increasingly likely to be shelved, while housing assessment methods still look set to be shaken up, but with less central control than originally proposed. In an [appearance before the LUHC select committee](#) (Q78 onwards), Michael Gove repeated that he wanted "to be in a position where communities accept and welcome new development", and that what had prevented this were public concerns about aesthetics, infrastructure, the environment, an a feeling of powerlessness, and that his reforms would aim to address these issues. He acknowledged that addressing the climate emergency had to be at the centre of the planning reforms, and said that he "loved" the idea of street-level votes to increase housing growth.
- The new Environment Act 2021 stipulates that all new development must deliver a [net gain in biodiversity of ten per cent](#), either on-site or via offsetting. The Planning Advisory Service has compiled some [useful BNG FAQs](#). A potentially hugely significant move placing major new duties on developers and local authorities, it was described as the "gold standard for protecting nature" when unveiled by former environment secretary Theresa Villiers in January 2020. By making net gain a legal requirement from 2023, the Act goes significantly beyond the NPPF, which already calls for plans to deliver biodiversity net gain where possible, but sets no target. However, [analysts fear that](#) "planning departments are chronically understaffed and under-resourced, leading to fears that developers' proposals will be accepted without detailed examination of sites' existing biodiversity. Likewise, there are concerns that there will not be a satisfactory investigation of BNG proposals."
- Boris Johnson has committed to legislation that will make it [mandatory for new homes to have electric vehicle charging points installed from 2022](#). Other new buildings such as supermarkets and workplaces, and those undergoing large-scale renovation, will also be required to have electric vehicle charging points put in place.
- Despite the furor around the government's introduction of 'beauty' to the NPPF, [two recent appeal decisions](#) suggest that, as many feared, it is not defined precisely enough to have any real impact.
- The National Infrastructure Commission has published a [baseline report](#) for its next major National Infrastructure assessment, which is due in 2023. The report pinpoints areas in which policy and/or technology challenges are hampering progress towards what the Commission has determined are its key focus areas: reaching net-zero, minimising other environmental impacts, building climate resilience and levelling up. Its priorities will include identifying the infrastructure needed for hydrogen and carbon capture and storage to decarbonise parts of the economy, improving recycling rates, and the long term investment needs for surface transport within and between cities and towns.

- Liverpool City Region has committed a further [£36m to building 2,600 homes on brownfield sites](#) across its six local authority areas.
- A new report has urged the government to [ban developers from building in high flood risk areas](#).

## **Transport**

- The government has published its [Integrated Rail Plan for the North and Midlands](#). Despite loud [governmental protests to the contrary](#), the decision to axe the eastern leg of HS2 and to downgrade much of the rest of the promised east-west connectivity, especially a new line from Manchester to Leeds via Bradford, has widely been seen as a [betrayal of the North and of the idea of levelling up](#). Members of Transport for the North, the country's first statutory sub-national transport body, have described it as a "[chaotic shambles](#)". Opponents of HS2 have [welcomed the decision](#). The problem is that while the particular schemes that have been cancelled may well have been environmentally damaging, they are not being replaced with something better, and the North remains chronically short of the rail capacity it needs to enable a shift to a more sustainable future.
- The government has also published the [Union Connectivity Review](#), which proposes transport investments to improve "connections on local and national transport networks to bring all UK communities within closer reach of social and economic opportunities". While it does say that potential improvements should be appraised on a wider economic basis in order to support government objectives such as levelling up and net zero, it nevertheless includes recommendations to build and upgrade roads. It recommends that government designs and implements 'UKNET', a strategic transport network for the whole of the UK, and commits to providing additional funding to improve that network. It [rules out the Boris Bridge between Scotland and Northern Ireland](#), on the basis that it would cost more than 20 times more than Boris had estimated and was "impossible to justify".
- Hot on the heels of the Budget announcement cutting air passenger duty for short-haul flights, in a move broadly dubbed hypocritical in light of national net-zero targets, the UK Government has announced up to [£4.3m in additional subsidies for domestic flight routes](#).
- Greater Manchester has set out its ambition to become the [first city-region to deliver a carbon neutral transport network](#). Under the plans, the city region's bus fleet will be 50% electric by 2027 and 100% electric within a decade, a move that would singlehandedly reduce carbon emissions by 1.1 million tonnes. The Greater Manchester Ring and Ride fleet will also transition to zero emission technology by 2027. Metrolink, the city region's tram network, already runs on 100% renewable energy, and funding has recently been secured to the develop the next stage of plans for expanding the network.

## **Publications**

### **Recycling our Land: State of Brownfield 2021**

The [latest research by CPRE](#) shows that:

- There is land available for 1.3 million new homes in swathes of previously developed sites across the country but at the same time, development on greenfield sites is increasing.
- There is more brownfield land available for redevelopment but a smaller proportion is being granted planning permission over the past 12 months.
- The proportion of brownfield housing units with planning permission is the lowest since records began – down to 44% in 2021 from 53% in 2020 – and the actual number, at 506,000, is the lowest for four years.

Amongst other things, they are calling for a comprehensive brownfield-first policy to be set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and brownfield-targeted housing funds

established to enable levelling up across England to tackle the “glut of disused and derelict land available in areas that need the most support”.

### **Planning for climate change**

The main bodies representing the planning profession in the UK have issued a [third update to “The Climate Crisis”](#), a guide aiming to assist local authorities in planning for the growing impacts of climate change. The update presents a greater urgency in tone to previous versions with an overall message that tackling climate change needs to be at the heart of the vision for the future of communities and that planning has a vital role in securing that vision. The document also notes that *“many of the actions necessary to tackle the climate crisis are also key in creating healthy, ecologically rich, prosperous and beautiful places for us and for future generations”*.

### **State of our Rivers report**

The Rivers Trust has published a landmark [State of Our Rivers Report](#) to bring together critical data and present it in online, summarising the overall condition of our rivers, lakes, canals and groundwaters, to give people, businesses and organisations more knowledge so that they have more power to take action individually and collectively, based around a clear common understanding of the problem. The headlines of the report are that there may have been local improvements in many areas, but the overall condition of our rivers is, at best, flatlining in a poor state. This is leading to a decline in biodiversity, in the security of our future water supplies, and in our resilience to the climate crisis, which will tend exacerbate pollution, drought, and flooding.

### **Digging deeper: the farming transition**

Wildlife and Countryside Link’s Agriculture Group have launched [Digging Deeper, a new report](#) setting out the actions required to ensure the success of the farming transition. This major change in farming, underpinned by the Agriculture Act 2020, will see farmers rewarded for the public goods they provide, including reduced carbon emissions and improved biodiversity. Taken as a whole, the transition should secure a sustainable future for farming, and contribute to nature’s recovery and climate mitigation. However, as the report makes clear, this transition is in [danger](#) of failing to make the changes needed to effectively contribute to nature and climate targets. It provides recommendations for delivering a successful transition.

### **Events**

#### **Place-making and a strategic view of nature**

The 25 Year Environment Plan encourages local organisations involved in the stewardship of land, water and nature in England to adopt a natural capital approach. Join these webinars to gain insight into local initiatives that have been working to create a common understanding of place through natural capital evidence. Across the two events, you will hear from various examples of how natural capital evidence has informed decision-making and underpinned new partnerships. Register now for [Session 1](#) (including Liverpool City Region) & [Session 2](#) (including the Tees Valley).

#### **Green Infrastructure Mapping Tool for Local Plan making**

This event will provide a demonstration of a [new, online, free, interactive baseline map of Green and Blue Infrastructure](#) across England (beta version), for release to Local Planning Authorities and GI stakeholders. Natural England worked with Defra, Environment Agency and Forestry Commission and commissioned RSK ADAS and West Country Rivers Trust to deliver the tool. The event will feature a key note speech from Alan Law, Deputy Chief Executive of Natural England and a demonstration of the tool.

### **Green Investment Plan for Cumbria**

The [Green Investment Plan for Cumbria](#) is being launched, online, 10-12 on December 1. The Green Investment Plan project is a new and innovative green investment project for Cumbria that will engage with a wide cross-section of stakeholders to identify important decarbonising projects in buildings energy efficiency, energy generation, transport, agriculture, along with exploring the sources of finance required from institutional investors, banks, public finance and community funding institutions.

### **Resources**

#### **The Woodland Trust - Free Trees**

Schools, nurseries, colleges, universities, and other groups such as resident associations, sports clubs, parish councils, scouts, guides are amongst the organisations eligible to apply for up to 420 trees to improve their local environment. You don't need to belong to an official organisation. You could even set up a group for the purpose of planting, but you must be not-for-profit. The most important thing is that your group is willing to take on the planning, planting and care of the saplings. Tree packs available include hedging, copse, wild harvest, year round colour, working wood, wild wood and urban trees. The Woodland Trust is [currently taking applications for trees to be delivered in March 2022](#).

#### **The Green Infrastructure Resource Library**

The Green Infrastructure Resource Library (GIRL) is a unique database of documents, case-studies, videos, tools and other information about Green Infrastructure and its benefits and is free to use. The library is hosted by the [Green Infrastructure Partnership](#). For ease of use, the database is available in two formats: [a pdf](#) and an [on-line database](#) searchable by key terms, dates of publication etc. Both versions of the database are updated regularly.

#### **Climate change statistics**

The Office for National Statistics has launched a new [UK climate change statistics portal](#). It's an accessible one-stop shop for statistics on climate change and related topics, including drivers like energy use and emissions levels, giving clear, accessible and accurate information.

#### **Community wealth building energy transition toolkit**

CLES and Carbon Co-op have released a major new toolkit for councils, on [a community wealth building energy transition](#). The toolkit shows that councils have a vital role to play in addressing the climate emergency in a way that generates the greatest benefit for communities. Local government and other public sector organisations have a critical role in ensuring the transition to net zero is just, by using their economic power to enable community ownership, new local supply chains and innovative approaches to energy transition which help wealth to stick in our local places and address social inequality.

#### **Carbon and planning workbook**

Steady State Manchester have produced [a guide for local campaigners](#) who want to estimate the carbon (greenhouse gas) consequences of proposed developments on local land. It takes you through the various aspects to consider and data that you can use in your estimates. It also aims to forewarn you of potential problems and uncertainties in making such estimates.

#### **Natural capital**

New techniques for assessing natural capital abound.

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- Produced by Defra, [Enabling a Natural Capital Approach \(ENCA\)](#) resources are data, guidance and tools to help you understand natural capital and know how to take it into account. ENCA aims to: build capacity among users to assess and value the natural environment by providing comprehensive information and resources, reduce search costs for analysts and decision makers, provide a platform to update tools and guidance as knowledge develops, and identify new evidence and areas for development.
- The [Natural Capital Laboratory](#) is a five year programme using digital technology to assess the outcomes from efforts to restore 40 hectares of forest in the Scottish Highlands. Financial values are provided for ecosystem services, such as the amount of carbon captured on site. The final reporting outputs from the second year are now available.
- Natural England has recently published a [natural capital account for the Tees Valley](#), reporting on work done in association with Tees Valley Nature Partnership. The analysis estimates that the economic value of the natural environment in this region through recreation opportunities, improved air quality, thriving wildlife, water supply and flood mitigation is in excess of £100 million per year. Annual health benefits are £8 million per year.

### **Agroforestry in the Uplands**

Produced by The Soil Association this short documentary explores [the benefits of agroforestry on upland farms](#) through the eyes of three farmers, in Devon, Brecon and Perthshire. The three upland farmers talk about the benefits of giving their livestock access to trees and hedgerows, and why it's good for the animals, soil health, biodiversity, the environment and the bottom line.

### **Consultations**

#### **National Infrastructure planning reform**

There is still time to respond to the consultation on [changes to the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Planning regime](#). Amongst other topics, they are seeking to speed it up (which usually means less time for public input and consultation) and to understand how the quality of applications and the examination and decision process could be improved. Deadline: 17 December.

#### **Farm soil carbon code**

The Sustainable Soils Alliance is leading the development of a Farm Soil Carbon Code with a view to supporting the advancement of voluntary carbon markets in England and beyond. This will work alongside the existing Peatland Code and Woodland Carbon Code. [A consultation to inform the development of the Code](#) is now open.

#### **User research to inform planning reforms**

DLUHC have repeated their call for users of the planning system to sign up to be part of their user research panel to support the planning reform programme. They want to speak to those involved in the planning system, from all sectors, to hear about your experiences of planning and build that into future reform work. And if we don't get involved, they'll only be hearing from developers! If you sign up, 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. If you would like to consider taking part in future research, [sign up through this form](#).

### **Funding**

#### **Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund**



The [Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund](#) aims to stimulate private investment and market based mechanisms that improve and protect the natural environment in England. 29 projects are underway thanks to the first round of funding. A further round has been launched. It's a competitive grants scheme providing grants of between £10,000 and £100,000 to support the development of environmental projects in England that:

- help achieve one or more natural environmental outcomes from the 25-year environment plan
- have the ability to produce revenue from ecosystem services to attract and repay investment
- produce an investment model that can be scaled up and reproduced

You can apply for an NEIRF grant between 8 November 2021 and 3 February 2022.

### **Alpkit Foundation**

Alpkit offers small grants (typically £300 - £500) to grass-roots direct action projects that tackle issues such as diversity & inclusion in the outdoors, participation, education, conservation and protection of our natural environment and health & well-being. In particular they like to support projects that encourage responsible outdoor activity, introduce people to the benefits of getting outdoors, and/or have long-lasting impact. There's no deadline and applications are reviewed every two months

### **The Matthew Good Foundation**

The Matthew Good Foundation has launched a [Grants for Good Fund to support small charities, not-for-profit groups and social entrepreneurs](#) who are passionate about making a difference to people, their community or the environment. The Fund will share £10,000 between five shortlisted projects, which will be voted for by John Good Group employees. As well as established projects and charities, the Foundation are keen to hear from people with innovative ideas that need some funding to get their projects up and running. To be eligible, applicants will have to have had an income of less than £50,000 in the last 12 months. Funding is awarded every three months in April, July, October and January. The deadlines are the 15th of the month before, so the next round deadline is the 15th December 2021.

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